

Annual Report

**21
22.**

Welcome

I am delighted to introduce Gentoo Group's Annual Report for 2021/22 to you.

I am really pleased to report another positive year of change, transformation, and improvement at the Group, alongside the organisation's recovery from the global pandemic.

This is my third annual report since I joined Gentoo as Chief Executive Officer in 2019 and what a three years it has been.

When I joined Gentoo in 2019, the organisation was faced with some tough challenges and a long road to recovery. The progress it has made over the last three years has been nothing short of phenomenal.

Regaining our G1 governance rating and driving significant improvements in the services we deliver for tenants is something everyone at the Group should be proud of.

However, three years later in 2022, we are facing a different set of extremely difficult challenges, and the kind that we have not seen for a generation.

Record high inflation, building materials shortages, a lack of skilled workers, the impacts of climate change on severe weather, and of course, the cost of living crisis.

We are deeply concerned about the worsening cost of living crisis and the impact of this on tenants and colleagues. We know the worst is likely still to come. But, I want people to know that Gentoo is ready to deal with these challenges head on, and we are committed to supporting tenants in every way we can.

The huge hikes in the cost of fuel and energy have hit us all hard, and we have already started to see the impact of this on people. We will keep working with tenants through our various support services, such as Money Matters, and signposting them to partner organisations where additional advice and support can be gained.

The massive increases in the cost of household energy have put even greater emphasis on our commitment to sustainability, climate change and the work we are doing to reduce tenants' energy bills. We are improving the energy efficiency of our existing homes, and building new rented homes that are very energy efficient.

We have seen the first of our new affordable house type range delivered in Sunderland as part of 137 new affordable homes that have been completed this past year. The new homes are stunning and the feedback from tenants so far has been fantastic. All the new homes across our Affordable Homes Programme have an EPC rating of A, with energy bills estimated to be just over £1 per day.

Nigel Wilson
Chief Executive Officer

In the current climate, this is of huge benefit to tenants who are moving into these new homes.

Our commitment to sustainability and decarbonisation is also demonstrated by the target we have set to get all of our properties up to an EPC rating of C by 2030. We have made a great start in achieving this, with hundreds of properties benefitting from energy efficiency work as part of a successful bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund this past year.

The impact of climate change has been clear as ever over the past year, with severe weather and storm damage like we have never seen before in Sunderland. We had thousands of properties with significant damage, mainly to roofs, gable ends, walls and fences. We will be better prepared to deal with such severe weather if it hits us again in the future, but it is not something we would prefer to pay for every year, as the estimated cost to repair the storm damage is more than £2 million.

Despite increasing demand for our services from tenants, our performance has been good. Our rent collection continues to be solid, and I am pleased to see such an improvement in the number of repairs we are getting right for tenants on a first time basis. Despite a good year of performance, I know we need to do, and can do, better. Underpinning our good performance for tenants is our finances, and we remain in a financially strong position.

The City of Sunderland has continued its strong recovery from the pandemic and it is brilliant to see the vast array of positive change happening right across the city. The city council is leading a fantastic regeneration programme to transform the former Vaux site and the new City Hall has been a welcome second addition to the site. It is exciting to see the progress being made in that area of the city and we look forward to watching further progress from the

window in our new housing office in the City Hall itself. We are proud to be joining other key city partners in the building to create a civic hub under one roof, and we know that it will create a better all-around service and experience for residents.

I have been really pleased to see the Sunderland Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Alliance come to fruition in the past year. Voluntary and community groups carry out a huge amount of important front line work on Wearside, as we saw so well during the pandemic, and it is important we have the appropriate framework in place to support this work. In partnership with Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group, we are proud to be funding this project. Gentoo is Sunderland through and through and over the past few years in particular, it has been brilliant to see how everyone in the city has pulled together. Partnerships are so vital to the city's future prosperity and I look forward to working closely with key partners to help the city realise its huge potential.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our stakeholders and partners for their support and valuable contribution over this past year, it is greatly appreciated.

This will be Keith Loraine's last annual report as Chair as he hands over the Chair role to Emily Cox. I want to pay a personal tribute to Keith for all his work and support over the last 6 years. We are in the position today thanks in no small part to his dedication, commitment and passion for tenants. He has lead the organisation out of some dark places to a positive clear space able to support the City of Sunderland and our tenants wholeheartedly. Emily will be a great successor and we all wish her well for her 3 years in the role of Chair.

Chair's foreword

I am delighted to provide a brief foreword to Gentoo Group's Annual Report for 2021/22 - my last as Group Chair before I stand down at the AGM in September.

The past year has thrown still more and varied challenges our way, though, I'm very pleased that it now appears we are returning to a semblance of normality after the disruption and trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I'd like to thank colleagues across the Group in helping to steer us through the difficulties of the past two years.

Like many other business sectors, we are currently operating in an extraordinarily unpredictable, unstable, economic and political environment, which creates pressures and uncertainty in delivering our strategic objectives. During the past year, however, we have performed strongly against the backdrop of soaring inflation, escalation in the cost of living, rising cost of building materials, and labour shortages in construction. This has had a significant impact on the cost of our reinvestment programmes and the delivery of our new build construction programmes for rent and sale.

Nevertheless, we remain in a strong position to retain our focus on the delivery

of high-quality services to meet the needs of our tenants across all aspects of property, building safety and tenancy management.

Over the past 12 months we have continued to implement further positive changes and improvements across a wide range of our business activities. We have an extremely strong Group Board in place, comprising skilled non-executive directors who understand and care about our business and the people we serve.

Our Executive Leadership Team is ably led by our CEO Nigel Wilson who is professional, highly skilled and energetic. Nigel and his team work hard to deliver the very best for tenants and our hard-working colleagues.

Since this is my 'valedictory' I thought it an appropriate point at which to express a couple of observations regarding the huge importance of a thriving and continuing housing association sector. I hope government policy advisers never lose sight of the importance of a viable affordable rented housing market in the UK. It remains a fundamental cornerstone in our social fabric - providing quality homes for millions of people, offering both long term housing solutions, and stepping stone opportunities to those wishing to buy their own home.

In the main housing associations do a magnificent job - professionally managed, well regulated and funded with a uniquely successful combination of public and

private finance to deliver high quality homes. We should seek to protect those assets for future generations of renters - it makes little sense to sell rented homes to aspiring owners through Right to Buy who may have other purchase options available to them.

Six years ago Gentoo Group learned salutary lessons regarding the importance of ensuring that high quality tenant services remained our key priority. Under previous leadership our focus had become diverted from our core business, to other costly fringe activities. This must remain a priority across our sector. We have recently seen isolated, though high profile

even higher ground in the years ahead. Emily has first class credentials for this role and shares my passion and optimism for the organisation's future.

Finally - Gentoo is one of the key business institutions in the City of Sunderland working in close collaboration with Sunderland City Council. I was born and bred in Sunderland - my life was shaped here, and I have a massive affinity for the city. I want residents of Sunderland to enjoy living in Gentoo properties - we will always do our very best to fulfil our side of the bargain.

I want residents of Sunderland to enjoy living in Gentoo properties - we will always do our very best to fulfil our side of the bargain.

cases, of poorly managed and maintained homes in the UK. I am sure this will be a key priority for housing associations and our sector bodies in the years ahead, as we put tenants interests front and foremost.

Thankfully we recovered our position as a G1 organisation relatively quickly and now have excellent governance arrangements in place. I would like to thank my hard working, talented Board Member colleagues who served during that period for their support as we steered Gentoo safely home. Working alongside our first-class Executive Team and Senior Management colleagues has been my privilege throughout.

I would like to wish Emily Cox MBE my very best wishes in steering Gentoo Group to



Keith Loraine OBE
Gentoo Group Chair

About US

We're a housing association with a clear social purpose that provides more than 60,000 people in Sunderland with a place they can call home.

We believe everyone has the right to live in a good quality home they can afford and as part of our commitment to deliver on this, we invest millions of pounds every year in keeping our existing homes safe and secure.

Our vision

Great Homes
Strong Communities
Inspired People
For Sunderland

Our values

Do the right thing
Give all you've got
Keep learning
Make a difference
Work together

Our corporate strategy

Our business strategy centres around five strategic aims and our five Ps:

Place

Provide homes and services that enable our customers and communities to succeed

People

Invest in people and communities to help realise opportunities and release potential

Perform

Be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly, investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose

Partner

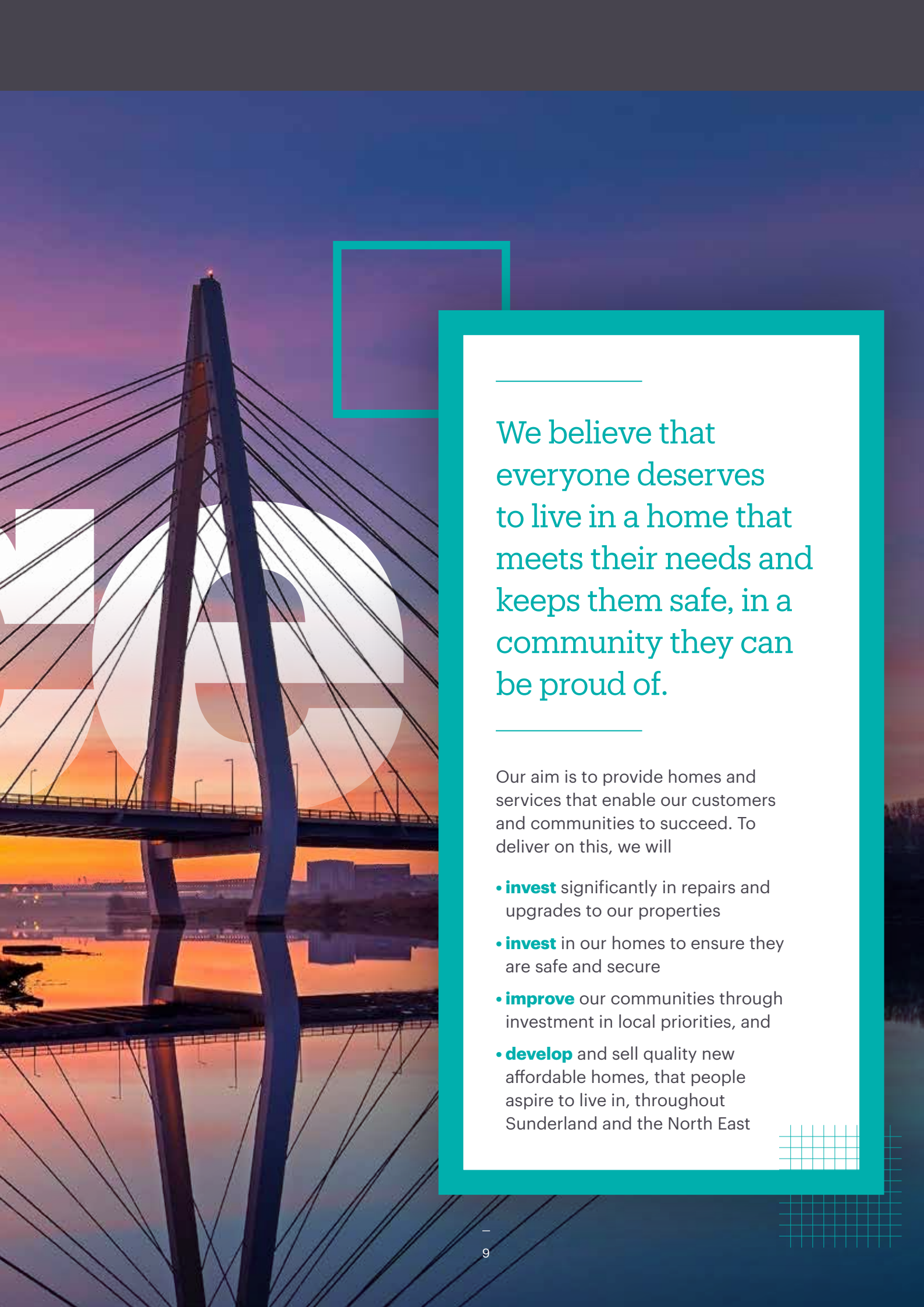
Work with others to influence and generate sustainable change

Pride

Harness the collective passion and energy of our people to support the city

A perfect





We believe that everyone deserves to live in a home that meets their needs and keeps them safe, in a community they can be proud of.

Our aim is to provide homes and services that enable our customers and communities to succeed. To deliver on this, we will

- **invest** significantly in repairs and upgrades to our properties
- **invest** in our homes to ensure they are safe and secure
- **improve** our communities through investment in local priorities, and
- **develop** and sell quality new affordable homes, that people aspire to live in, throughout Sunderland and the North East

Our commitment to building safety

Our Health, Safety, Risk and Assurance Team have been closely reviewing the Building Safety Act 2022 which was introduced following a review of the Grenfell disaster. The safety of our tenants and buildings is our priority, we want everyone to feel safe in their home.

We have been developing a programme of improvement works to roll out across our 25 buildings that fall into the scope of the act.

One of the first actions we took was to appoint a Building Safety Manager. This was a newly created role to introduce a dedicated resource to ensure our tenants are fully informed about how the safety in the building that they live in, is being managed. Although not a legal requirement, the creation of this new role demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the obligations of the act are implemented effectively.

This year we made the decision to centralise the management of our high-rise buildings to improve the experience for tenants and residents in our tower blocks. The team will be responsible for the management of the buildings, working closely with our Building Safety Manager,

to ensure we provide tenants with a good quality home that is safe, secure and compliant.

We have also been providing Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) with opportunities to take part in vital training exercises across the city. By giving them access to our high-rise and community buildings, they are able to practice vital evacuation procedures and prepare for any potentially critical situations.

These exercises are regularly played out throughout the region and are a critical part of the Service's armoury in light of the devastating Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Our partnership with TWFRS reassures our tenants and residents, especially those living in high-rise buildings that we are working to keep them safe in the event of any incidents.



No more gas in our high rise tower blocks

This year we made excellent progress in our commitment to making sure our high-rise buildings are safe places for our tenants. Our high-rise tower blocks no longer have domestic gas appliances.



Stephen Flounders, Gentoo Director of Risk and Assurance with a member of Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue

The 3 tower blocks in Sunderland's city centre were the last of our blocks to have the gas supply removed as part of a wider investment programme that has seen gas removed from all high-rise buildings.

The removal of gas and gas appliances has significantly improved the building safety and reduces the amount of carbon produced, contributing to Sunderland City Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.



Marc Edwards, Director of Asset & Sustainability with members of Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue

10,000 properties benefit from property investment work

Each year, we continue to invest in modernising our stock and last year we invested **£37.4 million** in our properties and buildings. We know that it's extremely important to our tenants that we're actively investing in their homes and this year over a third of our properties across the city received improvements.

Our multi-million-pound Property Investment Plan for 2021/22 includes a number of major schemes to over 10,000 properties, including roof replacements, internal modifications and external decoration.

We also completed a third year of our major window replacement scheme, with over 4,000 properties benefitting from double glazing. Each year we are making significant progress in our commitment of replacing all single glazed windows by December 2023.

This year's investment programme is part of our 2019-2024 Business Plan which will see more than £300 million invested into our existing homes and neighbourhoods over the five-year period.

Summary of our investment plan completed in 2021/22:

1,114 heating systems upgrades

695 roof replacements

4,012 properties fitted with double glazing

1,995 properties decorated externally

97 low rise blocks received communal decoration

1060 properties benefited from environmental improvements to porches, canopies and garages

Finished investment work to properties

Getting it right first time!

98%

**repairs completed
right first time**

Our responsive repairs service ensures that tenants feel safe and secure in their home. We are delighted that our focus on getting more repairs right first time has resulted in a 10% improvement from the previous year.

We provide a dedicated 24/7 service, carrying out both routine and emergency repairs, alongside vital compliance checks for gas and electricity. This year our repair visits exceeded **159,000** with 93% of tenants being happy with the repairs service they received.

Whole house approach modernising over 1,000 properties

We believe everyone deserves to live in a good quality, secure home and have committed to a £19 million improvement scheme to modernise 1,100 properties in Pennywell, Sunderland.

It's the first improvement scheme of its kind, that will see 'a whole house approach' with multiple elements of work completed at the same time to help minimise disruption for tenants and improve the appearance of the estate.

Tenants will benefit from new roofs to their homes and outbuildings, new front door canopies, double glazing, loft insulation, cladding or render on outbuildings, new



Susie Thompson Gentoo, Nigel Wilson Gentoo, Cllr Kevin Johnston and Marc Edwards, Gentoo

front garden fences and decoration to the outside of properties.

Following the work, tenants will see the energy efficiency of their homes improve, with their EPC rating increasing to C. This is part of our continued effort to shield tenants from rising energy costs and lift the EPC rating of our properties to band C.

We have also identified more than 30 pieces of unused land which will be tidied and landscaped to improve the overall appearance of the estate.



Nigel Wilson, Gentoo Chief Executive Officer with Bridget Phillipson, MP and Joanne Gordon, Gentoo Development Director

New era of affordable housing

Our Affordable Homes Programme significantly picked up pace and we have been delighted to see the bricks and mortar transforming into new homes at 5 developments across Wearside.

These developments are located right across the breadth of the city to ensure we are delivering new affordable homes for tenants and residents in all corners of Sunderland, including:

- **Austin Place**, Pennywell
- **Bellmen Green**, Silksworth
- **Brockwell Green**, Fencehouses
- **Keelman Rise**, Downhill
- **Liberty Grange**, Hylton Castle

These developments have delivered a total of 137 new high quality homes, which have been made available for affordable rent and are already fully occupied by tenants.

In the delivery of these schemes, we have developed successful working partnerships with a range of contractors, including EQUANS, Esh, Tolent, and TJ Manners.

The most recent of these schemes to complete, Liberty Grange and Bellmen Green, marks the start of a new and exciting era of affordable housing in Sunderland as they are the first developments where our bespoke, modern, and newly designed house types have been completed. Initial feedback from tenants living in these houses have described them as nothing short of life changing.

Each home has been designed to have minimal energy costs for tenants through the enhanced thermal envelope and renewable technologies. Built for the future, a fabric first approach has been combined with renewable and low carbon technology to offset carbon in the homes. This contributes to Gentoo's ambition to reduce carbon emissions by 75% - 80% by 2025.

The 14 new house types in our Affordable Homes Programme include:

- enhanced full filled external cavity walls
- high performance window casements
- air source heat pumps
- electric vehicle car charging
- thermal battery storage
- electric vehicle charging
- smart metering

We are also supporting local people with an affordable home ownership option by introducing the option for people to purchase a home through Shared Ownership, a part-rent, part-buy government backed scheme that supports people onto the property ladder. The scheme makes it easier for aspiring homeowners to buy an affordable share in a new property. Buying a home is one of the biggest investments you'll ever make, and through our Shared Ownership offer we're helping to make the process easier and more affordable.

Shared Ownership launched on our new development, Crosstree Park, Downhill in September 2022.



Gentoo Homes celebrates 5-star status for third year running

Our private housebuilding arm, Gentoo Homes, has retained its five-star status from the Home Builders Federation (HBF) for the third year in a row.

It's a brilliant achievement to be once again recognised for the quality service throughout the home buying process, including the standard of new homes and exceptional customer service.

They currently have 7 quality developments across the North East including our flagship Chester Gate development in Sunderland and the exclusive Cottier Grange site in the Tyne Valley.

Gentoo Homes generates a vital surplus which is reinvested back into Gentoo's housing services to be spent on building new homes for rent and investing in existing properties. The money is also used to fund services that help improve the lives of tenants, including our Money Matters Team and Victim Support service.

154 new homes sold

£1.7 million surplus reinvested back into Gentoo Group

Incredible

People





We believe that by putting people at the heart of all that we do we can build great homes and create strong communities.

Our aim is to invest in people and communities to help realise opportunities and release potential. To deliver on this we will:

- **always provide** a great service to our tenants and customers
- **help our tenants and customers** to become more resilient and support independent living through a range of support services
- **be an employer of choice** in Sunderland by investing in and developing our colleagues to achieve their potential, and
- **provide a range of employability opportunities** to potential recruits, including apprentices and work experience

Supporting tenants to deal with the cost of living crisis

Our specialist Money Matters Team continues to provide specialist advice and support to tenants who may need financial support or help managing their money.

The pandemic was financially challenging for tenants who dealt with furlough and unemployment, and with the current cost of living crisis, a new challenge is just beginning.

The team work hard to help tenants maximise their income, reduce debt and remove financial barriers to make sure they can manage their tenancy. This is a vital service and one that is going to continue to help our tenants through a difficult time.

Since September, our Money Matters Team have been contacted by over 250 tenants who were looking for advice and guidance, following the Universal Credit uplift and the end of the furlough scheme.



Lewis Walmsley, Gentoo Tenant Voice Partner with a tenant

We helped with energy saving advice, recommendations to local foodbanks and also completed Discretionary Housing Payments for those who met the criteria, recently helping one family with a claim which was successfully backdated to January. We can offer financial advice and guidance on improving your chances of getting into work.



55% of tenants
who are on Universal
Credit are in credit

4,336 referrals to water
rate discount schemes,
resulting in **£491,064**
financial discounts to tenants



860 tenants
supported to make
financial gains

Employment programme helping residents back into work

Our Wise Steps programme, which is delivered by our job coaches, continues to provide free practical advice and support to people living in the city who are unemployed and looking for a job.

We partner with organisations to create employment opportunities, help with skills development, confidence building and vocational training. We understand the importance of getting a job or learning new skills for the wellbeing of individuals. It helps with socialising, self-confidence and personal development.

Almost 10,000 people in Sunderland are currently unemployed. As unemployment rises, so does the

number of people looking for work, so

these programmes which aim to remove barriers to work are more important than ever before.



Kayle Hope, Gentoo Job Coach with a tenant



6 people successfully completed vocational training

120 people supported by Wise Steps job coaches

12 people successfully gained employment



5 people moved from claiming benefits to job searching activities

Housing Employment Network North East

Earlier in the year we teamed up with 12 North East housing providers to develop a regional employment partnership, designed to improve employment outcomes for people living in social and supported housing.

The programme will break down employment barriers and maximise opportunities for our tenants and communities.

As registered providers of social housing to hundreds of thousands of people, and with firm roots in communities regionwide,

the partners provide the potential for direct access to a local labour market for employers.

We recognise the value of working in partnership and the huge potential we can achieve in the region by working together. We will engage with employers, supply chain contractors and training providers to directly share opportunities and maximise social value impact for the benefit of the region as a whole.



Investing in our future workforce

As part of our ongoing commitment to invest in the workforce of the future, our 2021 apprenticeship recruitment programme saw us welcome 15 apprentices to the Group. The latest intake brings our total number of apprentices to 292 since 2001.

The apprenticeships, which have been developed in partnership with Sunderland College, give on the job experience while allowing apprentices to study towards a qualification in their chosen career. Our new apprentices have joined us across a variety of business areas including Repairs & Maintenance, Human Resources, Procurement, Property Investment, Legal and Estate Services.

The new recruits came out on top of over 364 applicants for the vacancies and will complete an exciting 2 – 4 year training programme.

As part of our ongoing commitment to providing training and employment opportunities in Sunderland, 15 placements have also been created through the government funded Kickstart scheme, which focuses on creating jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit.

Celebrating the success of our colleagues

Throughout 2021/22, we continued to invest in supporting our colleagues and are extremely proud of our people and their achievements.

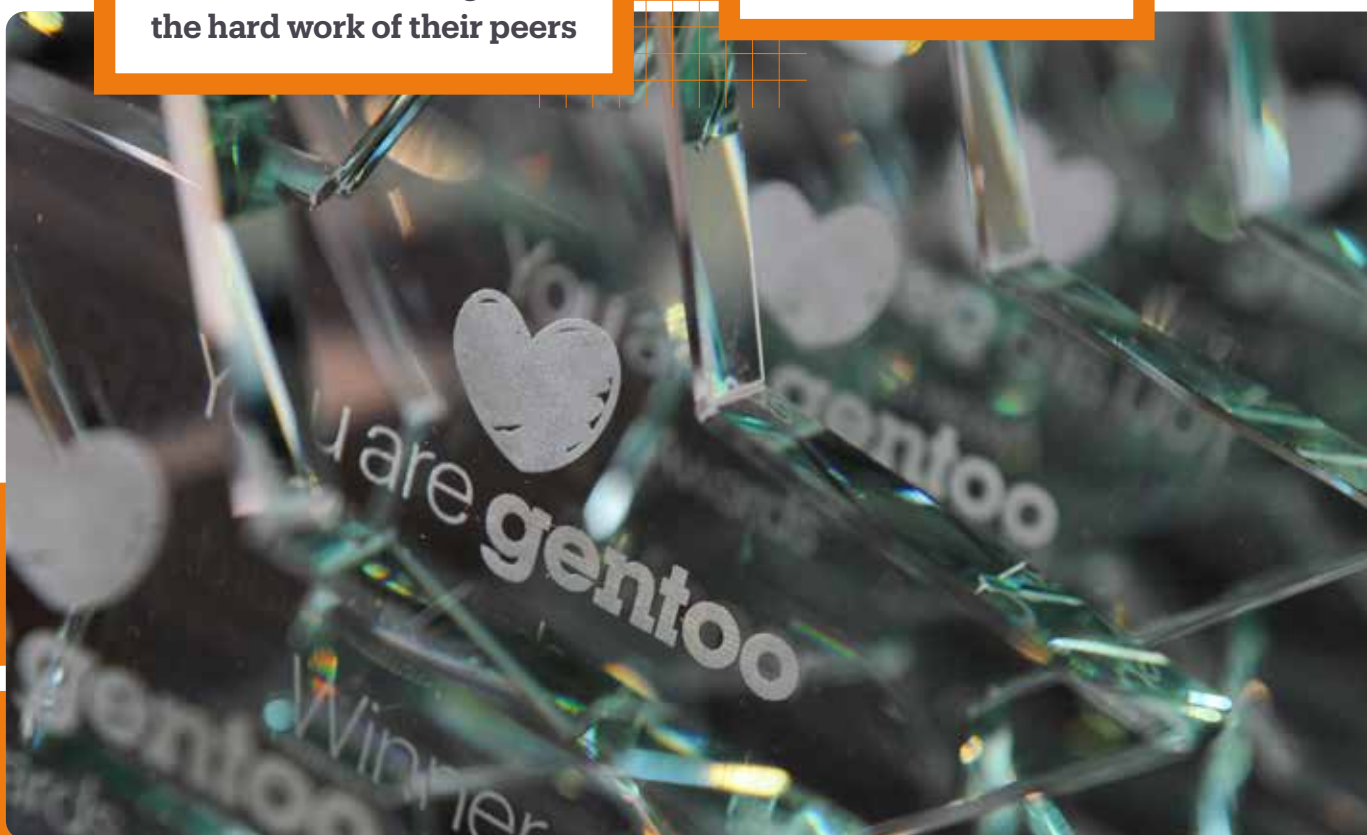
Our uniqueness and strength come from the dedication, skill and energy of our staff. They live our values every day and work to achieve our vision. We are proud of our IIP Gold status in recognition for our commitment to our people.

Our 'You Are Gentoo' Awards recognise the achievements of colleagues who make a difference to the lives of our tenants every day. These awards are nominated by peers and winners are chosen by our colleague-led Employee Forum.

The award nominations window is now open all year, with the awards taking place 3 times a year.

469 colleagues
nominated and recognised
the hard work of their peers

we presented **93**
colleagues with the
prestigious awards
over the year.





Specialist services to protect our most vulnerable tenants

We continue to support our tenants, residents and communities by investing in services that help people live their best possible life.

Our vital safety and support specialist services offer help and support, including support officers, mediation, acceptable behaviour agreements or contracts, and positive engagement.

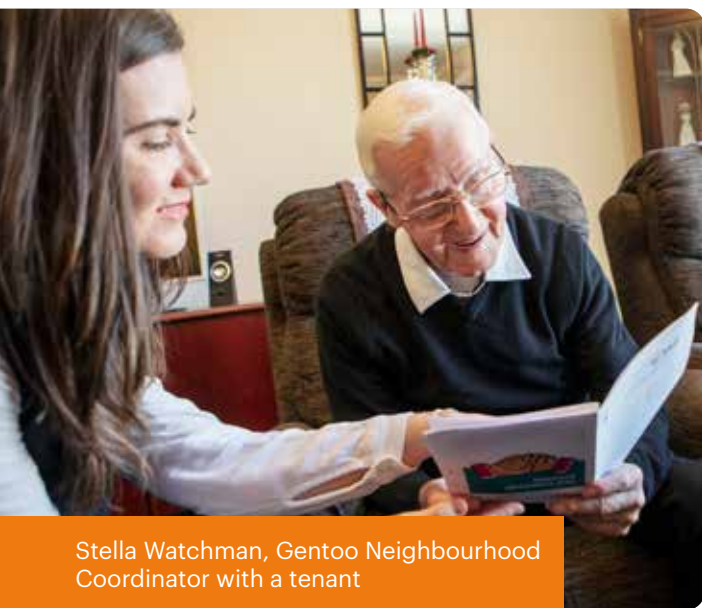
Our Positive Engagement Team has provided support to 175 tenants at risk of losing their tenancy and those behaving in an antisocial way because of alcohol misuse, drug misuse or mental health conditions.

Our Victim Support Team has continued to support tenants who have been victims of domestic abuse and antisocial behaviour. This year, 216 people have benefitted from the specialist support service.

Our Safeguarding Team coordinate safeguarding alerts across our properties. They worked closely with city partners, such as Together for Children to protect more than 220 adults and children this year.

Our experience has shown us that working with partners is essential to reduce antisocial behaviour and make people feel safer and more secure.

We work closely with agencies and partners, like Northumbria Police, Sunderland City Council, Wearside Women in Need, and the Safer Sunderland Partnership. This allows us to develop a shared understanding of responsibilities with one another and helps make sure residents feel safe and secure.



Stella Watchman, Gentoo Neighbourhood Coordinator with a tenant



175 tenants
supported through
positive engagement

216 domestic
abuse and antisocial
behaviour cases



78 adult
safeguarding
alerts

144 child
safeguarding
alerts



Supporting young people

Our Young Person's Team offers a range of vocational, educational and housing-related services to support young people aged 16 to 25 with the skills to live independently. We offer supported housing, advice and guidance to meet their specific needs.

200 young
people supported
with their
tenancy



250 young
person's cases
dealt with

69 young people
provided with a
secure home

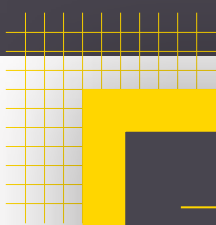
25 young people
provided with a
place they can
call home at
Holmewood

250 referrals
to our Young
Person's outreach
support service

Striving to

Perfo





We believe that in order to achieve our goals, we must operate as a competent and efficient social housing provider.

Our aim is to be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly, and investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose. To deliver on this we will:

- **always listen** to the voice of our tenants, through channels including scrutiny groups, forums and satisfaction results
- **improve our tenants' experience** by continually reviewing our processes and transforming our activities to take advantage of digital technology, and
- **ensure** our services and processes deliver value for money

irm



Driving performance by becoming a more digital housing association

Launch of new Gentoo Group website

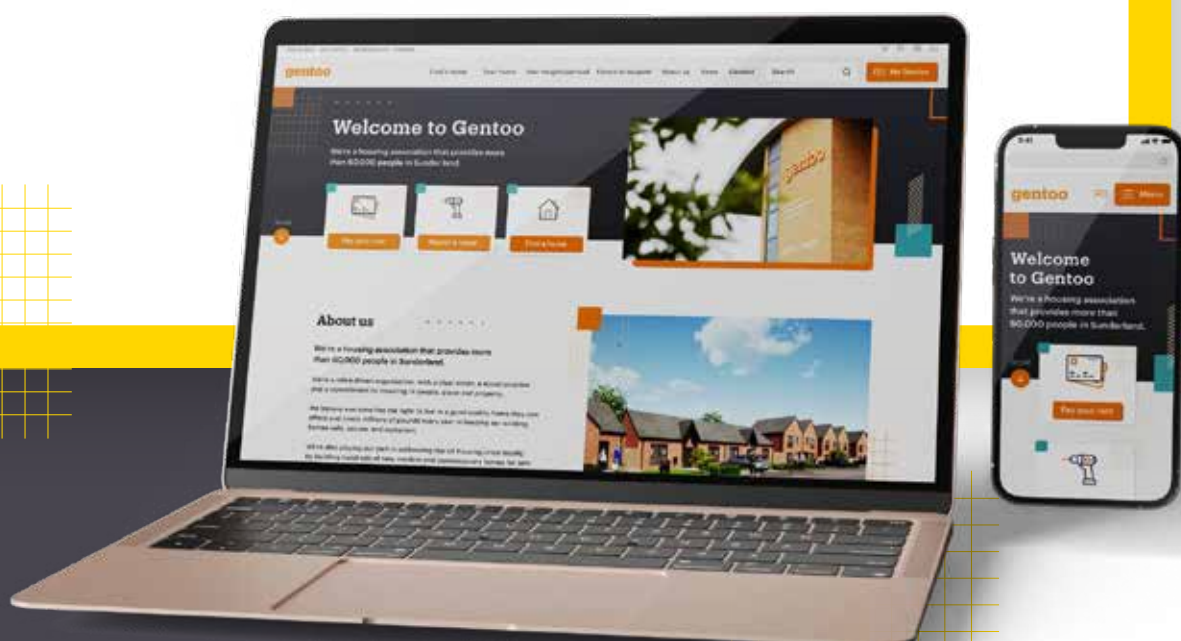
We have continued to invest in our digital transformation, ensuring our technology allows us to put digital services at the forefront of our offer.

Over the last year, the Group has invested significantly in developing and launching a new Gentoo Group website.

Tenants have been at the heart of this project, and everything has been done to make sure the website is accessible and easy to read and follow. The content has been rewritten to make sure it includes everything a tenant needs to know and is placed where they would expect to see it.

We engaged with **174** tenants on the design, content and placement of information on our new website.

This is only the first phase of the website, and we will continue to work on developing the website to make sure it is user friendly and the best it can be for tenants.



Saying farewell to paper appointment cards

This year we hit another major milestone on our journey to drive efficiencies in the business and to reduce our carbon footprint, in line with Sunderland City Council's target to be carbon neutral by 2030.

We launched our new text messaging appointment solution, which means tenants will now receive SMS reminders for any upcoming repairs appointments. This is instead of receiving appointment cards in the post.

Tenants will receive an SMS:

- **instantly when the appointment is booked**
- **7 days before the appointment**
- **the day before the appointment**

This is a huge step forward in our ongoing digitisation. As well as improving the experience for tenants, it will reduce our no access visits, printing costs, paper waste and administration time for colleagues.



Digital engagement with tenants

We want to be proactive in how we listen and learn from our tenants.

Back in July, we launched our newest digital engagement tool, Your Gentoo Voice. A comprehensive engagement platform which will revolutionise the way we consult and engage with our tenants and leaseholders through online forums, surveys and polls.

Feedback from tenants will:

- **help us make decisions**
- **impact how we achieve our projects' aims**
- **make sure that what we do will help tenants and residents**

Projects that have already used the digital platform include our operating hours, rate your estate, our website review and communal paint options for multi-story buildings.

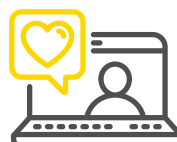
The engagement system continues to grow but has already achieved a lot since launching:

5,078
registrations

1,013
active
users

Up to 200
responses per
consultation

25
consultations



Putting tenants at the heart of housing

We have been on a journey to transform the way we engage with tenants and handle complaints. In line with the recommendations in the Government's Social Housing White Paper, we have put our tenants voice at the centre of our organisation.

We are responsible for giving **60,000** people a place they can be proud of and call 'home'. We invest millions every year to maintain and repair these properties, as well as employing 1,000 dedicated colleagues to support our tenants through all stages of their tenancy.

However, we are honest in acknowledging there are times when we don't get things right. We felt the number of complaints received in previous years was relatively low, and perhaps not a true reflection of our tenants' experiences.

Driven by our Tenant Voice Team, we have overhauled our formal complaints process. We have raised the profile of our formal complaints process to tenants, and encouraged them to provide feedback, positive or negative.

We have also opened up a number of new channels, to make it easier than ever to provide this feedback.

This includes:

- our new **feedback@gentoogroup.com** email address
- telephone
- letter
- in person at a local Gentoo office
- messages to our Gentoo Group Facebook and Twitter pages
- in our new Official Gentoo Group Complaints Facebook group



This campaign saw a **1060% increase** in formal complaints in the last year, which we view positively. We are grateful to the tenants, leaseholders and residents who reach out to us to share their issues and complaints. This gives us an opportunity to put right where something has gone wrong, identify trends and strengthen our partnerships with other strategic partners in the city, such as Sunderland City Council.

The team also manage five geographical tenant-led Tenant and Community Voice Groups (TCV). The group's work with Gentoo to help shape services, invest resources and make improvements. They have provided us with invaluable feedback resulting in improvements to our:

- telephony system
- new website **gentoogroup.com**
- appointment card process
- lettable standard
- design and features in our new build affordable rent properties





Gentoo Grounds Maintenance colleague



Keeping our neighbourhoods attractive and well maintained

We're proud of our neighbourhoods and want our tenants to be proud too. We work hard to ensure our neighbourhoods are safe, clean and attractive places to live and meet the standards our tenants expect.

We continue to work closely with our involved tenants through our Rate Your Estate assessment programme, to ensure

our tenants scrutinise the work we do to maintain our estates. We have digitalised the assessments through our digital engagement platform, Your Gentoo Voice, which means we have been able to gather even more feedback on our estates.

3,093 trees inspected



1,800 fly tipping and graffiti reports actions

92% of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live

18 Rate Your Estate inspections across our neighbourhoods

3.4 million square metres of grass cut – the equivalent to 478 football fields every 2 weeks



572 safety inspections to play parks

Performing well for tenants

As a social housing provider, we work to be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly and investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose.



We pride ourselves on performing to the highest possible standard and delivering the quality of service our tenants deserve. This year, we are pleased to have once again performed to a high standard.

93% of tenants were satisfied with the service they received from our Property Maintenance Team

93% of tenants were satisfied with the condition of their new home when moving in



97% of tenants were satisfied with the work carried out during upgrades to their home

100% of tenants were satisfied with our Positive Engagement service



92% of tenants were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live



We pride ourselves on performing to the highest possible standard and delivering the quality of service our tenants deserve.



Catherine Loftus, Gentoo Associate Director of Housing with a tenant

Our performance

We have developed a clear and concise dashboard to demonstrate our performance as a landlord, which was done working with our tenants.

The data shows how we have performed for the 2021/22 financial year, compared to the previous year.

	2020/21	2021/22
Current rent arrears including housing benefit recovery	£1.58m	£1.8m
Average time to re-let a property	81 days	70.13 days
£ invested to tenant's homes through planned investment work	£30.9m	£39.1m
Number of properties improved due to planned investment work	5,633	11,000
Overall satisfaction with planned improvement work	96%	97%
Number of repairs and safety inspections	153,310	159,621
Repairs completed right first	88%	97.8%
Number of formal complaints received	218	466
Number of complaints resolved in timescales	100%	100%

The perfect

Partner

Susie Thompson, Gentoo Executive Director of Housing and Julie Whittaker, Gentoo Neighbourhood Coordinator with representatives from partners, Bell Group and Tolent.



We believe that by working with others we can achieve far more than we can on our own, for the good of our tenants and the city.

Our aim is to work with others to influence and generate sustainable change. To deliver on this we will:

- **develop Sunderland** into a vibrant, healthy and dynamic city through effective partnerships with Sunderland City Council and other local anchor institutions
- **working alongside** organisations such as Northumbria Police, local schools, community groups and businesses to improve the safety of our neighbourhoods and wellbeing of our tenants and customers, and
- **collaborate** with key partners and other housing associations to influence things that affect our tenants, colleagues and society locally, regionally and nationally

We have continued to work closely with our key city partners to drive collaboration and positive change in Sunderland. As one of the city's main anchor institutions, we recognise that we are uniquely positioned to make a real positive difference to the lives of tenants and residents on Wearside.



The HALO project team outside the Hetton Centre

Launch of HALO Project to support those in need

The HALO Project was launched to breathe fresh life into Hetton with organisations and the public working together to tackle a range of issues including crime and disorder, mental health and unemployment rates whilst seeking to improve the overall aesthetic appearance of the area.

Building on the work achieved in Southwick and the award-winning SARA Project, the project will see key organisations and support services all working together under the same roof to support those living in Hetton and help some of the most vulnerable people in the community. This problem-solving approach can have a transformative and beneficial impact on the whole area.

The project will see our housing team working alongside representatives from Sunderland City Council, Northumbria Police, Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue, All Together Better Sunderland and Together for Children – operating from The Hetton Centre to provide streamlined support to those who need it most.

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance

Working together with Sunderland City Council and the Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) we launched a new alliance in a bid to build on the outstanding contribution made by the city's voluntary and community sector in supporting communities during the pandemic.

The Alliance was put in place to strengthen the sector and help it to influence how services are delivered in Sunderland, as well as enable the voluntary sector to grow and prosper, supporting voluntary and community groups to continue to work alongside residents and communities as well as broaden their service offer. It will also work to ensure everyone in the city understands that they must work



Nigel Wilson, Gentoo Chief Executive Officer and Catherine Loftus, Gentoo Associate Director of Housing with members of the voluntary sector

closely with the voluntary sector if they wish to

successfully deliver the ambitions of the Sunderland 2019-2030 City Plan.



Whether it's delivering hot meals and tackling loneliness or providing vital emotional support, the voluntary and community sector provides crucial support to the city's residents. Working in partnership with these great organisations and groups will create a stronger and better resourced voluntary sector that even more residents can benefit from.

Supporting the NHS with the COVID-19 vaccination roll out



Together with Sunderland CCG and Sunderland City Council we organised a pop-up vaccination clinic in one of our high-rise buildings in a low up take area.

We opened up the community room in D'Arcy Court to increase the rollout of vaccinations in the Hendon area. We also used our intercom systems to directly contact 1,100 tenants to promote the nearby clinic.

During the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination we strongly encouraged all colleagues to be vaccinated, allowing colleagues to attend vaccination appointments during working hours.

Working with our contractors

Each year, we work closely with our principal contractors to help fulfil our social purpose in our communities. Throughout 2021/22 we worked closely with our contractor partners, Equans, Tolent, RE:GEN and Bell Group.

The partnership with our contractors has impacted hundreds of people and multiple communities by providing them with opportunities and relief aids.

As an organisation with a clear social purpose, we work with local community groups and schools to fund vital projects and help change people's lives. This year, we have supported causes and charities which support victims of homelessness, mental health, illnesses, or domestic abuse.

We have given financial support to schools and colleges, investing in training and equipping them with laptops and WIFI. These donations were vital during a time when the need for virtual learning was greater than ever.

Between the contractors, we have received support with a number of initiatives including modernising a playpark, our Christmas and Easter appeal and our Give it a Grow gardening competition.



Joanne Gordon, Gentoo Development Director with representative from Tolent and local primary school children who received new laptops

A time for giving

Every Christmas we work hard to bring some much-needed festive cheer to our tenants and residents across Sunderland. With many of our tenants still recovering from financial impacts caused by the pandemic, our Christmas appeal this year was more important than ever.

Thanks to the generosity of partner organisations such as Sunderland City Council, Equans, Tolent and Sunderland Empire we were able to make Christmas extra special for hundreds of families across Wearside.

200 families received VIP treatment at the pantomime, with a visit from Father Christmas and complimentary snacks and ice cream



Nigel Wilson, Gentoo Chief Executive Officer

600 Christmas presents delivered



160 Christmas dinners delivered

250 selection boxes donated to Back on the Map Christmas Grotto



1 Christmas tree donated to Basis Sunderland through Oasis Community Housing

Influencing positive change nationally

We continue to work with a range of partners at local, national and regional levels, striving to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones. Through our membership of the National Housing Federation, Northern Housing Consortium, Placeshapers, Housing Partnership UK and the Chartered Institute of Housing, we have continued to promote the great work we carry out in Sunderland, as well as championing social and affordable housing in the North East.

We also play a key role with our membership of Homes for the North. Our Chief Executive Officer, Nigel Wilson, has just stepped down from Chair after two years in the role. We will continue to push for greater support for the social housing sector from national government and continue to campaign for further levelling up of investment in the north.





Nigel Wilson, Gentoo Chief Executive Officer with Susie Thompson, Gentoo Executive Director of Housing and pupils from Farringdon Academy

300 school children benefit from new breakfast club

Addressing child poverty and food insecurities in our communities is really important to us. We are proud to have supported the Greggs Foundation Breakfast Club for almost ten years.

This year we created a new partnership with Farringdon Academy in Sunderland to bring the breakfast club to 300 children at the school. We know having a nutritious breakfast and a full tummy makes a huge difference to the children and their school day.

School children at the academy receive a healthy meal before the school day begins,

preparing them for the day ahead, with hot and cold options such as toast, low sugar cereal, fruit, yoghurt, juice and milk.

The breakfast club aims to encourage pupils to socialise and engage with staff, giving them the best start to the day. The school has already seen an improvement in punctuality and productivity thanks to the breakfast meal on offer.

Raising the career aspirations of children

Our Raising Aspirations programme, which we deliver in partnership with Positive Footprints, inspires children and young people to identify their natural talents, believe in themselves and raise aspirations for the future. It builds on natural curiosity and shapes how children perceive the world they live and will eventually work in.

More than 1,500 children will benefit from the programme across 20 primary schools in Sunderland.

The programme, which was launched in 2019, is adaptable across all primary school year groups, with children achieving vital employability skills at the end of the 12-hour course which includes everything from discovering their unique qualities and skills to CV writing and preparing for an interview.

This year, children from Grange Park Primary School had the opportunity to meet local businesses including Gentoo Homes, Sunderland University, Royal Navy and SAFC Ladies to gain an insight into different sectors through talks and interactive activities before they embark on the programme.



Pupils from Grange Park Primary School



Taking

Pride



We believe that Sunderland is an outstanding city. It is our heart, our homeland, and somewhere we will always be proud to shout about and give something back to.

Our aim is to harness the collective passion and energy of our people to support the city's plan. To deliver on this we will:

- **remember** our roots in all that we do
- **be an excellent provider** of social housing in Sunderland, demonstrating the quality of our service
- **actively work to reduce our carbon footprint** in line with Sunderland City Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030
- **show pride** in our city by working collaboratively with local partners to make a difference

Whether this is through history and heritage, our culture, how we talk, what we eat or how well our garden is kept, being proud of where we live and work is key to ensuring both Gentoo and Sunderland continue to improve and transform. We are immensely proud of the work we have achieved over the last year and it is the pride that our tenants and colleagues have every day that really makes Sunderland a special place.

Gentoo Homes sponsors of Sunderland AFC Ladies

Gentoo Homes were the proud front-of-shirt sponsors for Sunderland AFC Ladies for the 21/22 season.

The multi-year partnership represents the continuation of a strong partnership between SAFC and Gentoo Group. We have been working alongside the club as a key partner in the city since 2019, previously as Sunderland AFC's official Community Partner and supporting the Foundation of Light on a range of exclusive community-based events and activities for tenants.

We were delighted to support the club's re-emphasis on the women's team and share the club's ambitions to see the women's game to continue to grow in the city and the region.





Gentoo colleagues with Sunderland AFC Ladies

£22,000 raised for our corporate charities

We've raised a brilliant £22,000 for our 2 corporate charities, Action on Dementia Sunderland and St Benedict's Hospice.

The Sunderland-based charities were our nominated charities for both 2020 and 2021 following a vote from our 1000-strong workforce.

The money was raised through fundraising activities including raffles, bake sales and our regular payroll deduction scheme.

The charities spend 100% of their funds in Sunderland, meaning the money raised will benefit residents and communities.



Nigel Wilson, Gentoo Chief Executive Officer with a representative from St. Benedict's Hospice



Development Team of the Year!



Keith Loraine, Gentoo Chair with the Affordable Development Team

We are delighted that our Affordable Development Team has been crowned as Development Team of the Year at the Inside Housing Development Awards.

The team, which was only formed in 2019, received the prestigious national award for their ambitious plan to creating a new era of affordable housing in Sunderland.

The team was recognised for creating a whole new range of beautiful house types, getting 160 homes under construction within one year, and a further 400+ homes through the planning process.

To be recognised nationally is fantastic and this is only the start of the team's success as we move forward and continue to play our part in addressing the UK housing shortage locally, by delivering more than 1,200 new affordable homes to rent in Sunderland by 2026.



Chloe Rudkin, Gentoo Tenant Voice Partner with a representative from Sunderland Training and Education Farm

Supporting the voluntary and community sector

We are proud to continue to support the voluntary and community sector in Sunderland and have worked closely with a number of groups across the city to support services for our tenants and residents.

Sunderland has an extremely strong voluntary and community sector and we are delighted to have worked with so many over the past year including: The Box Youth & Community Project, Shiney Advice and Resource Project, The Hug in a Bag charity and Pennywell Community Centre.

We have also continued to support the sector by providing grants through our Aspire Community Grant programme. Launched in 2003, the programme

offers up to £500 to local volunteers and community groups in our neighbourhoods. A grant can be used for projects and activities that will benefit our tenants. This includes art, music and drama clubs, toddler play groups, local football clubs, older people's clubs and resident and community associations.

The programme, which is overseen by our Tenant and Community Voice group, awarded £14,129 to 31 groups in 2021/22.

Annual Easter campaign

With soaring food and fuel prices, we wanted to do more than provide a chocolate egg for our annual Easter campaign.

With the support of our contracting partners, we collected thousands of food items, to create Easter hampers. The hampers were full of cereal, pasta, toiletries and Easter treats.

Gentoo colleagues delivered the hampers to 313 families ahead of the Easter weekend.



Nigel Wilson, Gentoo Chief Executive Officer with Gentoo Contractors

Hampers were given to families and isolated individuals who were struggling.

The appeal was a collective effort by our colleagues and donations from our contractors, Bell Group, Equans, Tolent and Venson.



Catherine Loftus, Gentoo Associate Director of Housing with pupils from Dame Dorothy Primary School

Blooming marvellous gardens

This year we recognised keen gardeners for their efforts during lockdown via our annual gardening competition, Give it a Grow, in partnership with Equans and Tolent. Tenants and residents turned their gardens into safe havens through the pandemic.

It gave them safe places to meet up with friends and family and spend time together.

Our top prize went to a tenant who turned their garden into a colourful, relaxing place with a memorial bench for her father. Whilst residents of our sheltered scheme, Peacehaven Court, secured first place in the community garden category.

We also recognised two local schools, Dame Dorothy Primary School and St Benet's RC Primary School for their dedication to encouraging young children to get involved in gardening. One school received a bench for the garden for children to enjoy the outdoors and the other received support towards their new garden to help create a new generation of sustainable gardeners.

We received 21 entries and were blown away by the commitment our tenants and communities have shown to creating beautiful gardens and outdoor spaces.

Our social impact summary 21/22

£5,914,763 total social value generated

Place

£68 million

invested in works and improvements on our properties

4,012

properties fitted with double glazing



137

affordable homes built

92%

of tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live

People

£1.57 million
additional income for tenants



120

people supported by Wise Steps job coaches



216

domestic abuse and antisocial behaviour cases

Perform

£1.7 million

surplus reinvested
back into Gentoo

97% 

of tenants satisfied with
the work carried out during
upgrades to their home

Partner

200

families received
VIP treatment at
the pantomime

£309,182

in social value generated through
partners and principal contractors



61

adults and families
provided with
emergency temporary
accommodation

Pride

£22,000

fundraised by our colleagues
for our corporate charities

81

veterans
rehoused

313

families
benefited from
Easter hampers



Governance



We would like to thank the Gentoo Group and Gentoo Homes Board for its commitment and direction this year.

Our board members have played a key role in ensuring Gentoo has strong oversight and outstanding governance, demonstrated by our maximum G1 Governance rating from the Regulator of Social Housing. The Group has worked hard to build a board that is challenging, experienced, technical and diverse and this past year it has continued to drive positive change across the organisation, albeit remotely at times due to the pandemic.

Our Board and Committee Members



Keith Loraine

OBE (Chair)
(Appointed 1 February 2017)



Alison Fellows

(Appointed 27 February 2019)



Brenda Naisby

Tenant Board Member
(Appointed 25 November 2020)



Carol Long

(Appointed 26 September 2018)



Chris Watson

(Appointed 27 September 2017)



Claire Long

(Appointed 1 May 2020)



David Murtagh

(Appointed 1 February 2017)



Emily Cox, MBE

(Appointed 27 February 2019)



Kehri Ellis

(Appointed 1 April 2021)



Pat Smith

(Appointed 18 July 2022)

Board members who reached the end of their term in office:

Phil Tye (Resigned 17 June 2022 after 7 years in office)

Board members who have resigned:

Debra Waller (Appointed 23 July 2020, resigned 19 May 2021)

Dianne Sharp (Appointed 1 May 2020, resigned 23 February 2022)

Karen Noble (Appointed 1 July 2021, resigned 9 May 2022)

Our financial summary 2021/22

Consolidated statement of comprehensive income

	2021/22	2020/21
	£m	£m
Turnover	168.7	165.6
Cost of sales and operating expenditure	(143.9)	(141.4)
Other operating income	0.3	0.3
Surplus on disposal of tangible assets	1.8	0.5
Operating surplus	26.9	25.0
Net interest charges	(20.1)	(20.7)
Revaluation of fixed asset investments	(1.4)	(0.9)
Fair value adjustment for investment property	(1.0)	0.8
Fair value adjustment	0.1	0.2
Taxation	(0.2)	(0.1)
Surplus for the year	4.3	4.3

Turnover has increased during the year by £3.1m. This is predominantly due to an increase in income from social housing lettings £4.0m and a reduction in income from properties developed for outright sale £0.8m.

Cost of sales and operating expenditure has increased by £2.5m. The key elements of this increase are a provision for repair costs due to damage to properties from Storm Arwen of £1.2m (2021: £nil), a reduction in house sales of £1.3m and increases in defined benefit pension costs of £2.3m. This increase is due to the increased pension service cost of £13.0m (2021: £10.7m) which was primarily driven by an increase in the underlying CPI assumption.

Increased surplus on Right to Buy and Right to Acquire disposals of £1.8m (2021: £0.7m) have positively impacted upon current year operating surplus. Overall surplus is negatively impacted by the revaluation of fixed asset investments £1.4m (2021: £0.9m). This revaluation reflects the market performance of security required to be held for the Group's T.H.F.C debt. Security arrangements have been reviewed during the year and future volatility has been removed by holding cash rather than market security. The core business has continued to perform well throughout the pandemic, with good income collection and operational performance.

Consolidated statement of financial position

	2021/22	2020/21
	£m	£m
Net book value of tangible assets – housing properties	1,044.1	1,028.4
Other tangible fixed assets and investments	26.1	59.5
Debtors due after one year	28.5	3.5
Net current assets	38.2	29.3
Total assets less current liabilities	1,136.9	1,120.7
Creditors due after one year	(526.9)	(518.9)
Pension asset / (liability)	-	(3.3)
Net assets	610.0	598.5
Revaluation reserve	144.1	155.1
Revenue reserve	207.8	178.2
Other reserve	258.1	265.2
	610.0	598.5

Housing property assets have increased by £15.7m. This reflects the Group's priority of enhancing existing properties and developing new properties with £48.1m invested during the year. This investment in housing properties is offset by depreciation of £28.4m and disposals of £4.6m.

The pension asset of £37.1m has been restricted to £nil (2021: liability £3.3m) as the recoverability of this asset would require a right to reduce employer contributions or to request a refund from the fund. Neither of these options are considered to be available. This restriction does not impact the Group's underlying operating performance or financial position as financial covenants continue to be met.

Consolidated statement of cash flows for the year ended 31 March 2022

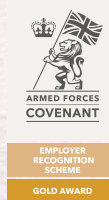
	2021/22 £'000	2020/21 £'000
Net cash flows from operating activities	65,339	68,205
Net cash flows from investing activities	(36,336)	(31,780)
Net cash flows from financing activities	(15,141)	(67,364)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	13,862	(30,939)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 April	69	31,008
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 March	13,931	69

The Group's policy is to hold a minimum cash balance of £10m ensuring that loan facilities are in place to fund future requirements. Short term cash balances are placed on short term deposits at competitive rates.

The Group had cash and cash equivalents of £13.9m (2021: £0.1m) and an unutilised overdraft of £5m (2021: £5m) at 31 March 2022. The increase in cash represents the fact that there has been an amendment to the Group policy to hold a minimum cash balance of £10m.

During the year the Group generated £65.3m (2021: £68.2m) from operating activities. Net cash of £36.3m (2021: £31.8m) was invested in both existing and new housing stock with net loans of £15.1m (2021: £67.4m) being repaid in the year.

We are gentoo



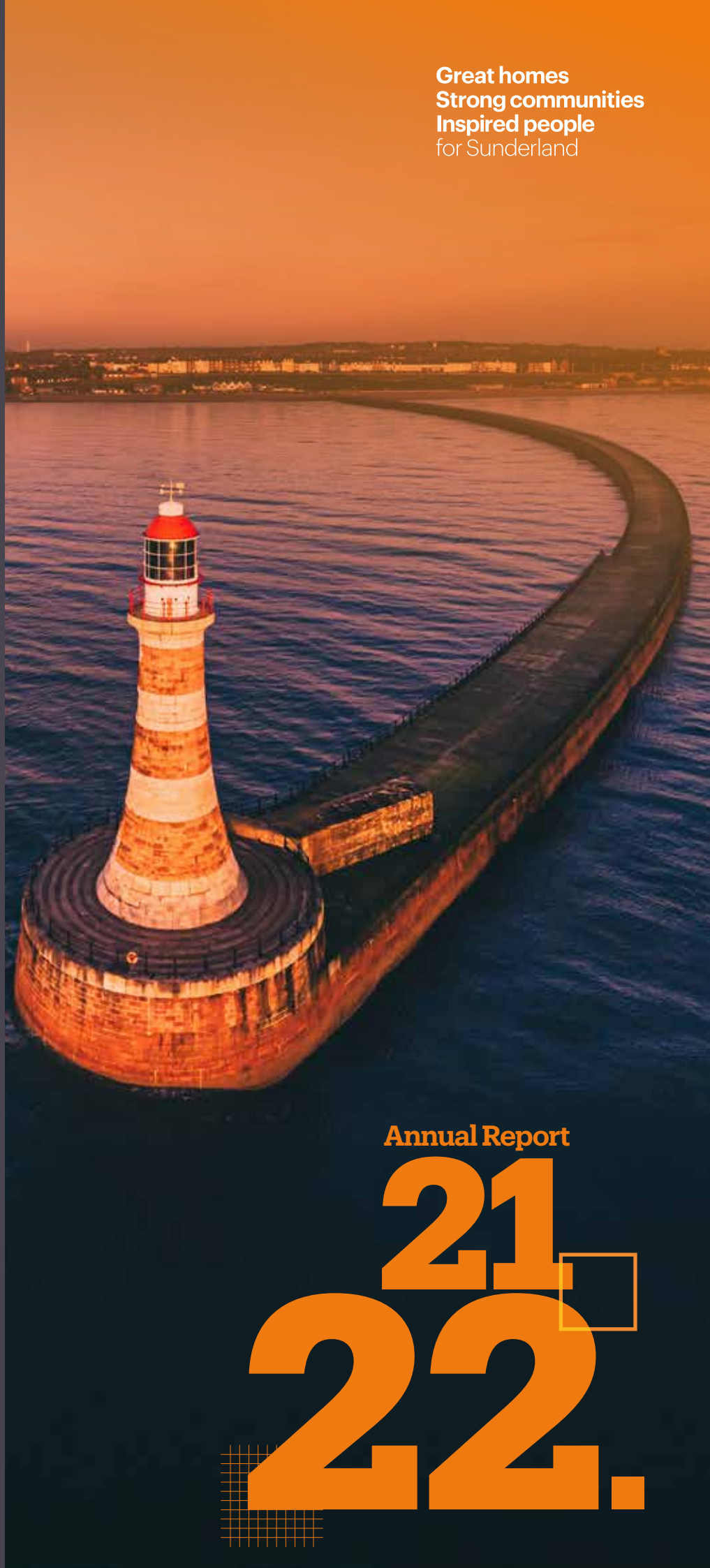


Great homes
Strong communities
Inspired people
for Sunderland

Gentoo Group Limited
Emperor House
2 Emperor Way
Doxford International Business Park
Sunderland, SR3 3XR.

www.gentoogroup.com

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



Annual Report

21
22.