

**gentoo**

Great homes  
Strong communities  
Inspired people  
for Sunderland

# Annual Report

19-  
20

# Welcome

## from our CEO, Nigel Wilson

This report marks my first full year in post as Chief Executive Officer, something I have enjoyed and found very rewarding. Getting to know the City of Sunderland, the wider North East and its fantastic people, is something my family have thoroughly enjoyed. The often heard quote “the folk are so friendly and helpful” is very true, making settling into life in the region a real pleasure.

As the end of the financial year coincided with the extraordinary challenges presented to not just this city, or the whole country, but the world, through the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been pleased to see how communities, particularly in Sunderland, have pulled together to help each other and ensure those around us have had the help and support they need.



Gentoo continues to change and develop as a business, serving the City of Sunderland and all of our tenants. We are keen to ensure existing homes are improved where needed, invested in, and also that new homes for rent are built to help address the affordable housing shortage in the city. We also recognise the importance of our work with tenants and the local community, as we continue to work across a range of areas to provide support to tenants who are most in need.

Ensuring we continue to provide real value for money and respect how we invest our income from rents is crucial. We cannot take for granted any aspect of our work and will continue to listen to our tenants, ensuring they influence, critique and improve what and how we do things, as we continue to seek to work together as ‘One Gentoo’.

Sunderland is a great city with a powerful history and culture. We are delighted to work with Sunderland City Council and other local partners to help drive the change and investment in the city to keep it at the forefront of opportunities. There are ambitious plans for Sunderland and as a key employer and provider of important services in the city, we are in a good position to help drive forward and assist in this important work.

We can only do this if we get our day jobs right, working with our tenants, continuing to do things well, and when we get it wrong, learning from our mistakes and putting things right quickly.

I fully believe that whilst the journey ahead will have some challenges, the great spirit and passion of the people of Sunderland will build a strong and vibrant future for all.

### **Nigel Wilson**

Group Chief Executive Officer

**“Our vision is to provide great homes, ensure our communities are strong and resilient and inspire both our tenants and our colleagues across Sunderland.”**

# Introduction

## from our Chair, Keith Loraine OBE

I'm very pleased to welcome you to Gentoo Group's Annual Report for 19-20 which celebrates a year of significant achievement in Sunderland and continued positive change across the organisation.

We ended the year during quite unprecedented times, amidst a global pandemic the likes of which have never been seen before. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis has been felt far and wide - across the world and right here on our doorstep in Sunderland. We have all seen the enormous impact of the virus in our local communities and I would like to pass on our heartfelt condolences to those in our wider Gentoo Community who have lost a loved one as a result of the pandemic. I would also like to record our thanks for the heroic efforts of our key workers in the NHS and those who serve in other essential Public Services.



Fellow Board Members and I have been hugely impressed by the clear sense of social purpose and care which has underpinned the work our colleagues have carried out for our tenants and residents across the city. We hold a unique position as Sunderland's principal provider of social and affordable housing, enabling us to make a real difference in the communities we serve. The way in which our teams have responded and adapted to enforced changes in our working practices, whilst continuing to support tenants, is something we are rightly proud of.

Although the events of early 2020 have been hugely challenging, I would not want this to overshadow the fantastic progress we have witnessed at Gentoo during 19-20. On behalf of the Board, I would like to congratulate Nigel Wilson on his first full year as Chief Executive Officer and commend him for the positive transformation and change we have seen across the organisation under his leadership.

In September 2019 we received positive news from the Regulator of Social Housing regarding the Group's governance rating, confirming that we had moved from a non-compliant G3 to a compliant G2. This was extremely pleasing given the hard work and commitment that has been invested in the organisation's recovery over recent years. We are well advanced in the process of rebuilding our reputation on all fronts and delivering a return to a G1 rating from the Regulator remains a key priority.

We have further strengthened our Board this year to ensure we have the necessary breadth and balance of skills and perspectives to provide the best level of support and constructive challenge to our Executive Team. I am delighted and proud to have assembled such a high-quality team and my thanks go to them all for their continued support.

Looking ahead we are absolutely committed to ensuring Gentoo continues to build, improve and modernise its homes to meet the needs and expectations of our customers. The launch of our new Affordable Homes Programme alongside our ongoing commitment to significant investment programmes in our existing properties, will help ensure we continue to meet the needs of the people of Sunderland.

**Keith Loraine OBE**  
Gentoo Group Chair

**"Looking ahead we are absolutely committed to ensuring Gentoo continues to build, improve and modernise its homes to meet the needs and expectations of our customers."**

# About us

**Our tenants are at the heart of everything we do. They set the direction of our business and ensure we create social value by improving the lives of our tenants.**

## **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**





**We are proud of what we have achieved throughout 2019/20 and hope you find this report useful in reading about the further positive transformation we have driven forward in Sunderland this past year.**



# **DRIVING FORWARD POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION ON WEAR SIDE**







# Place

**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

This past year we have continued to invest heavily in improving and modernising our existing homes, with investment schemes topping £41 million. We also launched our new ambitious Affordable Homes Plan that aims to tackle the housing shortage in Sunderland, by bringing 900 homes to the city by 2024.

We have continued to support the Government's national housing strategy by delivering new homes for sale through Gentoo Homes, as we aim to meet the needs of local people in the North East who wish to get their foot on the property ladder.



# Place



94%

## tenant satisfaction for repairs service!

Our responsive repairs service is vital in ensuring we keep our tenants safe and secure in their homes and we were delighted to receive a 95% tenant satisfaction score for 2019/20. Last year we continued to provide a dedicated 24/7 service to carry out both routine and emergency repairs, as well as vital compliance checks for gas and electricity, with repairs visits exceeding 169,580! We have continued to work in partnership with Jewson to support the modernisation of this service, to provide parts and materials, and we're pleased with the progress the partnership has made to ensure we provide an efficient and effective service for our tenants that is value for money.

## Investment in existing homes hits £41m

We recognise the importance of improving our existing housing stock and want to provide safe and secure homes for our tenants. We have launched our ambitious £417 million business plan which outlines a significant investment in existing homes, including £22 million to install double glazing to 9,000 homes by 2024.

We will continue to maintain this level of investment to ensure our tenants' homes are safe and secure. This past year we have continued to invest heavily in modernising our existing properties to ensure they are up to standard, with £41 million injected to improve our tenants' homes.

- 1,858** heating systems upgraded
- 98** properties received gable end works
- 730** buildings had roofs replaced
- 1,000** properties fitted with double glazed windows
- 151** properties received a new kitchen and/or bathroom
- 2,337** properties decorated externally
- 8** tower blocks and 26 low rise blocks received communal decoration
- 169,580** repair visits carried out in 2019/20
- 83%** of our repairs were completed right first time



# Ambitious Affordable Homes Plan launches

We were extremely pleased to launch our new ambitious Affordable Homes Plan to bring 900 additional homes for rent to Sunderland by 2024. We are investing a huge £117 million to achieve this ambition and we're hugely excited to begin work on 11 new schemes in 2021. These developments are located right across the breadth of the city to ensure we deliver new homes for tenants and residents in all corners of Sunderland, with a range of fantastic new modern and energy efficient house types.

Work started to bring more affordable homes into Gentoo's portfolio last year through the acquisition of homes on schemes in Great Lumley and Washington, with building work also getting underway at Keelman Rise and Brockwell Green in Downhill and Fence Houses respectively.



# Place

## Pioneering Core 364 launches

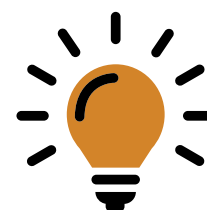
We were delighted to begin work on our pioneering Core 364 project, which is a unique scheme that is bringing a renewable energy supply to seven tower blocks and 364 homes in the city, supplying both renewable heat and hot water by using energy from the Earth's core.

The scheme, which is being delivered in partnership with Engie, Kensa Heat Pumps, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and Hall and Partners, involves the installation of a ground source heat pump to supply residents with energy, alongside what is thought to be the largest gas removal project in high rise tower blocks in the UK.

Old gas boilers will be replaced with ground-breaking ground source technology, all properties within the scheme will be fitted with state-of-the-art sprinkler systems to improve the fire safety of the building for tenants, as well as smart meters fitted to help tenants better manage their energy usage. The unique scheme will help to tackle fuel poverty in the blocks, with tenants expected to see energy bill savings of around 25%.

# 25%

energy bill savings  
via Core 364

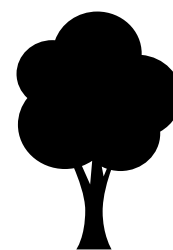


# 3.4m

square metres of grass cut –  
or, 475 football pitches!

# 4,531

trees inspected



# 2,201

fly-tipping and graffiti  
reports actioned

# 880

safety inspections to play parks

## Our neighbourhoods

We believe that greener and cleaner estates can assist our tenants to live more sustainable lifestyles and be proud of their home and area. This is a vital part of the work we do to ensure our neighbourhoods are safe and places our tenants are proud to live in.

We continue to work closely with our involved tenants on this service, through our Rate Your Estate assessment programme, to ensure our tenants scrutinise the work we do to maintain our estates. This is important to ensure our work meets the standards our tenants expect.







# gentoo homes

## 5 Star Home Builder

### Gentoo Homes pushes forward with ambitious plans

Our profit for purpose commercial house building arm, Gentoo Homes, helps us to support the Government's housing policy, by building high quality new homes that allow local people onto the housing ladder. Gentoo Homes generates a vital surplus that is reinvested into Gentoo's delivery of social and affordable rented homes across the city. This past year it has pushed forward with its ambitious plans to build close to 200 new homes for sale across the North East region.



# 189

new homes sold



# £1.7m

surplus reinvested  
back into Gentoo



# Five

star status



### Five-star status

We were delighted to celebrate Gentoo Homes being awarded five star builder status by the Home Builders Federation this year – a fantastic achievement for the team and outstanding recognition for the high levels of customer satisfaction we continue to receive.





# 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 tenants and residents are at the forefront of this and the role of our colleagues is central to ensuring we deliver a service that meets their needs and keeps them safe.**

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

Throughout 2019/20, we have continued to invest heavily in supporting both our tenants and our colleagues and have been proud of our people achievements.



# People



## Money Matters service and financial inclusion

Our specialist Money Matters Team has continued to provide advice and support to tenants who may need financial support or help with managing their finances. We aim to work with our tenants to help them maximise their income, reduce debt and remove financial barriers. We know this is a vital service that our tenants value and appreciate.

We have seen even more tenants move onto Universal Credit over the past year and our dedicated team have continued to support tenants in their transition.

This hasn't come without its challenges, but colleagues have done some fantastic work to ensure our tenants have been fully supported when moving onto the new payment arrangement. This is clear by the significant number of tenants who are in credit on their rent accounts.

**£1,114,456**

**Additional income for tenants  
via Money Matters**

**51%**

**of tenants who are on  
Universal Credit are in credit**





## More tenants helped into employment through Wise Steps

Our Wise Steps programme has continued to provide one to one specialist support to help tenants take positive steps towards securing employment. We have partnered with other organisations, to create employment and training opportunities for our tenants, as we aim to remove barriers to work.



### Building our workforce of the future

We have remained committed to building our workforce of the future by continuing to recruit apprentices. Our 2019 apprenticeship recruitment programme saw 16 individuals gain employment with the Group, across a variety of roles, including housing management, arboriculture, electrical, surveying and paralegal. A further three people completed their apprenticeships in 2019/20 and went on to gain permanent employment with Gentoo.

Our new apprentices, who came out on top of 1,150 applicants for the vacancies, started their apprenticeships on salaries of £12,500, which is £5,200 above the minimum apprentice wage. Upon completion of each year of their apprenticeship, their pay will increase by £3,000. Since we were founded in 2001, we have created 276 apprenticeship opportunities for local people, with 90% of apprentices going on to full-time, permanent employment within the business.

**101**



**people supported  
by Wise Steps job  
coaches**

**14**

**people successfully  
gained employment**

**10**

**people successfully  
completed  
vocational training**

**9**

**people moved  
from claiming  
benefits to job  
searching activities**

**58**

**work experience  
placements  
provided within  
Gentoo**

**276**

**apprenticeships  
created since 2001**

# People



## Safety and support service continues to protect most vulnerable tenants

We have continued to provide various specialist services to our most vulnerable tenants throughout 2019/20, offering vital domestic abuse and social inclusion support, as well as a specialist anti-social behaviour service.

Our Positive Engagement Team have worked with 174 tenants in relation to mental health issues and drug and alcohol addiction, empowering tenants to overcome problems in these areas and to achieve a better quality of life.

Our Victim Support Team has continued to support tenants who have been victims of domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, with 211 people benefitting from specialist support.

Our Safeguarding Team has continued to coordinate safeguarding alerts across our properties, working closely with the city's children's services, Together for Children, to protect more than 260 adults and children.

# 174

tenants supported through positive engagement

# 211

domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour cases

# 187

child safeguarding alerts



# 89

adult safeguarding alerts

## Colleagues key to driving forward positive change

Our colleagues are the lifeblood of our business and are what makes Gentoo so unique. We believe that our strength and uniqueness comes from the dedication, passion, skills and energy of our colleagues and we are committed to their development and growth.

We have transformed the organisation over recent years and our colleagues have continued to drive positive change to ensure we are delivering the best and most efficient service to our tenants as possible.

The creation of our colleague-led Employee Forum has also been a huge milestone for us, with an elected group of 16 colleagues now working together to ensure the voice of our colleagues is heard and playing an important role in influencing the running of and the future direction of the business.



Gentoo is proud to be a values-driven organisation and this past year we were incredibly proud to be awarded with an Investors in People Gold accreditation for our hard work and commitment to further developing a positive working culture across our workforce.



We believe everyone deserves a fair wage and were delighted to be awarded with the Living Wage accreditation last year.









# Perform

**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



# Perform

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.

**89%**

**of tenants were satisfied with the condition of their home when moving in**

**94%**

**of tenants were satisfied with our Repairs and Maintenance service**

**91%**

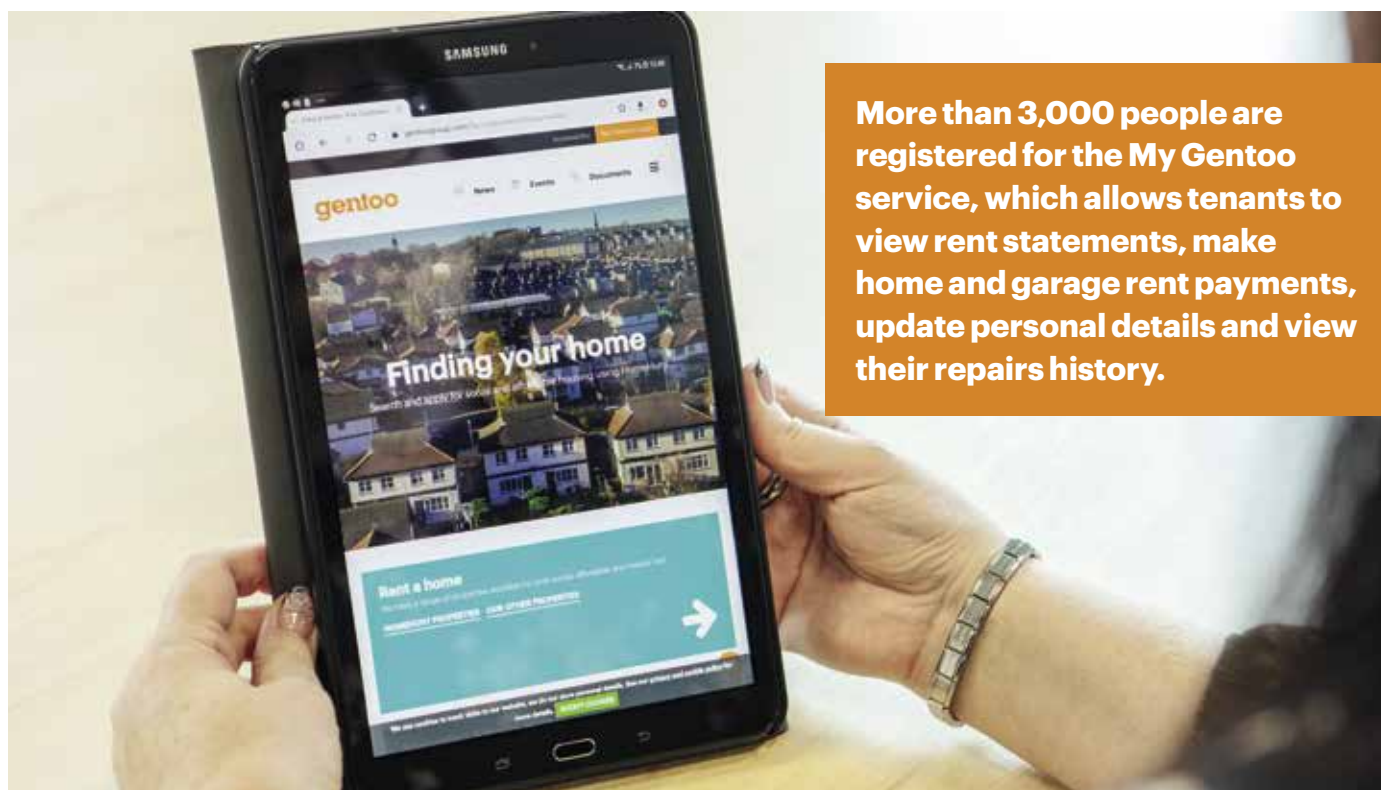
**of tenants were satisfied with planned maintenance work to their home**

**98%**

**of tenants satisfied with the support received from our Money Matters Team**

**99%**

**of tenants satisfied with our Positive Engagement service**



## Gas safety records have moved online

As a landlord, we must carry out an annual gas safety check in each of our properties by law. We must also provide tenants with a copy of the gas safety record for their homes.

This past year we have decided to move all gas safety records for our properties online, with paper copies no longer being produced. Tenants are now able to visit our website and login to our gas safety portal, where they can view the gas safety records for the property.

This is small change in the way we deliver our landlord compliance service that will provide increased value for money, saving us an estimated £58,000 per year.

## Pushing forward digital transformation

We have continued to make good progress in transforming our organisation digitally, ensuring we invest in technology that allows us to put digital services at the forefront of our offer. As part of our ongoing digitalisation, we've seen a huge increase in the number of tenants who have registered for our online self service portal, My Gentoo, with more than 3,000 tenants now registered.

We're also set to launch our online repairs service, which is an exciting new feature that will allow tenants to report, amend and cancel routine repairs to their home.



# Perform

## Putting our tenants' voice at the heart of what we do

Putting our tenants' voice at the heart of what we do is one of our top priorities and this past year we were delighted to be an early adopter in the National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants programme. This is part of our commitment to have positive relationships with our tenants and as we continue to listen to our tenants and ensure their voices are heard.

We have actively worked with our tenants and residents across a number of different channels to ensure their needs and feedback are at the heart of everything we do. This has included the transformation of our USTOO tenant scrutiny group, as well as the creation of a Young Persons Community Engagement Forum, which is part of our commitment to our younger tenants to ensure their voice is heard and they are able to influence our decision making.





## Board commits to HACT Charter for Community Investment



We were delighted to become the first housing association in the UK to sign up to the Board Charter for Community Investment. Developed by HACT, the housing sector's leading ideas and innovation agency, the Charter aims to encourage Board-level ownership of community investment and help maximise and measure the impact of community investment activity. It's been developed so that housing associations can demonstrate a clear commitment to investing in the communities in which they provide homes and deliver services, in a strategic and impactful way. Investing in our local communities is fundamental to what Gentoo stands for and right at the heart of our social purpose and we look forward to further ensuring community investment is at the heart of our future strategy.

*"We congratulate the Group Board of Gentoo in signing up to the Board Charter for Community Investment. As the first housing association in the UK to sign up to the Charter, Gentoo has demonstrated its commitment to community investment and highlighted its role as one of the leading anchor institutions in Sunderland. Many social housing organisations are driving forward the community investment agenda and they recognise that there is now a significant opportunity for us to speak more collectively, effectively and publicly, formalising our long-term commitment and ensuring our social purpose is embedded across our businesses."*

**Andrew van Doorn**  
Chief Executive of HACT

## Continuing our governance recovery with further progress

We have continued to make strong progress on our journey to become a G1 rated organisation by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and this past year we were pleased to have regained a compliant G2 governance rating. The organisation has endured some difficult times over recent years and this achievement is testament to the dedication and commitment of our colleagues and our Board Members.

We are looking forward to a positive future and will continue to strive to achieve a G1 governance rating as we head toward our In Depth Assessment with the RSH.







# Partner

**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
- Work 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.





# Partner



## Transforming Sunderland

Sunderland is a great place to live, work, visit and invest in. It is on an exciting journey of transformation, with a number of developments and projects currently happening across the city. We have continued to work closely with our key city partners in driving forward positive change in Sunderland. In particular, our strategic partnership with Sunderland City Council has been key to this.

We continue to support the city council in its target to bring 7000 new homes to Sunderland by 2030, through the delivery of our 900-home £117 million Affordable Homes Plan. This includes the development of the Chester Gate housing development, as well as progressing partnership plans to build more affordable homes for rent at key sites on Wearside.

The city is spearheading a digital transformation and we are proud to be supporting the council's ambitious plans to rollout 5G technology and connectivity as part of its Smart City project.

It is important for our tenants to be digitally included and connected, which is why we have supported the installation of 5G as part of a pilot project at two of our high rise tower blocks in Roker to enhance network coverage for tenants and residents.

**Helping the city to deliver**

**7,000**

**new homes by 2030**



## Community partnership with Sunderland AFC launches

We were delighted to announce our community partnership with Sunderland AFC (SAFC) and the Foundation of Light, a registered charity of the football club, this year. We recognise the value of working in partnership with the culture and sport sector, and the huge potential we can release in the city by working together.

In conjunction with the Foundation of Light, we will deliver a range of activities aimed at helping tenants build skills for employment and facilitate engagement with young people.

We have also embraced the power and reach of the football club to drive digital engagement with our tenants, working with the club's players to share exclusive video content on our 'My Gentoo' online self service platform.

As part of the campaign to encourage more tenants to use our online portal, we also provided tenants with the opportunity to win match tickets to the club's home games throughout the season.

As part of the partnership, 30 colleagues from our Property Services division were treated to a special 'mental health team talk' from SAFC manager Phil Parkinson. The team talk took place in the player's dressing room at the Stadium of Light and formed part of the 'Time to Talk' and 'Heads Up' mental health campaigns that both Gentoo and SAFC were supporting. The aim of the event was to help eliminate the stigma of mental health and encourage colleagues to talk about mental health related issues and the benefit of the team talk to our colleagues was clear in the post-match press conference.



# Partner

## Supporting the city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we moved quickly to support the efforts across the city to aid the most vulnerable tenants and residents who were unable to leave their home for food.

We worked in partnership with Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Foodbank to prepare and deliver food parcels throughout the lockdown.

In total, our colleagues gave up more than 1,000 hours of their time to volunteer at the Foodbank to help those isolating and most in need.



## Tackling homelessness in the city

We believe everyone deserves the right to a home and we work in partnership with Sunderland City Council and the charity, Changing Lives, to provide safe and secure homes for people sleeping rough in the city. During 2019/20, we helped to provide a home for seven adults and one family who were sleeping rough.

We also provided temporary accommodation to a further 20 adults and 13 families in need. We continued to work closely with the city council and Changing Lives during lockdown.

## 1,000 volunteer hours

We are proud of the way in which we worked closely with the city council and the city's voluntary and community sector, setting up various hubs across Sunderland to support the city's most vulnerable tenants and residents, whilst working closely with community organisations who continued to provide services to our tenants and residents on the frontline.





## Influencing positive change nationally

We continue to work extremely closely with our sector partners to influence positive change on a national basis that will bring benefits for our tenants locally. Through our membership of the National Housing Federation, Homes for the North, Northern Housing Consortium, Placeshapers,

Housing Partnership UK and the Chartered Institute of Housing, 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 will continue to push for greater support for the social housing sector from the Government and continue to campaign for further levelling up of investment in the north.

## Christmas celebrations

We have a long-standing tradition at Christmas time, which aims to bring some festive cheer to our tenants and residents across the city. This past year we decided to step our commitment up a notch, by involving even more tenants.

Partnering with organisations across the city, such as Northumbria Police, Sunderland City Council and Empire Cinema, we were able to spread some cheer to hundreds of our tenants and families.



# 120

**families attended a free private screening of Frozen 2 and provided with snacks and gifts**

# 100

**Christmas dinners and desserts were delivered to families across the city**



## Working with our contractors

We work closely with our principal contractors to support the delivery of our social value initiatives. This commitment resulted in a number of unique opportunities for our tenants and the city with a social value of approximately £1.1million. During 2019/20, our social investment activities were supported by four of our main contractor partners, Engie, Kier, Bell Group and Jewson. Between the contractors, we received support for a number of initiatives, including our Give it a Grow gardening competition, The Genfactor and Work Discovery Week, as well as through the provision of work experience, apprenticeship and employment opportunities for local people.









# Pride

**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, and
- 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.





# Pride



## Launch of the Positive Footsteps programme

Giving young people the best chance to succeed is huge part of the work we carry out across our communities. This past year we were delighted to work with Positive Footsteps to launch its 'Raising Aspirations' programme in Sunderland for the first time.

The programme was setup to inspire local primary school children in developing their future life and career aspirations. The programme is adaptable, with children achieving employability skills at the end of the course including CV writing and preparing for interviews.

## Two new corporate charities announced

We were delighted to launch a partnership with two local charities in Sunderland, following a vote that was cast across our 1,100 colleagues. Our colleagues voted to support St Benedict's Hospice and Action on Dementia Sunderland as our two corporate charities for 2020.

These charities play a hugely important role in the local community and we are proud to be supporting them with both resources and fundraising during 2020.



## Supporting the voluntary and community sector

We are proud to support the voluntary and community sector in Sunderland and have worked closely with a number of key groups across the city to further support services for our tenants and residents. Sunderland has an extremely strong voluntary and community sector and we have been delighted to work with many of them over the past year, including Fans Museum, Shiney Advice and Resource Project, Fulwell Community Library, Ryhope Seaview Angling Club, Young Asian Voices, Box Youth Project and Easington Lane.

We have continued to support voluntary and community groups by providing grants through our Aspire Grant Programme. The programme, which is overseen by our tenants who are part of our Community Engagement Forums, awarded £24,894 to 56 groups in 2019/20.

Our commercial house builder, Gentoo Homes, also provides grants to local groups in the areas in which they build new homes. Last year it awarded £8,000 in grants to 13 local groups.

**£24,894** awarded to 56 groups through our Aspire Scheme

£

£

## Empower Sunderland Community Fund

Gentoo is contracted by Empower Community Solar (ECS) to manage more than 10,000 solar panel systems in Sunderland and across the UK. The unique partnership generates income for the Group through shared profit as a result of the solar panels installed across our properties. In 2019/20, the portfolio's profit share generated income of £173,106, alongside £132,715 generated from the Feed-in Tariff, all of which was able to be reinvested back into the Group's housing services.

As part of this scheme, other shared profit is allocated to Empower Sunderland Community Fund – which is run independent of Gentoo, supports local voluntary and community groups in the city with money for energy efficiency and environmental sustainability initiatives.

In 2019/20, the fund supported five local voluntary and community projects with more than £50,000 in grant funding.

Fulwell Community Library, a community led library that provides free access to books and computers for the local community in the north of Sunderland, was just one of a number of places that benefitted from the fund in 2019/20. Empower funding was given to the library alongside financial support from Sunderland City Council, to support the installation of a new energy efficient heating system that has helped to save thousands of pounds in energy costs.



# Pride



## Genfactor celebrates tenth year as Riona is crowned winner

We were delighted to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Genfactor, with so many talented acts auditioning for this past year's competition. The talent contest gives young people in Sunderland the opportunity to showcase their talents, build confidence and grow. Many of the finalists and previous winners have gone on to do great things, including studying at prestigious performing arts colleges and competing on national TV talent shows. The competition is now in its tenth year and more than 1,000 young people have taken part.

In 2019, 95 young people auditioned, with the incredibly talented singer Riona Sorianosos stealing the hearts and minds of the judges and the audience to be crowned the winner.

We're delighted to say that Riona has gone to sing on the big stage at a number of large scale events in the North East since winning The Genfactor and we look forward to watching Riona grow as she realises her huge potential.



## Award winners

We were delighted to be crowned 'Employer of the Year' at the Sunderland Echo's Portfolio Awards. This was an outstanding achievement that was only possible as a result of the hard work and dedication of our colleagues to deliver a fantastic service for our tenants.



We have continuously pushed forward positive transformation and over the past year have made great strides in driving a One Gentoo culture and crucially allowed us to refocus on what we do best - providing good quality affordable housing for the people of Sunderland.

As an organisation that has equality and diversity embedded in everything it does, we were delighted to be once again specially recognised by LGBTQ charity, Stonewall, by being ranked second in its Workplace Equality Index and also being recognised in the charity's top Trans employer list.



## Supporting our armed forces community

We hugely value the service and dedication of the armed forces community in Sunderland and have a commitment to support existing and former members through the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Covenant.

We are extremely proud to hold the gold award as part of the Employer Recognition Scheme. The Covenant is part of our promise to treat those who serve or have served and their families fairly. We're also a member of Sunderland Armed Forces Partnership and work with like-minded organisations in the city. In November 2019, following our work to house over 500 families where someone has served in the UK Armed Forces, Veterans in Crisis Sunderland awarded Gentoo Platinum Partner Status.

## Reward and recognition of our colleagues

We're proud of the people we employ and the difference our colleagues make to the lives of local people on a daily basis. We launched our 'You Are Gentoo' scheme to acknowledge the fantastic work delivered by our colleagues all year around, which allows colleagues to nominate one another for special recognition. Over the course of the first year, we received more than 600 nominations to recognise and value the important contributions of colleagues. We were delighted to work in partnership with Sunderland Culture and the National Glass Centre, to create our bespoke award trophies that were especially made for our colleagues in Sunderland.



# Our performance

We have developed a clear and concise dashboard to demonstrate our performance as a landlord to our tenants. The data below shows how we have performed against key performance indicators for the financial year 2019/20.

Current rent arrears

**£1.65m**



Average time to re-let a property

**49 days**



Formal complaint performance

**78%**

dealt with in line with our service standards



Telephone calls performance

Operations Team received **236,369** telephone calls with an average wait time of ten seconds

Property Team received **181,895** telephone calls with an average wait time of 78 seconds



Tenant satisfaction with repairs

**94%**



Repairs completed on time

**84%**



Repairs completed right first time

**83%**



# Our social impact

As a housing association, we are uniquely positioned to make a real difference in the communities in which we serve, through the provision of services that deliver real social value. These services have a long lasting and life changing impact on tenants and residents and this summary demonstrates the huge social impact we have had in Sunderland during 2019/20.

**£4,046,265** 

total social value generated

## Place



**900**

new homes for  
affordable rent by 2024

**£41m**

invested in major works and  
improvements to properties

## People



Advised tenants on  
more than

**£1m** of debt

**211**

victims of anti-social behaviour  
and domestic abuse supported

## Partner



**1,000**

volunteering hours at  
Sunderland Foodbank

**£1.1m**

in social value generated  
through principal contractors

## Pride



**500**

Armed Forces  
families housed

**75%**

of colleagues living and  
working in Sunderland  

## Perform



**£440,618**

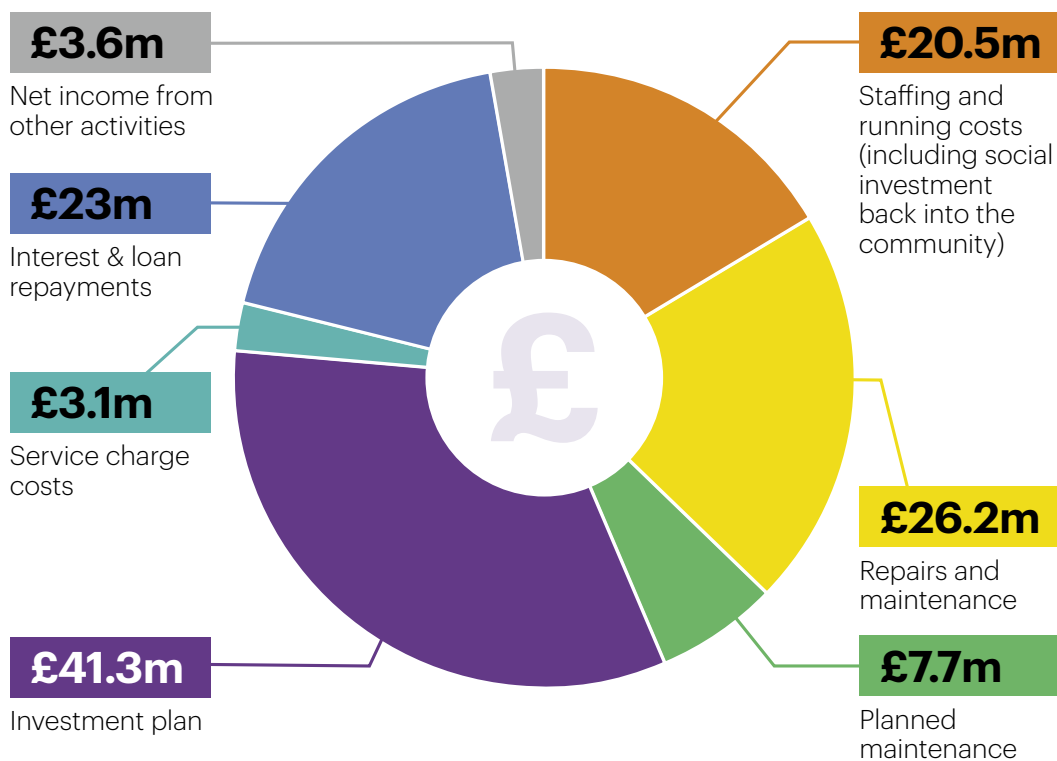
social value from tenant  
engagement activities

**3,000**

tenants registered for My  
Gentoo self service portal



# How we spend our income



We believe that in order to achieve our goals, we must operate as a compliant, efficient and effective 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.

Value for money is a key driver of the services we provide on behalf of our tenants and residents and it is embedded in everything we do. We recognise that it is not just simply about the cost, it's about identifying the right balance in how our resources are best utilised.

Over recent years, we have transformed the organisation and have implemented a renewed focus on the core activities of a provider of social and affordable housing. This has allowed us to prioritise investment in our housing stock that we recognise should have been completed before now, as well as launch a new Affordable Homes Programme that aims to address a shortage of affordable rented housing in Sunderland. A refocus on our core housing functions has ultimately allowed us to ensure our services are effective, efficient and meeting the needs of our tenants.

Throughout 2019/20, we have continued to meet the Group's strategic and operational value for money objectives, whilst ensuring external benchmarking continues to be carried out to understand how our costs and performance compare to others in the sector. Value for money is central to the future success of the organisation and critical to ensuring we deliver an efficient service to our tenants. We continue to develop our capacity to invest in new and existing homes to meet the housing needs of local people.

# Our financial statements 19/20

	2020 Total £'000	2019 Total £'000
Turnover	172,203	177,145
Cost of sales	(37,851)	(37,666)
Gross profit	134,352	139,479
Operating expenditure	(107,498)	(105,067)
Other operating income	199	370
Surplus on disposal of tangible fixed assets	1,552	2,146
<b>Operating surplus</b>	<b>28,605</b>	<b>36,928</b>
<i>Analysed as:</i>		
Operating surplus before exceptional pension past service costs	28,605	42,728
Exceptional pension past service costs	-	(5,800)
Operating surplus after exceptional items	28,605	36,928
Interest receivable and similar income	1,424	1,445
Interest payable and similar charges	(23,570)	(24,643)
Revaluation of fixed asset investments	603	220
Fair value adjustment for investment property	(550)	(557)
(Deficit) / surplus on disposal of investment properties	(119)	116
Fair value adjustment	(129)	(82)
<b>Surplus before taxation</b>	<b>6,264</b>	<b>13,427</b>
Tax on surplus	(228)	(237)
<b>Surplus for the financial year</b>	<b>6,036</b>	<b>13,190</b>
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		
Actuarial gain in respect of pension scheme	12,310	12,910
Restriction of pension asset	(460)	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>17,886</b>	<b>26,100</b>

# Governance

## Group Board

We would like to thank the Gentoo Group 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. 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.

## Our Board and Committee Members



**Keith Loraine, OBE**  
Chair



**Emily Cox, MBE**



**Alison Fellows**



**Leslie Herbert**



**Carol Long**



**Claire Long**  
(appointed 1 May 2020)



**David Murtagh**



**Debra Waller**  
(appointed 23 July 2020)



**Dianne Sharp**  
(appointed 1 May 2020)



**Brian Spears**



**Philip Tye**



**Chris Watson**



**Susan Johnson**  
Independent Risk Special



**Ged Walsh**  
Independent Development  
Committee Member

## Board Members who have resigned during the year

**Colin Blakey** (resigned 29 January 2020)

**Colin English** (resigned 15 May 2019)

**Michael Essl** (appointed 15 May 2019,  
resigned 10 June 2020)

**Frank Nicholson** (resigned 29 January 2020)



# The future's bright



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

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



Gentoo Group Limited is a charitable community benefit  
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