



Empowering Voices, Building Communities:

A Customer Engagement Strategy for
Stronger Connections and Shared Success
2025 - 2027

A message from our Customer Committee

This strategy emphasises the importance of customer engagement and our dedication to it. In light of this commitment, our engaged customers share their reflections on what this means to them.

“

We cannot stress enough how encouraging this strategy is. As customers, we feel excited, positive, and hopeful about the future.

The news that Gentoo will engage, involve, and collaborate with customers could not have come at a better time

”

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Why is customer engagement important

Local context

At Gentoo, we have a strong track record of customer engagement and involvement.

In 2023, we recruited customers and launched our Customer Committee. Customer Committee is a key part in our governance structure, ensuring customers have a voice in how we operate and help hold us accountable.

During 2024, we enhanced our approach to scrutiny by enabling more customers to share their views. We asked customers to review areas such as complaints, empty homes and how we provide grants to the local community. These scrutiny reviews have led to several service improvements.

We understand that true customer engagement is not a transaction; it is an ongoing relationship built on trust, transparency, and a shared commitment to customer and community wellbeing.



The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places customers at the centre of social housing. It grants the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) the power to actively monitor and enforce regulations.

To support this, the RSH has introduced new consumer standards that set clear expectations for landlords regarding transparency, influence, and accountability. These standards have requirements for landlords, which include:

- Consider customers' views when making decisions about service delivery.
- Provide customers with information about services so they can understand, use, and hold their landlord accountable.
- Collect and share information to help customers effectively monitor their landlord's performance.

The Building Safety Act 2022

The government introduced the Building Safety Act 2022 following the Grenfell Tower fire. The Act acts as a regulatory system for managing high-rise residential buildings that are 7 storeys or more, or over 18 metres high, and defines two major risks; the spread of fire and structural failure.

Gentoo is responsible for 25 high-rise residential buildings in Sunderland. Customers living in these buildings have more say on how their building and homes are kept safe under the act. They are also able to raise concerns to nominated people who are required to listen to them.

We have a separate engagement strategy specifically for building safety. We call this our Customer Engagement Strategy for Building Safety in high-rise residential buildings.



Who is impacted by this strategy?

Our strategy impacts different groups, including customers, leaseholders, shared owners, and freeholders, and includes those customers who live outside of the city.

We also recognise that residents who own or rent privately in social housing areas need a voice, as our services can impact their lives.

Purpose

The purpose of our strategy is to make it easier and more meaningful for our customers to connect with us. A key enabler in building stronger relationships and helping to improve our services.

We want our customers to be involved in three key areas:

1

Working together to improve services:

Customers will be invited to share their thoughts and ideas. By listening to customers' ideas and needs, we can improve our services and make them better suited to what customers want.

2

Reviewing our performance and making sure we deliver:

We want customers to feel comfortable telling us when something is not working. Customer feedback on what we do well and where we can improve will help us stay on track and provide the best service possible.

3

Influencing decisions at local and national levels:

Customers will have the opportunity to influence important decisions that impact them and their communities. Whether taking part in discussions or giving feedback on policies, customers will ensure their voices are heard.

By following this strategy, we aim to create a culture of working together, openness, and careful listening. Our customers will not just receive services they will shape and improve them. Our aim is to be a landlord that puts customers first, making engagement a natural part of how we achieve our shared goals:

- **A housing provider that listens and sorts things out**
- **Embracing modern technology and data**
- **Helping our communities to thrive**
- **Achieving growth through partnerships and innovation**
- **A professional, caring, great place to work**





Our customer engagement framework

The framework is designed to provide customers with different ways to connect with and influence Gentoo. This could be by staying informed or taking part in decision-making. It recognises that every customer has different needs and expectations from their landlord, and these needs may change over time.

Informing



We provide customers with information about our policies, events, and services that may impact them.

- Website and social media
- Publications – policies/reports
- E-newsletters
- Performance information
- Daily communication

Insight



Opportunities to share opinions on service delivery, policies, and procedures.

- High-rise engagement strategies
- Targeted/generic surveys
- Community events
- Complaints and compliments
- Your Gentoo Voice (our online engagement platform)

Involving



Opportunities to help make decisions and shape how services are designed and delivered, both locally and strategically.

- Customer and Community Voice meeting
- Building Safety Group
- Community grants
- Estate walkabouts
- Scrutiny (Deep Dives & Task and Finish)

Governance*



The framework at the heart of a successful housing association. It sets out the way decisions are made and how rules should be followed to make sure we act compliantly, fairly and in the best interest of customers.

- Customer Committee
- Group Board

The framework is divided into four sections to represent the different ways customers can engage with Gentoo.

Informing

We provide customers with information about our policies, services, and events that may impact or interest them. The aim of these activities is to ensure customers have the information needed to understand and compare our services. This information allows customers to access services, form opinions about what we offer and share their views to influence how we deliver services.

Involving

These opportunities allow individuals to influence decision-making and service design at both local and strategic levels. They are suited for customers who wish to play a more active role in shaping decisions, whether by joining one of our specialist groups, or getting involved in local community activities. These opportunities require a greater time commitment than our insight-based options. Customers will have the chance to engage with staff and managers to scrutinise services and provide recommendations for service improvements, which will be presented to our Customer Committee and Group Board.

Insight

These are opportunities for customers to express their opinions on service delivery, neighbourhood issues, policies, and procedures. This can be done through surveys, polls, estate walkabouts, community events, or through complaints and compliments.

These opportunities make it easier for customers to provide feedback. They may be local (such as at community events or estate activities) or more strategic (through surveys and meetings). Feedback gathered will be shared with our customers and colleagues to help shape service delivery, policies, and procedures. It also allows us to demonstrate that we listen and act (you said, we did)

Governance

These opportunities give customers a chance to participate in the governance of Gentoo, actively shaping decisions on service delivery based on feedback, scrutiny, performance, and best practices. These opportunities are designed for customers who are willing to dedicate a considerable amount of time and effort to engage directly with Gentoo.

Our opportunities

We provide various ways for customers to get involved and provide feedback sharing their views. These include:

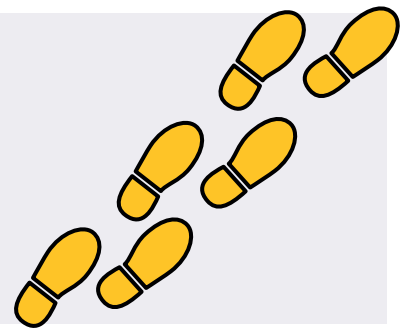
Specific/Generic surveys

We regularly ask customers to complete surveys to measure the level of service we have delivered or to gather feedback on specific service areas to identify potential improvements.



Neighbourhood Walks

Customers have the opportunity to join a walkabout to identify issues around the estate with local partners. Information about the location, date, and time of these walkabouts can be found on our website.



Local community events

Welcoming and informative, we use community events to give customers the chance to learn about the various support we offer and how they can get involved in shaping our services.

Community drop-in sessions

We offer customers the opportunity to drop in and speak with colleagues about any issues they may be experiencing.



Local and corporate consultations

We provide consultations when needed, particularly for modernisation projects, such as when customers need to make a choice (e.g. bathroom or kitchen selection) or when changes are planned for an estate (e.g. building more homes) or a significant management change.

Customer and Local Community Voice meetings

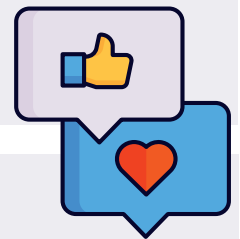
Customers can meet with colleagues from their local housing teams to discuss concerns, learn about new services, and suggest ways to improve local communities.

Building Safety Customer Group

A group exclusively for customers living in high-rise residential buildings. The group discusses and consults on all matters affecting building safety.

Task and Finish Groups

These one-off projects seek feedback from customers regarding services which will directly impact them.



Deep Dives

We conduct in-depth reviews where customers are asked to make recommendations to improve service delivery.

Your Gentoo Voice

An online engagement platform where customers can provide feedback on different services at their convenience. For more information, visit Your Gentoo Voice.

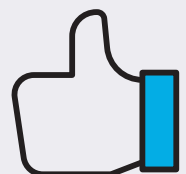


Customer Committee

Every two months, a group of customers meets to shape how we deliver services and review performance. They provide direct feedback to the Group Board.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's)

Customers provide feedback on a quarterly basis, with the information used to measure the landlord's performance over a yearly period.



Local community grant applications

Customers collectively award community grants to groups that have submitted applications.

Our objectives

Improving customer experience:

We will gather feedback on our services to better understand customer needs, improve service quality, and address issues quickly, ensuring we serve our customers and communities more effectively.

Strengthening trust and accountability:

We will encourage consistent and meaningful engagement to build trust with our customers, ensuring accountability in decision-making and maintaining open communication. This approach will help address concerns, resolve issues, and strengthen positive relationships.

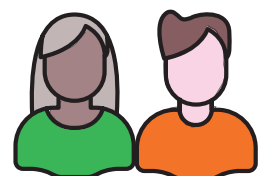


Following compliance and regulation:

We will demonstrate our commitment to strengthening regulations around the 'Customer Voice' by listening to customer feedback and acting on it, to ensure we meet the Consumer Standards. We will make it easy for customers to get involved and work to understand the views of those who rarely contact us or use our services.

Strengthening our local communities:

We will actively engage with our customers and local community partners to foster a sense of belonging and unity among residents. We will encourage customer participation in community activities and use partnerships developed across the city to strengthen relationships and consult with the wider community to seek feedback about our services.

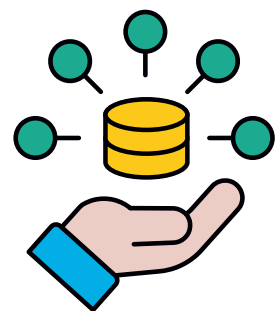


Aiding customers in difficult circumstances:

We will use insights to support our most at-risk customers as Gentoo serves a diverse population, including groups with vulnerabilities. We recognise that engagement is key to understanding and addressing their individual needs, providing appropriate support, and ensuring their voices are heard.

Improving and making the most of data collection:

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and social inclusion, ensuring all customers have easy access to our services. Moving forward, we will refresh the data we collect and record on our customers and households to enhance support, improve involvement opportunities, and drive positive service improvements in line with the Consumer Standards.



Growing our involved customer base and opportunities for involvement:

We are fortunate to have engaged customers on our Board and Committees. Our goal is to expand our network of involved customers, making sure we hear from a wide range of groups who we can rely on to help us fulfil our commitments. Recognising that time is valuable, we will make it easy for customers to engage with us and use insights from these interactions to improve services and increase satisfaction across all areas. We also aim to increase the range of opportunities for customer involvement, consistently offering new ways for customers to participate.

Monitoring and reporting

Progress on the delivery and implementation of this strategy will be regularly reviewed and reported to the Customer Committee, Gentoo Executive Team, and Board.

Updates will also be shared publicly through Gentoo's website and communication channels, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Measuring success

We will evaluate the impact of this strategy through a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures, including:

Annual Impact Report:

A comprehensive report highlighting how customer feedback has directly influenced service improvements.

Improved Tenant Satisfaction:

A measurable increase in overall satisfaction scores from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Real-Time Feedback:

Continuous listening and action based on insights from real-time surveys sent to customers following their interactions with Gentoo services.

Consumer Standards in action

This document provides a detailed mapping of the four Consumer Standards to Gentoo's Customer Engagement Strategy 2025–2027. It also includes the five strategic commitments that guide the overall approach.

Consumer Standard	How it aligns with Gentoo's Strategy	Supporting activities and opportunities	Strategic objectives supported
1. Neighbourhood and Community Standard Ensuring tenants live in safe, well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes	Gentoo promotes community safety, estate upkeep, and local partnerships through direct customer involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate walkabouts • Community events • Community drop-in sessions • Customer and Community Voice meetings • Community Grant applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening communities • Improving customer experience
2. Safety and Quality Standard Ensuring homes are safe and of good quality	Customers are engaged in safety discussions and service reviews to ensure high standards in housing quality and compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Safety Customer Group • Consultations (e.g. modernisation projects) • Deep Dives • Task & Finish Groups • Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving customer experience • Aiding customers in difficult circumstances • Follow compliance and regulation
3. Tenancy Standard Fair allocation, management, and ending of tenancies	Gentoo involves customers in shaping tenancy-related services and policies, ensuring fairness and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys on tenancy experience • Consultations on policy changes • Task & Finish Groups • Customer Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving customer experience • Strengthening trust and accountability
4. Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard Ensuring openness, fairness, and tenant influence	Transparency and influence are embedded across all engagement levels, from informing to governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Gentoo Voice • Performance information • Customer Committee • Group Board • Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) • E-Newsletters, Website, social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening trust and accountability • Follow compliance and regulation • Growing our involved customer base

We aim to be open and accountable and publish our performance on our website so our customers can understand how we are performing and hold us to account. For more information visit **www.gentoogroup.com/performance**

If you have any questions relating to anything in the report, please email **customerinvolvement@gentoogroup.com**