

# **CUSTOMER ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014**



“At Gentoo we believe in something called the ‘Art of Living’. We are a social business whose ambition is to improve lives by investing in people, the planet and property.

Our aim is to make society a better place to live and to make a real difference to the way people live their life.

As well as telling you how Gentoo Sunderland Limited performed in 2013-14, this report gives you an insight into some of the fantastic work that has been delivered in our communities to help improve the way people live their life.

I hope you enjoy reading it.”



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P Walls".

**Peter Walls**  
Group Chief Executive

## **Vision**

To improve the art of living beyond our imagination.

## **Mission**

We generate wealth by improving the lives of our customers and re-invest it through passionate people to create a climate for personal and collective opportunity.

## **Values**

Believe nothing is impossible.  
Re-imagine the future.  
We cultivate a learning curiosity.  
Live authentic relationships.  
Give us all you've got.

**Click here** for more information about our approach to Value for Money.



## Key to symbols

Performance information provided will include a comparison to the previous year's performance and our target.



### Thumbs up

Performance met/  
exceeded target



### Thumbs straight

Performance improved  
but still not achieving  
target



### Thumbs down

Performance not  
met target

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# OUR APPROACH TO VALUE FOR MONEY

Our definition of Value for Money (VfM) is connected to our mission and vision. The word 'wealth' in our mission isn't just about financial wealth and corporate profit, it is also about recognising the resources available in the community in the shape of individuals' skills and maximising the opportunities to use those skills to make our customers' lives better.

Our approach to VfM is to consider economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in everything we do, recognising the expectations and requirements of all of our stakeholders. We are concerned with costs and quality of service, but we also focus on the social and environmental impacts of our choices and what we do.



As part of our continued commitment to VfM we have reviewed our strategy to ensure we continue to deliver best value for our customers and stakeholders. To do this we worked with Customer Panel members, the Ustoo Customer Scrutiny Group, our Boards and Committees, and other stakeholders.

Our action plan to improve VfM takes into consideration your top priorities which continue to be Repairs and Maintenance, Anti-Social Behaviour and Looking after your neighbourhood.





Our VfM statement includes a self-assessment of how we are doing, shows how we compare to other organisations, and gives more detail on our plans to deliver better value.

**[Click here](#)** to see our Value for Money Strategy and Statement.

# WELCOME FROM THE LINK PANEL

“It has been another busy and challenging year for the Link Panel. In 2013-14 Welfare Reform was high on the agenda and there has been a strong focus on supporting customers who are financially vulnerable.

Gentoo’s Money Matters Team has been working closely with customers who are in financial difficulty. From budgeting and benefits, to debt advice and crisis, staff have been working hard to ensure customers have all of the support they need.



We are all Chairs or Vice Chairs of other Customer Panels and we use customer feedback to review policies and procedures – helping to improve the services delivered by Gentoo. This helps Gentoo be more efficient and make a difference to the way people live their life. We are the voice of the customer and we work hard to ensure your views are heard.

## Your 2013-14 Link Panel members:

**Pictured left to right:** Dorothy Mordue, Pat Carroll, Brian Taylor, Ray Grainger, Danny Bulmer and Nicola Robson. **Other members include:** Judith Williams, Mick Williams, Doris Maddison and Arthur Bond.

This year’s report is packed full of interesting facts and figures and details Gentoo’s performance during 2013-14 and we hope you enjoy reading it.”

## The Link Panel



# OUR GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Gentoo Sunderland Limited forms part of Gentoo Group and operates under the governance arrangements of the Group. The Board of Gentoo Sunderland is responsible for monitoring performance and the deployment of resources as well as ensuring the services we provide offer value for money. We have 5 local area Management Committees which report to the Board of Gentoo Sunderland and deal with performance within their area.

Each local area committee has five Customer Members, three Independent Members and one Council Member. As well as standard meetings, there are a number of additional sessions throughout the year to update on progress.



The effectiveness of our Governance arrangements is monitored by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

## Throughout 2013-14:

# 7

**Gentoo Sunderland Board meetings  
were held**

# 25

**Management Committee meetings  
were held**

# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Being committed to Equality and Diversity is not about giving preferential treatment to any individual or group. It's about recognising and responding to different individual needs which may arise in respect of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or other personal circumstances. It means creating a welcoming environment where everyone feels respected and valued, and that means raising awareness and working to address prejudice and disadvantage.

This year saw many people impacted by the Government's Welfare Reform Act. As



part of our response we were delighted to link with faith groups in the City, sharing information and practical support to our mutual benefit. It has helped us to get information and support to more people who were affected by the changes in welfare benefits.

We have also worked more widely with other groups and organisations to help create a safe and welcoming environment in our communities. As part of this, we have continued to support city-wide equality networks, working with partners to value and celebrate diversity and encourage inclusion.

We were proud to take part in Sunderland's Pride Parade, which is a growing annual celebration of diversity. We also participated in the Disability Independent Advisory Group's event to mark International Day of Disabled People.

Our zero tolerance approach to dealing with hate incidents has not diminished in any way. We remain committed and equipped to provide support to victims and to take prompt firm action against anyone whose behaviour does not demonstrate value and respect for diversity.



# MAKING PEOPLE FEEL VALUED AND CARED FOR



## **Gentoo tops Stonewall's 2014 list of gay-friendly employers**

Back in January, Stonewall named Gentoo as the top organisation in Britain for our inclusion policies for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) staff. This is the first time that a housing sector employer has taken the top spot and the first time the award has been won by a North East company. This is not just good news for our LGB staff. The award supports equality in its widest sense so it's great news for our customers too.

# TACKLING ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Our Community Safety Team work hard to ensure you feel safe and secure in your home. The most serious cases of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and tenancy breaches are defined as Category 1 and 2 and are dealt with by Specialist Officers within the Community Safety and Safeguarding Team. Category 3 tenancy breaches are dealt with by Neighbourhood Teams.

Our approach to working in partnership with victims and perpetrators continues to deliver a reduction in the amount of legal action needed to effectively resolve incidents.

	2012-13	2013-14
Evictions	3	3
Injunctions Obtained	16	5
Injunctions Served	16	4
Instructed Legal Action	24	10
Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSPs)	168	104
Notice of Requiring Possession	10	6
Postponed Possession Order	6	1

In 2013-14 we recorded:

**661** Tenancy Breaches

**469** Incidents

**589** Perpetrators

**1,195** Telephone calls by staff to help resolve cases of ASB

In 2013-14 top breach types were:

**30%** Nuisance

**9%** Damage

**9%** Domestic Abuse

**9%** Assault



## Early Intervention

We have a range of early intervention tools and legal powers which the team utilise to deal with ASB and other tenancy breaches. Our approach and focus to prevention and early intervention continues to be effective in terms of providing successful resolutions.

## Safeguarding

Any organisation coming into contact with the public has a responsibility to ‘flag up’ any issues they come across which might indicate that a young person or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm. Staff are trained to identify any potential risks and to make an appropriate referral to the responsible authority.

In 2013-14 we made:



## Did you know?

Our Diversionary and Educational Programmes are organised as a direct response to youth ASB. We deliver these on our own or in partnership for young people to engage in ongoing, informative and educational activity. In 2013-14 200 activities were held with 7,479 people attending.

Outcome of referrals	2012-13	2013-14
Prevention and Early Intervention	66%	70%
Enforcement	29%	20%
Allegations Unfounded	5%	9%

## Victim Support

Gentoo has a dedicated team of Victim Support Officers who support victims of serious ASB including Domestic Abuse. Through this service we aim to minimise and reduce incidents of Domestic Abuse and raise awareness of our 'no tolerance' approach to perpetrators.

We aim to support victims of Domestic Abuse by ensuring that all people that approach us are offered sensitive, confidential and consistent support by trained members of staff.

Throughout 2013-14:

**70**

Referrals were made by our Victim Support Officers

**143**

People were supported via our Victim Support Service

**97%**

Of customers felt very or fairly safe when their case was closed, compared with 41% at first contact



**Did you know?**

**60**

Appropriate Behaviour Agreements were made as an early intervention tool to resolve ASB during 2013-14.



## Positive Engagement

Our Positive Engagement Service aims to support perpetrators to tackle the causes of ASB for example, substance misuse (including alcohol) and mental health issues. In addition, we continue to work with UNITE to deliver mediation services to our customers.

## Panel Update

“We have held seven meetings discussing Community Safety. We have provided feedback on illegal money lending, helped update policies and procedures and provided feedback on the Community Safety Toolkit.”

### Neighbourhood and Community Customer Panel

If you're interested in joining this panel contact us on ☎ 0191 525 5000.



Throughout 2013-14:

**27**

Referrals were made to UNITE

**61**

Customers accessed the service

**32**

New people accessed the service

**121**

Customers benefitted from the UNITE service

**98%**

Success rate

**1**

Customer has gone on to cause further ASB

# LOOKING AFTER YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Our dedicated Neighbourhood Teams and estate services staff are responsible for making sure your neighbourhoods are safe, clean and attractive places to live.

Throughout 2013-14:

**89%**





of fly tipping was removed within 7 days

**70%**

of gardens at empty properties were tidied in 7 days





Neighbourhood Management	Performance 2012-13	Performance 2013-14	Target	Result
Encourage customers to get involved in 'Rate Your Estate' which assists us in identifying estate issues and making service improvements	10	10	10	
Number of times grassed areas cut*	14	16*	18	
Weed killing*	N/A	5**	6	
Satisfaction with the Tenancy and Estate Management service we provided†	98%	97%	85%	

Throughout 2013-14:

**£3,352,607**  
was spent on keeping our estates tidy

\*Due to weather conditions. †This satisfaction figure relates to customers surveyed in our area offices following an interview about Tenancy and Estate Management issues.



## Did you know?

Neighbourhood Managers have started to use iPads to assist with estate inspections and home visits. This is proving very successful in assisting and resolving customer queries. It has even helped to remove rogue supermarket trollies.

## Rate Your Estate Inspections 2013-14

Month	Estate	Score	Month	Estate	Score
March	Harraton	76%	August	South Hylton	100%
April	Grindon*	66%	September	Silksworth	89%
May	Town End Farm	94%	October	Leafields	90%
June	Barnwell	95%	November	Ashbrooke	78%
July	The Oval (Concord)	87%	December	East Rainton	97%

Throughout 2013-14 our Estates Services Team:

Cut the equivalent of

**625**

football fields every 2 weeks

Maintained over

**500,000m<sup>2</sup>**

of planted areas and hedges

Cleared and maintained over

**1,000**

void gardens

Completed approximately

**800**

tree inspections

Undertook daily inspections and maintained

**17**

play areas

\*The low score in Grindon was as a result of cleanliness in some of the communal blocks and grounds maintenance issues. We have been working closely with Grounds Maintenance staff and Cleaners to improve the situation.



## Panel Update

“The panel has had a productive year and have met on seven occasions, with an average attendance of 16 customers. A range of topics and themes have been discussed and presented - including the development of a Neighbourhood Management Toolkit. We are also looking in more detail at feedback provided from the Estate Services Questionnaire, to help improve the service.”

### Neighbourhood and Community Customer Panel

If you're interested in joining this panel call us on  
☎ 0191 525 5000.



### You said:

An estate inspection with customers and staff identified an area in Fatfield, near to Biddick Comprehensive School, was extremely prone to vandalism.

### We did:

We pruned shrubs and landscaped the area to make it look attractive. This has resulted in a reduction in vandalism and subsequent maintenance issues.

# REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We have a responsibility to maintain your home to a safe and suitable standard. Our aim is to ensure that we carry out your repairs right first time and to your satisfaction.

Throughout 2013-14:

Repairs and Maintenance	Performance 2012-13	Performance 2013-14
Jobs completed right first time	78%	81%
Number of missed Appointments (Card Ins)	19,539	19,952
Number of repairs requiring follow on work	17,280	14,736

**46,314**

emergency jobs were completed

**£19,902,241**

was spent on completing repairs

**210,521**

jobs were completed

**99.3%**

of properties had a essential gas safety check

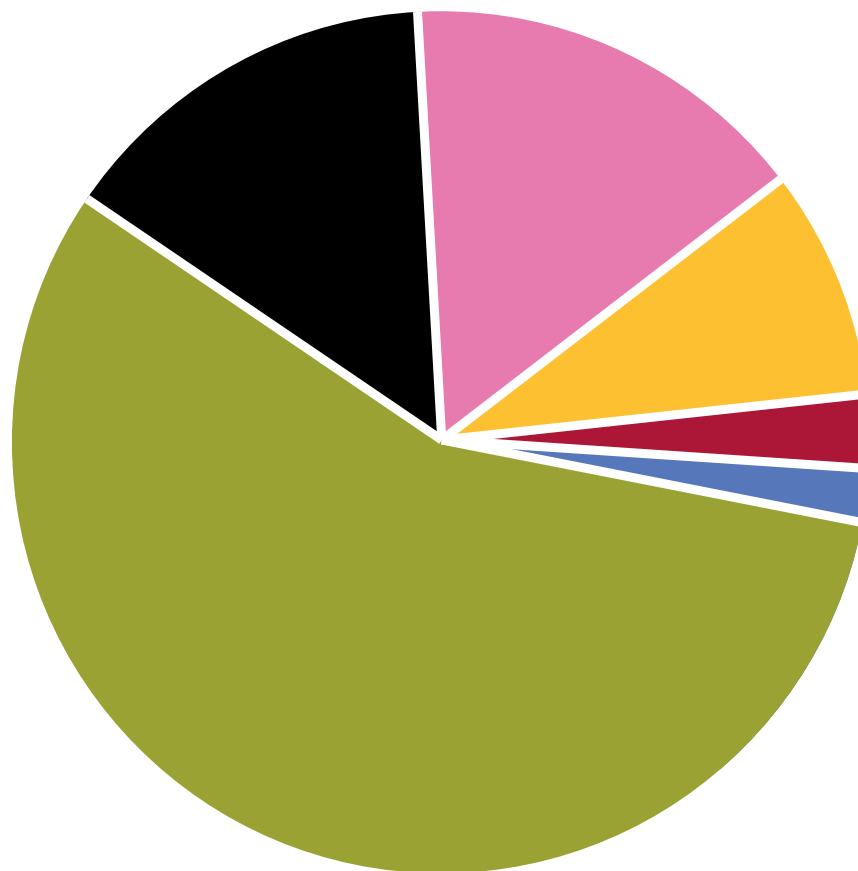
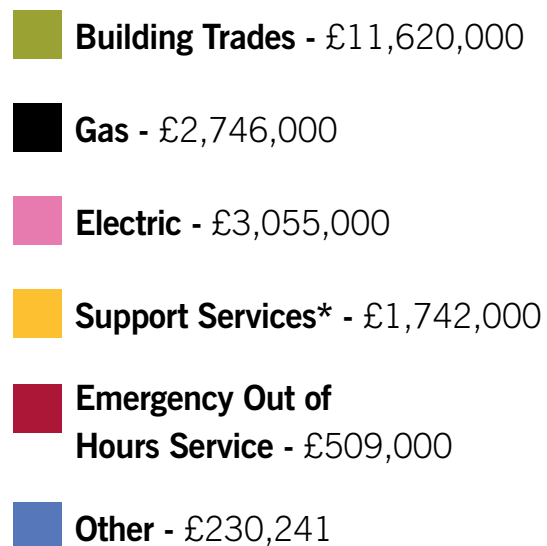
**95%**

of customers were satisfied with the service\*

\*Satisfaction figure relates to customers surveyed by Voluntas, an external organisation we use to collect Repairs and Maintenance satisfaction on recently completed repairs.



## In 2013-14 we spent:



## Voids (Empty Properties)

2013-14 has been an extremely challenging year, with an increase in turnover of 21% (i.e. the number of homes being re-let). Please see page 28 for re-let performance information.

Voids	Performance 2013-14
Total number of voids	2,631
Total spend	£4,049,620.50
Average spend per void	£1,539.19

## Top repairs raised in 2013-14 were:

**50,590**

Electrical

**30,698**

Joinery

**26,028**

Plumbing

\*Support services costs are the administrative costs associated with various departments within Repairs and Maintenance that are essential to complete a repair.

# LOOKING AFTER YOUR HOME

We have a responsibility to maintain your home to a safe and suitable standard. In order to do this it is vital that we deliver both a planned and responsive approach to Repairs and Maintenance. We will continue to monitor the condition of your home and this information is used to develop our planned and responsive maintenance programmes.



	2013-14
<b>Number of homes modernised since transfer in 2001</b>	26,633
<b>Money spent since transfer</b>	£536m
<b>Money spent during year</b>	£23.3m



Comparison of 2013-14 budget vs. actual spend, as well as budget for 2014-15.	2013-14		2014-15
	Budget (£ millions)	Actual ( £ millions)	Budget ( £ millions)
Refurbishments	£6.2m	£6.1m	£2.2m
Heating	£5.8m	£5.4m	£5.5m
Windows	£1.9m	£1.9m	£1.9m
Roofing	£4.5m	£3.7m	£2.2m
Structural Works	£1.1m	£1.5m	£2.9m
District Heating	£0.14m	£0.14m	£0.13m
Lift Maintenance	£1.3m	£1.3m	£0.6m
High Rise Electrical	£0.25m	£0.11m	£0.28m
Miscellaneous	£2.51m	£3.15m	£2.5m
Painting	0	0	£0.6m
Planet Smart Activity	0	0	£1.9m
Annual Requirement	£23.7m	£23.3m	£20.71

## Planned Maintenance Update

Investment Plan	Performance 2012-13	Performance 2013-14
Homes refurbished	4,038	4,600
Kitchens	527	551
Bathrooms	409	449
Heating and fires	1,507	1,483
Roofs	36	381
Windows	660	1,233
Structural	39	512
Communal areas	13	12
Painting	846	
Health and Safety	1,350	929
Lifts	0	6
Number of schemes completed	56	126
Value	£13.8m	£23.3m

Throughout 2013-14:

**81%** of customers were satisfied with the service\*

\*This satisfaction figure has been collected using face-to-face interviews with customers who have had their home modernised or refurbished.



## Planned Maintenance Programme 2014 -15

We have received approval for **£21 million** to deliver our Planned Maintenance Programme for **2014-15**. Our priorities for this year continue to be, to replace kitchens, bathrooms and internal doors to properties that have not had any improvement works completed since stock transfer in 2001.

We are in the final year of our 3 year programme to undertake these works where necessary to homes that have had a property condition survey undertaken. We expect to complete works to **330** homes during this financial year and should have completed these improvements to **1,610** homes over the 3 year period.

Our heating replacement programme is continuing to replace back boilers with combination boilers. This also includes the replacement of existing single glazed windows with double glazing. We completed heating upgrades to **1,483** homes during 2013-14 and are looking



to complete these works to **1,969** homes this year. We expect to complete all back boiler replacements by March 2017.

We will be undertaking **246** roofing

replacements across the City and a number of other external repairs including structural works to **150** gable ends.



### **You said:**

You would like a wider range of flooring choices for bathroom and kitchens.

### **We did:**

The flooring choices have been amended and three new flooring options are now available.



### **You said:**

You wanted the option to mix and match fires and surrounds.

### **We did:**

This option is now available to customers, which has increased the choices available while using the same products.

## Living in Multi-storey Accommodation

The top three priorities for people living in multi-storey accommodation are looking after communal areas, security in their neighbourhoods and repairs and maintenance.

Throughout 2013-14 we spent:

**£18,000**

on repairs to communal windows

**£104,000**

on electrical upgrades

**£1,304,000**

replacing lifts

**£678,000**

providing a concierge service

**£58,000**

on repairs to windows  
at Victor Street

**£41,000**

on Lakeside porch repairs





# IMPROVING THE ART OF LIVING

Staff from across Gentoo piloted a furniture recycling project in partnership with Community Sustainability Services (CSS) based in Sunderland. Any items of furniture in good condition left in empty properties are being donated to CSS.

The project not only helps us to be more 'planet smart' by sending less waste to landfill, it also gives our customers a cheaper alternative when buying essential household items.

**One customer said:** "I couldn't afford to buy new furniture, so without this service I would have had an empty home. It has improved my mental health as my empty house is now a home."





## Panel Update

“The panel have met on six occasions with an average attendance of 12 customers. We have been visiting void (empty) properties to get first hand experience of the standards of these properties when they are handed back to Gentoo and when they are ready be to re-let.

We have also reviewed the suite of Asset Management Customer Information Leaflets used during the modernisation process. This has helped Gentoo to improve the communication we have with customers during this time.”

### Home Customer Panel

If you're interested in joining this panel call us on

☎ 0191 525 5000. Gentoo customer involvement

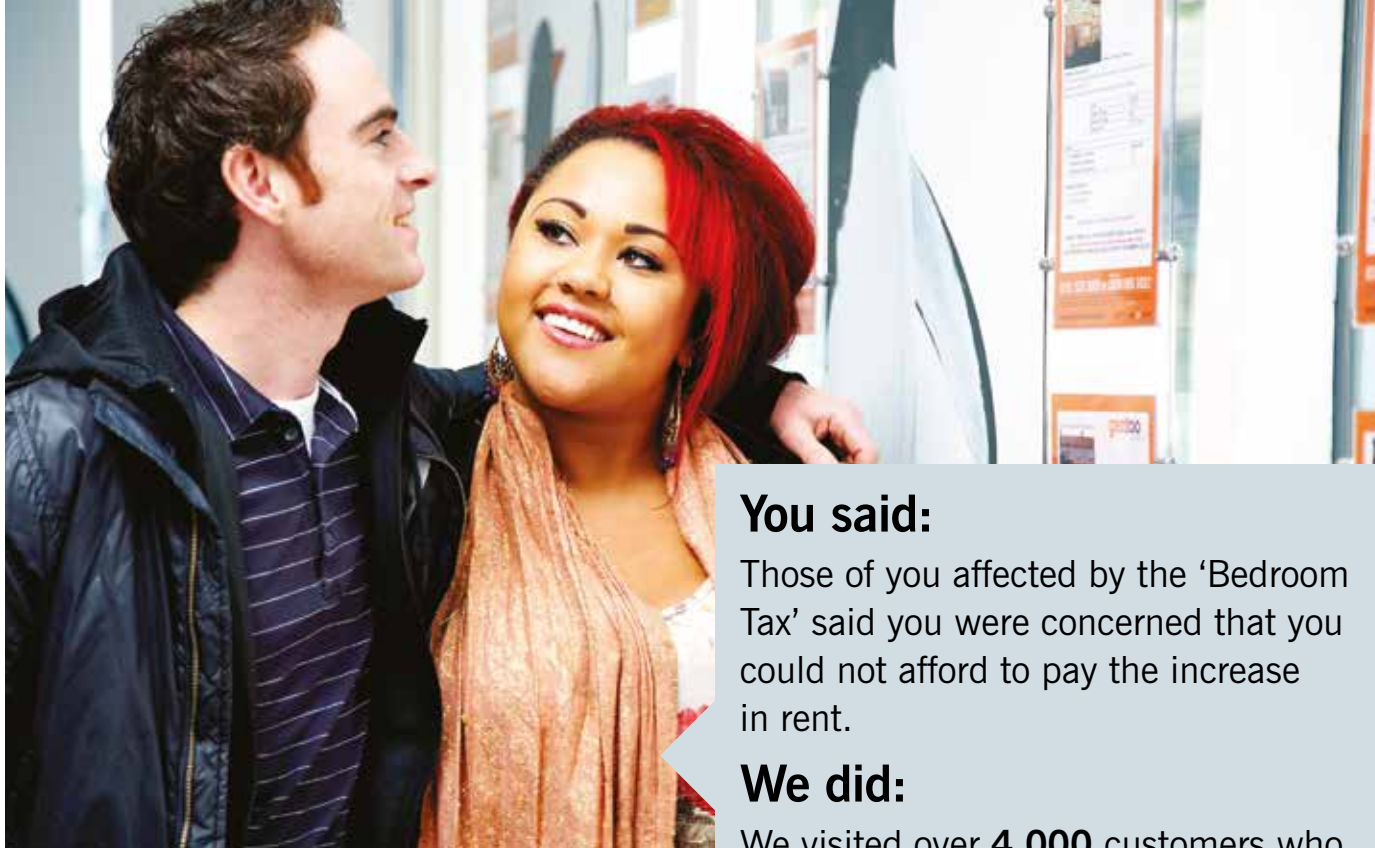




# FINDING A HOME

We allocate our homes through a Choice Based Lettings System (CBL), Direct Allocations and Nominations. Throughout 2013-14 we have continued to see an increase in the numbers of properties being allocated. Our re-let period was 37.08 days. The re-let period is how long it takes us to make a home ready for the next customer.

**Please note:** With the support of our Board the way we measure our void performance has changed and we now consolidate all void types, including those requiring major repairs.




## You said:

Those of you affected by the 'Bedroom Tax' said you were concerned that you could not afford to pay the increase in rent.

## We did:

We visited over **4,000** customers who were affected. As well as advising customers, the visits have helped us to understand the challenges customers face and the level of support that is needed. Of those who were visited, 1,000 said they were willing to consider a move to a smaller home, via our CBL and Mutual Exchange Services. In 2013-14 **135** people affected by the bedroom tax have moved to a smaller property.

	2012-13	2013-14
<b>Number of homes let</b>	2,150	2,600

	Performance 2012-13	Performance 2013-14	Target	Result
<b>Percentage of customers very satisfied/fairly satisfied with the lettable standard*</b>	92%	89%	85%	

\*This satisfaction figure has been collected using face-to-face interviews with customers after they have moved into their new home.

## Panel Update

“The panel has met on eight occasions this year with an average attendance of 13 customers. We have helped produce a range of literature available to customers who are preparing to take on a tenancy. Our pre-tenancy information pack includes information on managing your money, decorating, furnishing a home and energy saving.”

### Tenancy Customer Panel

If you're interested  
in joining this panel  
contact us on

☎ 0191 525 5000.





# INVOLVING OUR CUSTOMERS

Involving our customers means providing a range of ways for you to influence and improve the products and services we provide. There are lots of ways to get involved and our customers have helped to make a real difference.

Throughout 2013-14 we held:



**169**

Resident/Tenant Meetings

**109**

Social Events/Fun Days

**7**

Neighbourhood and Community Customer Panel Meetings

**30**

Local Customer Panel Meetings

**110**

Partnership Meetings

**27**

Estate Focus Groups

**2**

Peer Reviews with External Organisations

**6**

Home Customer Panel Meetings

**20**

Intergenerational Group Meetings

**8**

Tenancy Customer Panel Meetings

**541**

Coffee mornings/surgeries

**5**

People and Society Customer Panel Meetings

**29**

Surveys/Consultation

**13**

Link Panel Meetings

**6**

Communication Customer Panel Meetings

**71**

Estate Walkabouts







# IMPROVING THE ART OF LIVING

Our Intergenerational Group walked away with the 'Intergenerational Award' at the Regional Youth Work Units PoSBO (Positive Social Behaviour) Awards.

This was a great achievement for a group that had only been together for 12 months. The Group work in partnership to help overcome the negative stereotypical opinions that people have about the younger generation and prove that young and old can work together in harmony.





## Activities and Events for Older People

To tackle social isolation, bring people together and raise awareness of issues that affect older people, we provide a programme of activities based on customer needs and interests. From quiz afternoons, fishing clubs and tea parties to educational events and coffee afternoons there is something for everyone.

Throughout 2013-14:

**2,555**

older customers attended

**255**

events



### Outcomes:

- People felt that they had more information about their choices.
- People felt more empowered to make informed decisions about their lives.
- People reported an increase in social contact and company.
- People felt more able to learn new skills and try new things.

## Customer Scrutiny Group Update

“It has been a busy year for Ustoo. Back in May 2013 we presented our final report on Welfare Reform to the Board. Overall we found that Gentoo is very proactive in supporting customers through the welfare changes. We made 11 recommendations to help Gentoo do even better, ten of which were agreed, and most of which have now been completed. The Customer Link Panel is monitoring the action plan to ensure everything is implemented.

“We have also undertaken a review of Leasehold Services. We scrutinised the services provided to leaseholders because they had received poor feedback. Leaseholders are people who own their own home, but in a building managed by Gentoo, so they pay charges to maintain the communal areas and building. We made 11 recommendations to improve the service in March 2014, including improving value for money, reviewing literature and communications to reviewing cleaning contracts and regularly reviewing customer feedback. The Board



**Panel members Nicola Robson and Diane Conway.**

has agreed these recommendations and staff have already taken steps to improve the service as a result.

“Our Chairperson joined the Gentoo Group Board as a Tenant Member, so this year we appointed a new Chair and planned a recruitment campaign and new Ustoo members were appointed in June 2014.

“Our next area to review is Repairs and Maintenance. We have chosen this topic because it is really important to customers. ”

**Ustoo Customer Scrutiny Group**






## Did you know?

Tawanda Kawanzaruwa, Customer Involvement Officer (Houghton and Hetton) won the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Tenant Involvement Officer of the year award for the Northern Region.

He also scooped a CIH Housing Heroes Award in the Tenant Engagement Individual of the Year category.



Tawanda has exceeded all expectations, substantially increasing Customer Involvement activity in his area. He has set up many projects to benefit the community and has won over customers with his passion, commitment and determination to succeed.

**Well done Tawanda!**



# DEVOLVED BUDGET UPDATE

There are five Local Customer Panels who represent our areas across the City. The main focus of these panels is to make decisions on where to spend the Devolved Budget used to improve our local communities.

This scheme is a great way of letting communities have their say on how money is spent in their area.

**Throughout 2013-14:**

# 81

projects benefitted from allocated Devolved Budget

# £129,945

was the value of Devolved Budget allocated



See examples of where this funding has been spent on the following pages.



“Gentoo has played a crucial role in helping volunteers with design and costs. The Gentoo Local Customer Panel provided support to make our dreams become a reality.”

**Emma Frew, Project Manager at ShARP**

**Area: Houghton**

**Devolved Funding: £1,238**

**Used to: The opening of the Shiny Things Charity Shop.**

Back in August the Shiny Things Charity Shop officially opened. The project was jointly commissioned by Gentoo and the Shiny Row Advice and Resource Project (ShARP) when the two partners identified

that there were no charity shops in the Shiny Row or Penshaw areas. The shop provides low cost second hand goods, clothes and bric-a-brac, as well as craft and seasonal items.



**Area:**

Washington

**Devolved Funding:**

£1,000

**Used to:** Help pupils with disabilities to compete in a National Table Cricket Final.

Funding was allocated to help with travelling and hotel costs to send a group of disabled pupils from Oxclose Community Academy to Lords Cricket Club to compete in the national final of the table cricket tournament, after winning their regional heats.

“The children played very well and enjoyed the experience. Hopefully, we will be back next year.”

**David Beeston, Head of Sport, Oxclose Community Academy**

“Without this sponsorship we wouldn’t have been able to go as it is an expensive trip. Thank you very much from all seven of us on the team.”

**Aidan Guy, Year 8 Pupil**





**Area:** South

**Devolved Funding:**  
£2,500

**Used to:** Fund  
community activities  
for children  
under 11.

Funding was allocated to the Box Youth Project who carry out youth work with 11-21 year olds. No funding was available for children under 11 years, who often wanted to get involved. Lisa Wilson, Project Manager approached us for help and used the money to hold a Junior Youth Club on a Friday. The club went on to win a Young Achievers Award.

**Area:** North  
**Devolved Funding:**  
£1,000

**Used to:** Complete a facelift of a communal garden.

Funding was allocated to complete a facelift of the communal garden at the bottom of Wendover Close and Witney Close. The funding was used for raised planting beds for residents to plant flowers, vegetables and herbs for use in the community. The area was cleaned by a team of Gentoo volunteers.



**After**

“I absolutely love my new bungalow. The work the Gentoo staff have done to improve the communal garden is fantastic.”

**Mrs Armstrong, Wendover Close**



**Before**





“We have had a great day out today, there have been lots of activities and the children have had a great time. The staff are really friendly and helpful and it’s great to see activities taking place in Pennywell.”

**Mrs Ryan**

**Area:** Central

**Devolved Funding:**  
£1,500

**Used to:** Set up a community provision for families.

Two parents from the Pennywell area asked for support to set up a community group to tackle the lack of family provision in the Pennywell area. Since the ‘Schools Out Fun Club’ opened last summer over 2,000 people have used the facility. The group organise family activities during every school holiday, parties, themed events as well as fun days, and family trips. In addition, they organise fundraising activities that benefit the people of Pennywell. So far they have raised over £5,000 that has been reinvested back into the local community.

# OUR COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAMME

Aspire is our Community Grant Programme that is accessible to anyone living in the city or working with local people. The aim of Aspire is to enable local people to help improve their communities.

Throughout 2013-14:

# 120

Applications  
were successful

# 12,167

Local people  
benefitted

# £43,150

Was the value of  
successful applications







“The grant has helped the group to fulfil their ambition by enabling people of all ages and abilities to learn and develop new skills in music. It has allowed the group to grow and has benefitted lots of people in the local community.”

**Danielle Smiles, Project Support Worker.**

**Who:** St. Davids Community Project

**Awarded:** £497

**Used for:** The purchase of additional music equipment to provide free music lessons to people of all ages and abilities including youth groups and people with learning difficulties.

Local residents from Farringdon, Thorney Close, Lakeside, Plains Farm and Doxford Park come along to learn to play instruments such as guitar, bass, keyboard and drums, as well as taking part in singing.

The grant has supported the group to reach approximately 450 people each month.

# OUR VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME

Through our volunteering programme, we encourage our staff, corporate partners and the community to give their time to activities that help improve local communities and make a difference to peoples' lives.

Throughout 2013-14:

**4,589**

volunteering hours were given benefitting and supporting **3,543** individuals, **60** organisations, **50** schools and **80** events

**60%**

of volunteers agreed they were more aware about community needs

**100%**

of staff agreed that their job satisfaction had improved

**60%**

of volunteers agreed their relationship with Gentoo staff had improved

**60%**

of volunteers agreed their knowledge about Gentoo had improved

**60%**

of volunteers agreed their relationship with external partners had improved





# MAKING PEOPLE FEEL VALUED AND CARED FOR

Ninety-two volunteers from Gentoo took part in Good Deed Day on Monday 24 February, along with 29 student volunteers from Sunderland University and ten volunteers from Barclays Bank, making it one of the largest co-ordinated volunteering projects aimed at supporting communities in the city. Seven community buildings were completed in one day with the help of 131 volunteers.

“It was a fantastic day and it has truly inspired the church to come together. The amount of work completed in such a short amount of time was amazing. I’m very grateful to all the volunteers who were involved.”

**Pastor Kenny**





## The Genfactor

Organised by Gentoo, the 'Genfactor' is a talent competition which gives young, local performers a chance to showcase their talents

Dan Tyrens, Training and Development Advisor, Gentoo has been volunteering for the Genfactor for the last four years and has been involved in coaching young singers and musicians, helping them to improve their confidence and learn new skills.

**If you are interested in getting involved contact the Volunteering Team on ☎0191 525 5000 or email ✉[volunteering@gentoogroup.com](mailto:volunteering@gentoogroup.com).**

"I have been in my band 'Risen Prophecy' for ten years and have been all over the country learning new skills and tricks. I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to help support young people who have the talent and passion to succeed."

**Dan Tyrens, Training and Development Advisor, Gentoo**



# IMPROVING THE ART OF LIVING

Gentoo staff organised a team challenge to re-decorate the new home of a little boy who was in hospital suffering from a 'flesh-eating bug.' After hearing about Frankie's struggle, staff at Gentoo's Southwick office organised a team challenge to decorate the family's new home, with paint supplied by B&Q.

Gentoo Neighbourhood Operations Manager, Jim Taylor, used his artistic skills to paint two colourful murals in the bedrooms - the Gruffalo, for Frankie, and Spiderman, for his big brother Kayne.



# WORK AND LEARNING

We provide a range of work and learning opportunities to help reduce unemployment and bridge the gap between education and the world of work.

Throughout 2013-14:



**1,788**

people were provided with employment and skills opportunities

**11**

pre-employment programmes were delivered

**53**

people completed our pre-employment course

**39**

people achieved a NCFE qualification

**41**

people attended interviews

**30**

people gained employment or an apprenticeship

**56**

people enrolled on the Duke of Edinburgh Award

**4**

internship programmes were delivered engaging 74 pupils



- “I feel very motivated as a result of this programme and encouraged to pursue my chosen career.”
- “My confidence has grown enabling me to apply for more jobs.”
- “This programme has allowed me to mix with a lot of different people of all ages. I have really enjoyed it and wouldn’t hesitate at being involved in other courses.”
- “I have some of my old self-confidence back. The course has given me the confidence to volunteer and seek employment.”

- People felt more informed about their life choices.
- People felt more able to make informed decisions about their lives.
- People felt more that they had increased their skills.
- People reported an increase in employability.

## Be your own boss

Be your Own Boss (previously known as Enterprising Futures) offers free business advice and practical help to Gentoo customers wishing to explore self-employment opportunities.



Throughout 2013-14:

**186**

people were given advice  
by a Business Advisor

**32**

new businesses were created

**33**

new jobs were created



# BE PROGRAMME

The Be Programme has been designed to engage individuals on a journey of discovery of individual strength, wellbeing, emotional resilience and learning curiosity. 'Be' aims to encourage the learners to continue their self-development through other services provided by Gentoo.

**Throughout 2013-14:**

**31**

Be programmes were delivered by Gentoo staff

**343**

people took part in the Be Programme

**269**

people completed the programme



## Outcomes:

- People felt they had more information about their choices.
- People felt more empowered to make informed decisions.
- People felt they had an increase in feelings of wellbeing.

### Our customers said:

- “I am more determined than ever to focus on my future, doors have opened and that has never happened before. I have made a plan to change my life completely.”
- “I’ve learned I am a strong person, but need to listen and learn from people around me. Finding this out about myself has changed how I react towards others and all situations.”



## Panel Update

This year the panel met on five occasions. Social isolation is one of the impacts of an ageing population, and we have been working with Gentoo staff to facilitate and deliver a range of activities to older people. More recently, we have been looking at how we can communicate the older persons offer to more people within the City. We have also been getting out and about talking to our neighbours and communities about the way that Gentoo support older people and how they can get involved in the agenda.”

### People and Society Panel

If you are interested in joining our panel please contact us on ☎ 0191 525 5000.





# SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We provide specialist support to young people aged 16-21 to enable them to manage a home. These services include our STEPs Service (Supporting Tenants Empowering People) and our Holmewood Supported Housing Scheme. They are designed to empower young people to live independently and make informed choices about their future.

**Throughout 2013-14:**

## 233

**young people were supported to live independently**

### **Outcomes:**

- People have increased their skills.
- People are more able to maintain their independence.
- People are more empowered to make informed decisions about their lives.
- 100% of customers were satisfied with the service\*.

### **Our customers said:**

“I am more sure of the things I want in life and how to achieve them.”

“I have grown up a lot; I am a lot happier, more independent and focussed on my future.”

“More confident, more able to manage money, improved relationships with family, I’m more positive about the future.”

\*All customers were given the opportunity to feedback after using the service and this satisfaction figure represents those who completed a questionnaire.

# SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Our services for older people help customers to remain independent within their own home and community for as long as possible. It is hoped that the service will reduce hospital re-admissions and improve the quality of life for older people.

Throughout 2013-14:

# 1,855

older people were supported to live independently in their own home



## Outcomes:

- People reported an increase in having more information about their choices.
- People reported an increase in their quality of life.
- 100% of customers asked reported a reduced risk of falling.
- 99.5% of customers were satisfied with the service\*.

## Our customers said:

“I am financially better off as a result of receiving attendance allowance and I feel safer and more content with assistance from the Wellbeing Service.”

“I have really enjoyed the service provided by the Wellbeing Team. I have now enrolled in swimming lessons and this really matters to me. The Wellbeing Service has given me the support to do things I thought I couldn't.”



# NEEDS ASSESSMENT SERVICE

We have a team of staff who respond to the support needs of our customers with physical disabilities. Staff undertake a full needs assessment and provide housing advice to vulnerable customers taking into account their health and mobility needs.

Throughout 2013-14:

## 805

people with physical disabilities and mobility problems were supported

## 733

referrals were made

### Outcomes:

- Customers reported a reduction in the risk of falling.
- Customers reported a reduction in hospital admissions.
- 91% of customers were satisfied with the service\*.






\*All customers were given the opportunity to feedback after using the service and this satisfaction figure represents those who completed a questionnaire.



# PAYING YOUR RENT

The collection of rents allows us to supply and deliver the services we provide to customers.

Our performance in rent collection continues to be strong despite our customers facing financially challenging times. Staff continue to provide support and guidance wherever possible.

	Performance 2012/13	Performance 2013/14	Target	Rating
Rent collected (£)	£113,722,137	£117,096,278	£116,130,450	
Rent collected as % of rent due	98.77%	100.27%	99.95%	
Former tenant rent arrears collected	£232,630	£255,109	£280,915	
Satisfaction with the Income Management service we provided*	98%	95%	85%	
Number of transactions handled	722,688	753,066	n/a	
Satisfaction with the collection service we provided†	100%	100%	85%	

Throughout 2013-14:

## 331

customers successfully applied for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

†This satisfaction figure relates to customers surveyed in our offices after making a payment. \*This satisfaction figure relates to customers surveyed in our offices following an income related interview.



# HOW WE SPENT YOUR RENT

The graph opposite shows the breakdown of the **£81.8 million** spent on services delivered directly to you.

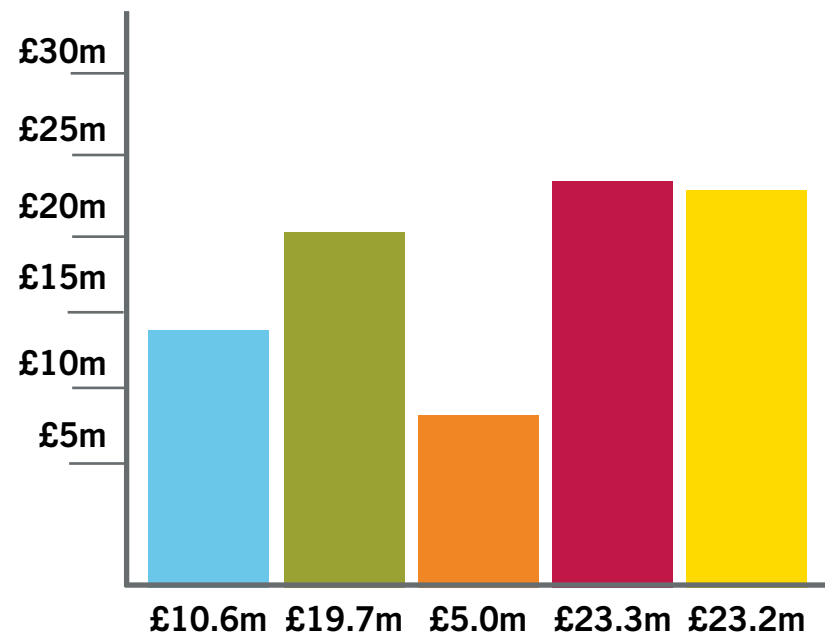
In 2013-14 we received:

**£118 million**  
in rent payments\*



The top 5 areas where we spent your rent:

-  Housing Management
-  Responsive Repairs
-  Estates
-  Planned Maintenance
-  Interest Payments



\*For more information on the money spent by Gentoo Group, [click here](#) to see our Value for Money Strategy and Statement.

# FINANCIAL WELLBEING SERVICES

Our Financial Wellbeing Services are centred on providing customer access to appropriate advice, products and support.

If you are struggling financially contact the Money Matters Team on ☎0300 123 2004†



Throughout 2013-14:

**£1,523,695**

worth of debt was consolidated

**£2,500**

worth of energy grant applications were claimed

**2,317**

customers were supported by Age UK and FISCUS

**£606,840**

worth of benefits were claimed

**89%**

of customers were satisfied with the service provided\*

†Calls to 03 numbers will cost the same as calls to a landline number and will be included as part of any inclusive call minutes. \*All customers were given the opportunity to feedback after using the service and this satisfaction figure represents those who completed a questionnaire.



# IMPROVING THE ART OF LIVING

Catherine Loftus, from Gentoo's Money Matters Team, visited Mrs Brown in 2013, who had many debts and significant rent arrears. Catherine completed a Discretionary Housing Payment application, delivered a food parcel and also referred Mrs Brown to the Credit Union. Catherine supported the family with a claim for Disability Living Allowance, increasing their weekly income. This customer has gone from being in a desperate financial situation, to having financial stability and no rent arrears. This customer feels that we have completely transformed her life. In December, their Credit Union loan is repaid, the family will be debt free for the first time in years.





# BEING PLANET SMART

We encourage everyone to learn how to be more planet smart within their community and at home, as it can save people money, reduce their impact on the environment and because 'it's the right thing to do'.



Throughout 2013-14:

**48**

customers accessed our fuel switching service

**1,038**

PV panels were installed

**711**

customers received energy saving advice

**£128**

was the average annual saving for those who completed a fuel switch





## Did you know?

Back in February 2014, we rolled out our new and improved fleet of vehicles. In April 2014 we had 266 new vehicles on the road. All vehicles are more fuel efficient and release less CO<sub>2</sub>. We estimate a saving of 54 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year and £76,000 per year in fuel costs. By the end of 2014 we will have replaced 342 vans with a new fuel efficient fleet.

## Would you like to be a Planet Smart Volunteer?

To date we have recruited over 100 volunteers to work on a range of different projects and initiatives. From giving energy advice, teaching others to grow their own food, to getting a new

qualification or driving a community pool car, there is something for everyone. Full support and training is provided.

**If you would like more information contact the Green Team on**  
**☎ 0191 525 5000**



# CUSTOMER CARE




All staff are responsible for delivering an exceptional standard of customer care and are measured against the service standards we publicise to customers.

Throughout 2013-14:

## 95%







of customers were satisfied with the service



Customer Service Centre	Performance 2012-13	Performance 2013-14	Target	Result
Number of calls received	494,929	533,106	N/A	
Number of calls answered	473,113 95.6%	501,602 94%	At least 90%	
Number (%) of calls answered within our 20 second service leave	382,398 80.8%	370,152 74%	At least 80%	
Average customer wait	18 seconds	32 seconds	Less than 20 seconds	
Number of private interviews	29,953	32,076	N/A	

\*Satisfaction figure relates to customers surveyed by Voluntas, an external organisation we use to collect satisfaction data the service provided by our Contact Centre.



Customer Care	Performance 2012-13	Performance 2013-14	Target	Result
Number of formal complaints received	720	87		
Number (%) formal complaints responded to and resolved within service standard of 10 working days	84.3% 607	95.3% 61/64	100%	
Number (%) formal complaints responded to within service standard of 10 working days with an agreed action	100%	100% 23/23	100%	
Number of telephone calls received	270,857	250,756	N/A	
Number of calls handled	93.8% 254,115	91.7% 229,899	N/A	
Number (%) handled within 20 seconds	86.8% 220,655	90.8% 208,839	85%	
Number (%) picked up by voicemail	2.8% 7,648	3.5% 8,751	10%	
Number (%) calls abandoned	3.0% 8,100	3.8% 9,605	5%	
Average call waiting time (seconds)	26.5	20.3	Less than 20 seconds	

# MAKING PEOPLE FEEL VALUED AND CARED FOR

Our complaints policy was reviewed at the end of 2012-13. We consulted with staff and customers to shape the new policy, which was launched in May 2013. As part of the new policy staff are encouraged to take personal responsibility to ensure that they adopt an 'own it, fix it' attitude to solve customers' problems first time.

In 2013-14 we received 87 formal complaints, compared with 720 during the same period last year. This highlights that staff are actively owning and fixing issues at first contact, preventing them from becoming a formal complaint.





# MORE WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH

From reporting a repair, to finding out about events in your local area, we understand that everyone is different and prefers to communicate with us in different ways.

At the end of March 2014 we had:

**903**

likes on Facebook

**3,577**

followers on Twitter

**475,601**

visits to our website

**144,669**

visits via a mobile smart phone

**66,817**

visits via a tablet



## My Gentoo

We are currently switching to a new system that will make accessing your account much easier and friendlier to use.

### **Soon you will be able to:**

- Access your rent account details, including balances and payments.
- Report a repair.
- Review and update your email address and phone numbers to make sure they are up to date.
- Choose how we communicate with you in the future.
- Send us direct messages via My Gentoo.

The new My Gentoo will also allow you to log and track repairs requests and complete online surveys which will help us to develop the services you need.





## Panel Update

“We are responsible for ensuring that all printed and online material is appropriate and accessible for customers. From proof reading customer newsletters, providing content, to supporting local events and market research we have been working closely with the marketing team to ensure that the customer’s views are taken on board. In addition, we have been looking at digital inclusion and the best ways to get customers to engage online.”


### Communications Customer Panel

If you are interested  
in joining our panel  
please contact us on




0191 525 5000.





**We would like to thank all of the customers who have worked with us to produce this report.**

Please tell us if you need help to read or understand this information. If you need this report in large print, on CD, in audio or in another language, contact the Communications Team.

 **0191 525 5000**

 **enquiries@gentoogroup.com**

 **gentoogroup.com**



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