

Customer Annual Report 2022 - 23

If you or someone you know would like this information in another language or format, please contact us by emailing **communications@gentoogroup.com** or calling **0191 525 5000**.

Welcome from our involved customers

We are some of Gentoo's involved customers and we're delighted to introduce your 2022 - 23 Customer Annual Report.

This year's customer annual report is an opportunity to reflect on the last year and provide you with some important messages and an overview of the Group's performance.

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves. We are all Gentoo customers from across the City of Sunderland and we are committed to helping our local communities to thrive.

Our role is to create opportunities for customers to engage with Gentoo, at all levels. We start conversations, enable discussions, and we ask the big questions. We share insight with partners and policy makers and we are empowered to speak on a national stage, regularly contributing to national policy research discussions.

The more customers get involved in developing, reviewing and shaping services, the greater impact it will have.

We help Gentoo to understand the key challenges that are being faced by customers and together we look to solve problems and create opportunities to build strong neighbourhoods and communities.

We also hold the Group to account by identifying and asking for in-depth scrutiny of policies and procedures and we always strive to make things better, wherever we can.

It is rewarding to manage the Aspire Grant Programme on behalf of Gentoo. Together we assess applications and award grants of up to £500 to various local voluntary groups every year.

The projects are varied, and themes can include environmental matters, promotion of health and well-being and tackling unemployment. All successful Aspire grant projects have a core purpose – to enable local people to improve their communities.

In the next 12 months, we are looking forward to ensuring our voices are heard by working alongside the newly appointed Customer Committee. The newly formed committee will provide Gentoo's Board with assurance that the consumer standards are being met, value for money is being achieved and excellent services are being delivered to Gentoo households.

The new consumer standards will set expectations that landlords, including Gentoo, will have to meet. The regulator will measure landlord performance against these standards.

We hope you enjoy reading the report.

"The more customers get involved in developing, reviewing and shaping services, the greater impact it will have."

We're committed to supporting customers

The cost of living has continued to rise over the last 12 months. We know people are struggling to cover the cost of basic essentials.

Earlier this year, the government announced a support package to help low-income households which includes:

- **£301 cost of living payment for those on eligible benefits**
(paid in Spring 2023)
- **£150 disability payment**
(paid in Summer 2023)
- **£300 cost of living payment for those on eligible benefits**
(due to be paid in Autumn 2023)
- **£300 disability payment**
(due to be paid in Winter 2023)
- **£299 cost of living payment for those on eligible benefits**
(due to be paid in Spring 2024)

Anti-social behaviour

We take all reports of anti-social behaviour seriously. After receiving a report, we investigate and gather evidence to support or disprove a claim.

Our Community Safety Officers work closely with agencies and partnerships, like the police, Sunderland City Council, Wearside Women in Need, ManKind, and the Safer Sunderland Partnership. This allows us to ensure we work collaboratively and everyone feels safe and secure in our neighbourhoods.

To report anti-social behaviour, call us on **0191 525 5000** and select option 4 or **0800 028 4445** or visit your local office.

Money Matters Team

Gentoo's Money Matters Team work with a wide range of partners to offer practical tips, advice and information to help you make the most of your money.

This includes benefit checks, claims and appeals support, debt advice, energy saving and fuel switching advice. Last year, the team helped 977 customers claim £1,578,091 in unclaimed benefits and a further 5,920 to utilise water discount schemes, with more than £760,000 in discounts being claimed.

The DWP are replacing legacy benefits with Universal Credit. If you need support moving to Universal Credit, our Money Matters Team can help. You can contact them using the contact details listed to the right.

The service is not just for those in financial difficulty, the team also support those who have recently had a change in circumstances and may need guidance on how to move forward.

If you find yourself in financial difficulty, our crisis fund can offer one-off payments that you do not have to pay back to help support you in emergency situations.

If you would like to speak to a specialist Money Matters advisor about your finances, you can do so confidentially, by calling **0300 123 2004**, or alternatively, email **moneymatters@gentoogroup.com**

How we are performing

We have developed a clear and concise dashboard to demonstrate our performance as a landlord, which was done working with our customers. The data shows how we performed for the 2022 - 23 financial year, compared to the previous year.

Measures	2021 - 22	2022 - 23
Current rent arrears including housing benefit recovery	£2.5m	£2.3m
Average time to re-let a property	70.13 days	69.41 days
£ invested to customers' homes through planned investment work	£39.1m	£42m
Number of properties improved through planned investment work	11,000	7,663
Overall satisfaction with planned improvement work	97%	93%
Number of repairs and safety inspections	159,621	160,878
Repairs completed right first time	97.8%	98%
Number of formal complaints received	466 (stage 1)	523 (stage 1 and 2)

How we spend your rent

The Regulator of Social Housing grades us as 'G1' for governance. We have been graded the highest rating possible because we are well governed, well run and financially viable.

- Investment Plan
£43.3m
- Planned Maintenance
£7.2m
- Interest payments
£22.8m
- Service Charge costs
£3.6m
- Repairs and Maintenance
£36.3m
- Management and running costs
£24.3m

Engagement opportunities

Customers are at the heart of our decision making. We use their feedback to help shape the delivery of our services, that's why we have a range of engagement opportunities available for customers and leaseholders.

Customer Committee

Earlier this year we announced we were creating a brand-new Customer Committee to ensure customers are at the forefront of decision making and service improvements.

The six successful candidates will work directly with the Group Board and Tenant and Community Voice Chairs to shape how the organisation delivers services across Sunderland. The newly appointed committee will attend their first Customer Committee meeting on 22 November 2023.

Scrutiny Group

The Scrutiny Group gives customers the opportunity to review and challenge Gentoo's services, before reporting their findings and suggesting recommendations of areas for improvement.

Scrutiny members have the opportunity to choose which scrutiny topics they would like to be involved with. There are no requirements for members to get involved with every scrutiny topic.

The type of topics the group gives feedback on include:

- **business plans**
- **operational performance**
- **how we engage with customers**
- **timely topics e.g. damp and mould**
- **policies and procedures**

Tenant and Community Voice Group Meetings

Tenant and Community Voice (TCV) groups are a forum that help us make business decisions and improve our services. The meetings now take place quarterly at our offices or within the local community with the next meetings scheduled to take place at the beginning of December.

The groups work together to:

- **give feedback on changes to our services**
- **decide how to spend the £5,000 local area budget**
- **identify what needs improving in the local area**
- **approve Aspire grant applications**

We have a TCV for each of the five areas of the city as well as a group to discuss building safety.

The Chairs of the above mentioned groups also meet regularly with our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to discuss current issues affecting customers.

Task and Finish Groups

The Task and Finish Groups are made up of customers who meet to discuss specific topics. During the meeting, the group have informal discussions surrounding one specific topic. Members in the group influence what, when and how decisions are made. The group has previously met to discuss:

- **affordable development properties**
- **lettable standards**
- **telephone system changes**
- **last year's Tenant Annual Report**

Your Gentoo Voice is the Group's online portal that allows customers and leaseholders to take part in online forums, surveys and polls.

The online portal gives you the opportunity to share your views and give us feedback on projects we are working on. Your feedback and opinions help us to make decisions.

To register for Your Gentoo Voice, visit **www.gentoogroup.com/YGV**

If you would like to get involved, or find out more about the engagement opportunities available, please email the Customer Voice Team on **feedback@gentoogroup.com**

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Earlier this year, the Regulator of Social Housing introduced 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The results of Tenant Satisfaction Measures will help us to improve our services for customers.

The measures are split into two parts:

- 10 performance measures that we will collect through management performance information
- 12 customer perception survey measures that will be collected through surveying customers directly

The TSMs cover the following key areas:

- overall satisfaction
- keeping properties in good order
- maintaining building safety
- safety checks
- respectful and helpful engagement
- effective handling of complaints/ASB
- responsible neighbourhood management

We are working with IFF Research to gather feedback from our customers through surveys to review the service we provide. IFF Research will contact you by either:

- email from **myopinions@iffresearch.com**
- reminder email from **myopinions@iffresearch-dm.com**
- phone call from **0203 148 7645**

If you do not want to participate, just let the surveyor know and you will not receive any further calls.

Social impact summary

Each year, we create added value from our everyday activities and by working with our partners and principal contractors.

In 2022 - 23 we generated an overall social value of **£6,834,316** of which **£356,568** was generated through working with our partners and principal contractors.

This allowed us to:

- Take **200** families to the Christmas pantomime
- Deliver Christmas gifts to **1,000** customers
- Support **188** customers with domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour cases
- Deliver **5,000** gifts to those in need at Easter
- Deliver Christmas dinners to **180** customers
- Help customers save **£56,000** on food bills thanks to The Bread and Butter Thing in partnership with RE:GEN Group

You Said, We Did

Making it easier for customers to report repairs

Earlier this year, we asked customers if they would be happy for us to complete external repairs to their property while they weren't home. Of those contacted, 96% were happy to go ahead with the change.

It now means that customers aren't restricted and don't have to take time off work for an appointment. It also allows the Group to offer a more efficient repairs service, as jobs can be completed as and when materials become available.

Typical repairs that can be completed while customers aren't at home include:

- **fencing**
- **roofing**
- **brickwork**
- **guttering**

We know this option isn't suitable for everyone and customers can still request an appointment for the work to be completed if that's what works best for them.

Decoration packs

Customers told us that the decoration vouchers we give people following any major work to their property could be improved. It could be difficult to visit a store, pick the products they needed, and then get them home.

We have introduced new decorating packs that are better value for money and offer more products and a wider range. Products can also be ordered online or by phone and delivered to customers' homes for free.

We have also introduced a disturbance allowance, which is an additional payment when we carry out a full electrical re-wire, new kitchen or new bathroom.

Our approach to tackling damp and mould

It's important to us that we provide our customers with safe and decent homes. So, we contacted all our customers to ask if they had any issues with damp or mould in their homes.

To ensure we provide the necessary support, we set up a specialist team to deal with concerns as soon as possible, set up a dedicated phone line and recruited additional resource to help prevent and treat condensation, damp and mould in our customers' homes.

Relevant colleagues and managers completed the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Damp and Mould training.

We have developed a new Damp and Mould Policy which is aligned with the Housing Ombudsman's report and Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) guidance.

We also held a Damp and Mould Scrutiny Group. The Scrutiny Group told us that customers felt that there was no follow up following a damp and mould complaint and we didn't check back in to make sure the issues were resolved.

We have now implemented a Case Management Team to manage the damp and mould cases. Each case will be allocated a case handler who will complete follow up calls to check remedial work has resolved any issues.

We added additional information about damp, mould and condensation on our website. It includes advice about how to clean and clear mould and how to reduce condensation. Find out more at **www.gentoogroup.com/damp**

Anti-social behaviour

Customers in Houghton and Easington Lane reported their health and safety concerns about anti-social behaviour.

On Kingsway Street, vehicles were driving over a grassed area and onto a public footpath. At the Brickgarth, people were driving quadbikes and motorbikes onto a local field. We installed fencing and boulders to stop vehicles accessing the grassed area and field.

Investing in your homes

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

Last year, we invested £42 million worth of investment work to around 7,000 properties.

This included:

- **£250,000**
invested in installing new thermal efficient external doors
- **£8,684,800**
invested in installing new double-glazed windows
- **£246,268**
invested in topping up loft insulation
- **£1,510,228**
invested in carrying out a whole house retrofits including external wall and flat roof insulation
- **£980,200**
invested in carrying out external decoration
- **£5,975,500**
invested in internal modernisation work
- **£2,732,400**
invested in installing new boilers
- Our 22/23 investment work collectively reduced our carbon emissions by more than **6,000 tCO₂**

We would love to hear what you thought about this report.

To be in with a chance of winning a One4all voucher, please take a few moments to fill in a short feedback survey at: **www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CAR2023**
or scan the QR code



Gentoo Group Limited is a charitable community benefit society, registration number 7302