

# Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023–2024



## Board and Member Responsible for Complaints Response

The Board and Member Responsible for Complaints acknowledge the report and the self-assessment and the improvements that will continue to enhance complaint handling for our customers. The report provides assurance that we are listening, care, take accountability and act.

The report is welcomed and builds on the regular reporting and scrutiny that takes place in every Customer Committee and Board meeting. It should also be acknowledged that the visit by the Housing Ombudsman, in February 2024, attended by our Customers and the Board also demonstrates the level of importance Gentoo put on customer engagement and complaints, compliance and transparency.

The report reflects strong compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and how the learning throughout the year has been used to improve complaint handling and greater collaboration across the organisation. Of note is the shift of how service requests are managed, how the learning has been shared across the organisation, the communications and training that has taken place and is part of the improvement plan.

We note the areas and numbers of complaints which we are seeking to reduce. However, we also welcome support to enable customers to complain so that they are heard and we can take action. The areas for learning are noted and we have seen significant efforts in developing complaint handling and how the lessons learned are being used as improvement actions. We are proud that our Customer Committee and involved customers have worked with us to attend deep dive sessions to look at complaints, the self-assessment, the learning, risks and opportunities. Additionally, the report and actions have been discussed at length with our Member Responsible for Complaints.

On behalf of Gentoo Group Board, we are assured by the plan and note that the self-assessment represents the progress made throughout the year and the transparency in the issues, improvements and risks. We welcome the involvement of our Customer Committee in the scrutiny that has taken place on complaints which provides additional assurance. The plan is encouraging and provides a clear way forward to enhance the customer experience and service for our customers. The Board and Member Responsible for Complaints look forward to the continued focus and discussion and to see the improvements made for our customers.



Morven Smith  
Member Responsible for  
Complaints

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Morven Smith'.



Emily Cox MBE  
Group Chair

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# Introduction

Complaints are very important to us. They help us to learn when things go wrong and to improve our services. If something does go wrong, we will apologise, investigate what happened and work with the customer to make it right.

At Gentoo we understand that we must improve on how we listen and respond to customer complaints. It is only through improving how we receive and act on feedback that we will improve customer satisfaction and the overall customer experience.

Gentoo is committed to developing a positive complaint handling culture and to learning from the insight gained through effective complaint resolution. The aim of this report is to review our performance for complaint handling during 2023-24 and outline the ways in which we will improve by:

- Learning from any mistakes so that we can continually improve customer experience and outcomes
- Encouraging a culture of feedback, collaboration and insight to support service improvement, evaluating and improving effectiveness
- Being transparent about the complaints we receive and what has been done as a result
- Demonstrating our annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code



## Annual self-assessment for 2024-25

Gentoo's self-assessment against the new statutory Complaint Handling Code has been reviewed by our involved customers as part of a deep dive scrutiny exercise into complaints. The self-assessment has also been reviewed and approved by the Customer Committee and the Member Responsible for Complaints.

The self-assessment is available on our website.

## Analysis of Complaint Handling Performance in 2023-24

This table shows a breakdown of complaints received in 2023/24 as well as complaints that were extended with customer agreement.

Stage 1	345
Complaints extended (in agreement with customer)	52 (15%)
All stage 1 complaints handled within timescale	80%
Stage 2	107
Complaints extended (in agreement with customer)	14 (13%)
All stage 2 complaints handled within timescale	98.1%

The figures above demonstrate the need at stage 1 for increased customer communication and action taken to gain a resolution for the customer.

As an organisation Gentoo is working to improve the culture of accountability using customer feedback and the insight captured. The identified gaps above are part of our service improvement plan.

Key complaint themes throughout the last financial year have centred around roofing repairs, in particular timescales to have work completed, damp and mould where the cause of the issue had not been identified first time and resulting in repeated appointments.

## Types of complaints refused

Gentoo's complaints and compliments policy sets out the exclusion criteria for complaints which may be refused. Gentoo provides a copy of the complaints policy to customers when a stage 1 complaint is acknowledged.

If a complaint is not accepted, the customer will be given an explanation setting out the reasons why.

In Q3 of 2023-2024, Gentoo began recording refused complaints in line with the proposed Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

14 complaints were refused since October 2023 and reasons include:

- Non-Gentoo customers raising concerns - individuals were signposted to alternative services
- Gentoo customers had exhausted the complaints procedure - customers were advised to seek assistance from The Housing Ombudsman Service

## Housing Ombudsman determinations 2023-24

Gentoo received 10 Housing Ombudsman determinations in 2023-24.

There were 4 findings of maladministration summarised as follows:

- 5 findings of service failure
- 4 cases where there were no findings of maladministration or service failure.
- 1 case of severe maladministration

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

Upon receipt of a determination, Gentoo schedules a meeting with the relevant Heads of Service to ensure the complaint and determination can be discussed thoroughly, with any actions mutually agreed and allocated to a responsible Head of Service to implement. This ensures a joint approach to learning effectively from complaints and Housing Ombudsman determinations. With the aim to deliver noticeable improvements in service for our customers.

## Key learnings taken from determinations include:

- Undertaking a review of all warning and vulnerability indicators to ensure that internal records are up to date and to prevent any protected characteristics being outdated on customer records. This was carried out by one of our Head of Neighbourhoods in February 2024.
- Implemented a Damp and Mould Case Management Team to ensure there is a thorough process for any customer reports of Damp and Mould, as well as aftercare to prevent reoccurring issues for customers.

## Landlord Compliance Report

In October 2023, Gentoo was one of 90 landlords issued with a Landlord Compliance Report for determinations received during 2022-23 by the Housing Ombudsman.

Landlord Compliance Reports were issued to all providers with a maladministration rate above 50%. The National Maladministration Rate is 55%. Gentoo's maladministration rate was calculated at 64%. A Performance Improvement Plan was developed in response and a number of improvements have been implemented as detailed below.



## Improvements made in 2023-24

As a result of learning a number of changes were made to improve complaint handling and the customer experience during 2023/24:

- The Customer Voice Team undertook training with a sector specialist in preparation for the new Consumer Standards and statutory Complaint Handling Code.
- At Board recommendation for a new Customer Committee as part of our Governance framework was established. One of the terms of reference is to provide scrutiny of complaint handling and learning. Complaints, lessons learned, and improvements are discussed at all committee meetings and reported into the Board.
- A review of all complaint letter templates was undertaken to ensure that Housing Ombudsman contact details are included in all correspondence. This was completed during October / November 2023 as part of the consultation on the Housing Ombudsman Code exercise with our customers.
- Our Customer Committee worked with us to review our approach to Engagement and Scrutiny. We have enhanced the approach to allow more customers to take part and to increase the number of scrutiny exercises undertaken. This has included scrutiny of key policies such as the compensation policy, the allocations policy and the complaints and compliments policy as well as a deep dive on complaint
- A 'Meet the Ombudsman' event was held at Gentoo offices and online, for customers and Board members. Attendees heard directly about the services available from the Housing Ombudsman service.
- The Customer Voice Team amended their approach to redress specifically compensation offers, ensuring that service failures are identified and redressed as early as possible.
- Learning from and reporting on complaints, sharing insight and giving clear communication to colleagues helped them to 'own and fix' service requests problems swiftly, making the distinction between service requests and complaints clearer.



- We meet with Service teams to review learning and insights, this included holding 'Learning Lab' sessions during February 2024 to review Q3 insight.
- In the case of receiving an Ombudsman determination, a detailed review of the case review is prioritised with senior managers from across the business to ensure lessons are learned.
- Reporting was also improved in external communications with customers and stakeholders by sharing 'you said, we did' examples and publishing quarterly insight reports online and on social media. Giving customers more awareness on how we are taking their valuable feedback and turning their insight into action.



## Lessons learnt from complaints

The aim is to have a culture of continuous improvement, keeping the customer at the heart of what we do. The Customer Voice Team identified that improvements were required to logging day-to-day job tickets. The team identified that it would be beneficial to include photographs for record keeping purposes and ensure feedback is offered should the customer require any further information. The recommendations are currently being rolled out with trade operatives via 'Toolbox Talks', team meetings and 121 reviews with managers.

The Customer Voice Team also fed back that the guidance available on compensation did not offer enough assistance to support them in redressing Stage 1 complaints. Guidance is taken from The Housing Ombudsman Service and Gentoo's existing compensation policy. Gentoo is currently reviewing its compensation policy alongside involved customers.

Gentoo created a communication programme to promote the complaints process both internally and externally to customers and stakeholders. Gentoo co-designed a 'customer friendly' complaints leaflet with the support of involved customers and distributed these across the city, in local housing offices and added the information to sign-up packs and newsletters. A review of the website material was carried out along with consideration around processing complaints received on social media, to ensure a consistent approach.

Customers who have submitted a formal complaint which has been investigated by the Customer Voice Team are offered the opportunity to complete a 'satisfaction with complaint handling survey' following receipt of their Stage 1 response. The responses are reviewed monthly by Customer Voice Team Leaders and customers are contacted should they express dissatisfaction. The uptake for the survey is currently low and Gentoo are currently exploring other options to increase participation.

Additionally, customers who have completed the TSM survey are contacted to discuss their dissatisfaction in further detail. If they have not already exhausted the complaints process, they are offered the opportunity to do so.

Supported by learning, insight and triangulating our data into action we are running a pilot to reach out to our seldom heard customers. This involves holding complaints drop-in sessions in local community centres during daytime and evenings in addition to analysing the data to identify areas within our communities where we have low complaint numbers and those areas where we have high complaint numbers.



## Service Improvements made in 2023-24

Complaint feedback has influenced and improved the services provided to customers. As a result, several service improvements were implemented during 2023-24, such as:

### Damp and mould

Following customer feedback in October 2023, Gentoo introduced a new damp and mould case management process. The process involves triaging the severity of the damp and mould and a risk assessment undertaken in connection to the response to the severity. The individual case is overseen by a Case Coordinator who is required to carry out at least one aftercare check with the customer once treatment and/or remedial work has been completed.

Additionally, a specialised Damp and Mould Team was set up which includes a Damp and Mould Repairs Manager, a Damp and Mould Supervisor, two case coordinators and three specialised inspectors who focus on damp and mould inspection only. A joint review with Repairs and Maintenance Team, Customer Voice Team and customers will take place during 2024 -2025 to establish the impact and effectiveness of the new team.

Changes were also made to communications channels to make it easier for customers to report cases of Damp and Mould. The new process and procedure were co-designed with Gentoo's involved customers.

Repairs timescales have been a key theme of complaints in 2023-24. In October 2023, a comprehensive view of services was undertaken, and 20 extra staff members were appointed to support day-to-day repairs.

Repair Managers and Repair Supervisors were moved from a 'trade based' approach to an 'area' approach to offer a consistent personal service for customers, ensuring that one supervisor and one manager oversees a geographical area rather than their allocated trade.

Outstanding repairs were reduced by approximately 4,000 jobs by applying an area-based approach for non-urgent repairs.

The team reduced the average repair response time from 40 days to approximately 17 days by the end of the financial year.

Additional agency staff were appointed to support roofing repairs are undertaken within the 28-day timescales as stated in the repairs policy.

The process for logging follow on work from a handheld device was also reviewed to ensure consistency.

## Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Gentoo's TSM score for annual satisfaction is currently 40% with complaint handling.

To further understand the low TSM satisfaction scores, Gentoo has been to analysing customer feedback in more detail.

Gentoo carried out engagement activity around complaint handling on the engagement platform 'Your Gentoo Voice'. Customers were asked for feedback on how they had submitted a complaint, how easy it was to make a complaint, who dealt with their complaint and the subject of their complaint.

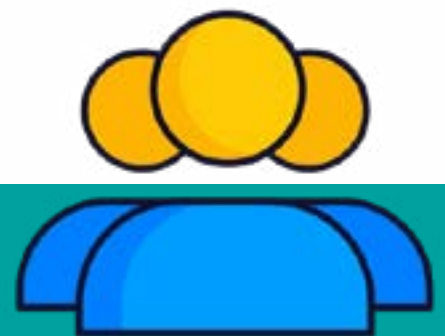
Customer feedback demonstrated that although customers felt it was easy to make a complaint to Gentoo, more clarity was needed when issues were handled as a service request. A new system for recording service requests has been introduced to ensure issues are followed up to improve customer satisfaction.

## Member Responsible for Complaints

In April 2024, Gentoo appointed a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

The MRC will ensure that complaint handling drives service improvement for customers and learning and business improvement for the organisation.

They will champion 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 Service Improvement Plan for 2024-25

Priorities for the year ahead from what our customers are telling us, the learnings and the approach of continuous improvement for the past year. Key areas of focus are on the following themes which are ongoing although implemented in specific quarters:

- Data and insight
- Skills and training
- Early complaint resolution
- Knowing our customers
- Create a culture of learning and continuous improvement from complaints
- Working more collaboratively across the group to identify root causes and trends to enable solutions



The following plan summarises the key actions:  
Service Improvement plan 24/25

Priority area	Actions	By when
Data, Insight and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop a new reporting approach that is clearer using BI</li> <li>-Provide greater reporting to Senior Leaders to enhance collaboration and better outcomes for customers</li> <li>-Quarterly deep dives to take place with the Customer Voice Team and Member Responsible</li> <li>-Closer analysis of social media channels</li> </ul>	<p>Q1</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Governance and Process	All stage 1 complaints handled within timescale	Q1
Skills and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rollout digital and face to face training for colleagues on complaint handling</li> <li>- Provide enhanced customer care training to all colleagues</li> </ul>	<p>Q1</p> <p>Q3</p>
Insight and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use insight, together with TSM data and engagement to identify improvements</li> <li>-Research ombudsman reports, best practice to learn and enhance service</li> <li>-Senior Leader review and improvement sessions</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Quarterly</p>
Customer Engagement and Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Continue customer engagement and scrutiny into complaints</li> <li>-Pilot Complaint handling ‘drop-in sessions’ in our communities</li> <li>-Use insights and data to identify customers ‘seldom heard’ who may need support, taking action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for customers through effective scrutiny by customers of the delivery of Gentoo’s services.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q1</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Review of customer complaint letters regarding tone of voice and language</li> <li>-Review effectiveness with engaged customers</li> </ul>	<p>Q1</p> <p>Q3</p>
Service Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Continue to review effectiveness of damp and mould team</li> <li>-Continue to work with service functions reviewing complaints trends to improve service performance</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

[www.gentoogroup.com/complaints](http://www.gentoogroup.com/complaints)



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