

NHMF Best Practice Award Submission

Category – How Gentoo is best at meeting residents needs in
provision of maintenance service



Who we are

Gentoo is a people and property business that exists solely to generate and deliver enduring opportunities and solutions.

Their firm foundations were laid in Sunderland in 2001, when the City's tenants voted overwhelmingly to transfer 36,000 homes to Gentoo (then SHG). In their first 5 years, Gentoo have shown commitment, with over £400 million invested back into people and property.

During this period, Gentoo have had a number of success stories, including achieving the Decent Homes standard for their housing stock five years ahead of schedule, increasing the value of their stock to over £1 billion and commencement of an ambitious programme of housing renewal – using Housing Association Grant levels that are among the lowest in the UK.

Gentoo Sunderland is the Housing Association of the Gentoo Group, responsible for delivering core housing management services and maintenance to approximately 70,000 customers in 30,000 homes. Customer service and business improvement is high on their agenda, with over 4,000 customers actively involved.

Employing over 821 staff (47% of the Group), Gentoo Sunderland provide a wide range of services for customers, from tackling anti-social behaviour to carrying out repairs and maintenance.

Gentoo now want to build on their successes to date and go on to achieve even more. With a vision that encompasses more than property alone, Gentoo aim to have a tangible, positive effect on the way people and communities live, develop and improve.

Gentoo Sunderland Repairs and Maintenance Service

The Repairs and Maintenance section employs 560 staff and provide a comprehensive service to Customers.

The services delivered by the Repairs and Maintenance section include

- Day to day repairs for all trades carried out by highly qualified staff
- Grounds Maintenance Service
- Estate Services including cleaning and caretaking
- Concierge providing a 24/7 service
- 24/7 Out of hours repairs service for emergency repairs
- Dedicated specialist Maintenance section which includes Gas, Electrical, Drainage, Glazing and Preservation

Delivering the service

Following a restructure of the management of repairs and maintenance the business now runs across three definitive sections:

- Day to day operation
- New Business
- Service Improvement.

Each section has a dedicated team of staff which allows them to concentrate their efforts on their respective roles. Gentoo Sunderland customers can now have certain repairs carried out either early evening on a Wednesday or on a Saturday morning. This allows for more flexibility and customer choice.

To make our repairs service the best it can possibly be, Gentoo Sunderland has a number of services which come as standard. These are:

- To carry out all repairs within agreed response times
- To carry out all repairs to the home when it is convenient to the customer
- Offer a variety of easy-to-use ways of reporting repairs
- Give clear information on the main aspects of the repairs and maintenance service

Technology

As part of our on-going commitment to providing an excellent maintenance service to our customers, Gentoo Sunderland carried out a fundamental service review of the repairs service in 2006 which promoted sound management and innovation.

In 2007 Gentoo then carried out a full and intense tender process to decide which scheduling/hand held solution was most appropriate to meet the needs of the business.

The most appropriate solution for Gentoo was Wheatley Associate's GRASP system.

The system currently processes approx 3,500 responsive repairs a week. We use O2 XDA Argon handheld units to transfer the job details to the workforce. This method of working has not only driven priority performance and efficiency to a new high for the Group, but has played a part in increasing customer satisfaction. The Gentoo team also carries out gas servicing by this method.

Gentoo's operational Customer Service Centre consists of a dedicated team of call operators with access to a computer based repairs diagnosis tool, locator plus, accessible within arcHouse, Gentoo's housing management and repairs software. This aids in the correct diagnosis of the required repair therefore allowing more jobs to be completed first visit. Once the repair is diagnosed, the repair details are transferred to GRASP and an appointment time is agreed with the customer. This works order is then scheduled to the appropriate trade staff.

Gentoo currently have a team of schedulers who are assigned to specific trades. The schedulers use GRASP to allocate work to the appropriate trade staff based on their skills and location. The GRASP system also assists in achieving the most efficient route for each of the trade staff to carry out their duties. Real time monitoring on the day of the repair is also carried out by the schedulers. All jobs are sent to the handheld devices on the evening before the works are to commence. An SMS message is then sent to customers.

Our trades staff send a text message to customers to advise they are on route to attend their repair.

On completion of the repairs, real time information regarding start and finish times, work completed etc are passed back to the GRASP system and the jobs are displayed in a different colour indicating to the scheduler that the job is now complete (see diagram).

This gives greater control and improves customer satisfaction and efficiency of the work force. Urgent jobs can then be passed to the handheld where gaps are identified and given to the tradesman closest to the address. This shows value for money and drives efficiency.

Any further work required at the property is also put through the handheld which enables jobs to be raised immediately back at the depot. Repairs Managers are no longer office based. They are supplied with 3G laptops and connect back to all Gentoo computer systems from anywhere in the city which allows for real time monitoring of the staff.

In order to drive towards a paper less service provision the trades staff now complete their daily vehicle check sheet on their Hand held.

Various monitoring tools and reports are available real time via the Gentoo Dashboard. The dashboard is an innovative tool which was designed in house by our ICT GRASP implementation team.

This tool is paramount to driving up productivity as Managers can see at a glance what volume of work is being completed each day per operative. Since the introduction of GRASP the productivity of Gentoo Sunderland has increased year on year as shown below. Jobs completed on time, average number of days taken to complete a repair and percentage of jobs completed first visit have all increased over the past three years.

Gentoo Sunderland repairs and maintenance also offers a 24 hour a day seven days per week concierge service. This service not only monitors all of our sheltered schemes and multi storey blocks but also offers an emergency standby service for repairs to be carried out and reported outside of normal office hours. The concierge service also carries out this function to private customers and monitors the prestigious echo 24 building in the heart of the City.

Service Improvements

Gentoo regularly review services to ensure continuous and progressive improvements are made to increase performance, productivity and customer service. We have a Service Improvement Plan which takes into account feedback and suggestions from a cross section of people including staff, tradesmen, customers and focus groups.

Some examples of the above introduced this year include

- Baton doors – we now make, supply & fit our own doors. These are painted prior to fitment so that the job is fully complete at the first visit
- Semi –skilled – we are currently setting up a “skills” trade on the GRASP system for this “trade”. This will enable us to identify smaller works with the emphasis being to enable customers to get an earlier appointment. We have identified 116 jobs which the semi-skilled team will carry out which allows for the tradesmen to be allocated
- Meter cupboard doors – we now supply and fit electric meter cupboard doors as the utility company have stopped providing this service. We are currently looking in following suit with doors which encase gas meters as this will save any reliance on external contractors. Whilst we are currently in the early stages of this process the intention is for the doors to become van based stock which again will help get jobs completed at first visit and therefore improve customer service.
- Guttering repairs are to be moved from roofing to semi-skilled trade to so that guttering can become more planned.

- Evictions – we have recently spent time working with our Legal team to streamline the eviction process. The depots will raise the lock change tickets the day prior to the eviction or not at all if notification of an eviction is cancelled. This will prevent the carpentry bin becoming blocked with eviction tickets which are subsequently cancelled therefore creating diary space for genuine customer repairs. This will also prevent trades staff attending jobs which have been cancelled at short notice. This is being piloted in South Area throughout December.
- We have reviewed our standard minute value times. This should free diary space to allow more appointments to be booked and further eliminate open tickets again providing a better customer service.
- A Repairs & Maintenance handbook is currently being developed which will give customers a more comprehensive guide and also provide diagnostic diagrams. This should increase the opportunity of getting repairs completed at first visit.

Overall the service improvements made have been of benefit to our customers. We have regular customer focus groups with our customers where we consult on how we move the service forward. We use our customer to telephone other customers following completion of a repair so that we can get a real time feedback. This was recently written up as best practice in the chartered institute of housing guide “Improving Repairs and Maintenance Services”.

Within 48 hours of a repair being completed our Concierge team phone our customers and complete a customer satisfaction survey.

As shown in the table below our current satisfaction levels have improved significantly in the first 6 months of this year.

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
Very Satisfied	79	86	94	96	106	117
Fairly Satisfied	13	23	6	16	13	25
Neither	8	10	9	11	5	8
Fairly Dissatisfied	4	5	2	3	5	5
Very Dissatisfied	1	2	8	3	7	2
Total	105	126	119	129	136	157
Volume of Repairs	9190	9750	8556	10764	10158	8084
% V/F Satisfied	87.62%	86.51%	84.03%	86.82%	87.50%	90.45%
Neither	7.62%	7.94%	7.56%	8.53%	3.68%	5.10%
% V/F Dissatisfied	4.76%	5.56%	8.40%	4.65%	8.82%	4.46%
Check	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

As part of our on going commitment to improving customer service we have recently created two new Customer Service Manager posts dedicated to repairs and Maintenance. The primary role of these two staff members is to look at the route cause of customer complaints. The information will be analysed with trends identified, this in turn will help to shape the service improvement agenda.

The chart shows how we have captured and analysed our complaints for the first 7 months of this financial year.

Complaints 2009-2010							
	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct
Time Waited	21	18	30	34	23	15	21
Lack of Communication	43	14	18	23	24	19	20
No Show	3	0	3	5	1	2	0
Carded when tenant at home	6	2	3	1	3	2	1
Poor Workmanship	4	1	2	4	0	2	1
Staff Attitude	4	6	5	4	0	7	4
Turned up at wrong appointment time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Internal system failure/follow on work	18	7	13	7	8	7	7
Materials	0	3	0	3	3	0	0
Appointment time not met	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3rd Party	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
No appt card/ no text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disability issues/ time to get to door	0	0	1	0	0		0
External works carded	6	0	1	0		1	0
Customer expectations	4	6	10	6	7	6	7
Total	111	57	86	87	69	61	61
official logged complaints	82	39	63	70	54	49	48
Volume of Repairs	9,190	9,750	8,556	9,041	10,158	8,084	12,235
%	0.89%	0.40%	0.73%	0.77%	0.53%	0.60%	0.35%

Everything we do in repairs and maintenance is done with the customers' best interest at heart. For this reason a service improvement plan has been developed which structures what we want to achieve and how we will achieve this. This has been extremely successful in driving up performance and more importantly customer satisfaction. This was re-iterated by the results of the most recently completed status survey which showed that customer satisfaction has increased by 7% from the previous survey.

The staff in Repairs and Maintenance have received 326 compliments to date since April 2009.

We have recently introduced an asset management software package which will allow us to gather comprehensive property attribute information including energy performance certification, gas servicing certification, HHSRS documentation and hold all components of our properties

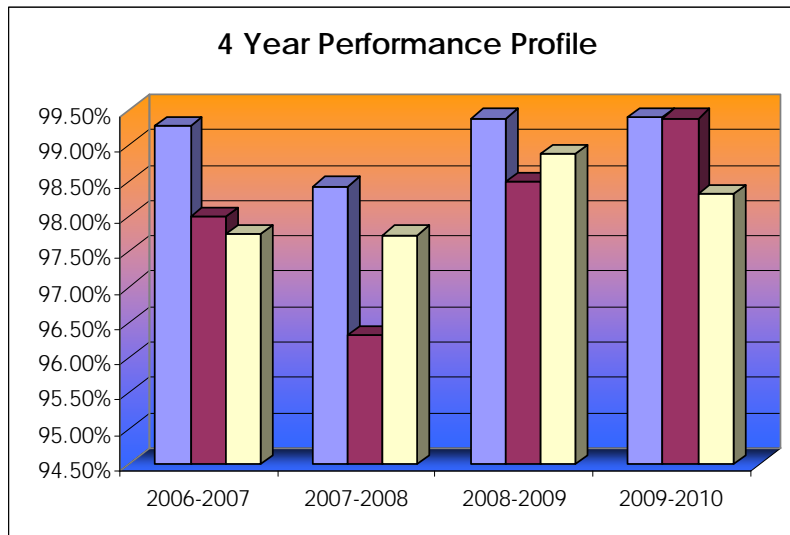
Gentoo have also recently purchased a Customer Relationship Management software package. This will allow us to hold the levels of customer information we require to tailor our services specifically to individual customers. It will also allow us to communicate better with our customers providing an audit history of customer interactions which will help us to provide our customers with a seamless service.

Performance

As a result of implementing GRASP and driving up productivity this in turn freed up resources. This allowed more repairs to be carried out in houses therefore reducing the external contractor cost by approximately seven hundred thousand pounds over the three years.

Additional savings have been made by the reducing overtime and cost on materials.

As a result maintenance budgets have been reduced.



These tables The Repairs and Maintenance performance for the past four years.

	% Jobs done on time
05/06	96.20%
06/07	98.15%
07/08	98.88%
08/09	99.09%
09/10	99.94%

	Average number of days
05/06	15.94
06/07	14.7
07/08	13.19
08/09	11.46
09/10	9.1

	% Jobs done 1 st visit
05/06	-
06/07	77.61%
07/08	84.62%
08/09	-
09/10	93.80%

The table below shows the current performance chart to date for this financial year for our specialised services.

Service Area	Emergency		Urgent		Routine	
	Jobs	%	Jobs	%	Jobs	%
Gas Repairs	671	98.51	5470	99.60	255	100
Electrical Repairs	105	99.05	663	100	1146	100
Mobility	17	100	17	100	121	100
Glazing	183	98.91	597	99.33	513	100
Drainage	1123	99.73	711	100	382	100
Preservation	-	-	-	-	175	98.29
Graffiti	16	100	17	100	217	100
Smoke Alarm Repairs	1	100	527	99.81	109	100
Totals Actual	2,116	99.46	8,002	99.82	2,918	99.78
Target %		99.40		98.50		99.00

Void performance

The two operational depots, Leechmere and Houghton, have an average target turn-around time, for standard voids, of 6.5 working days from keys arriving at the depot to keys being returned.

A total of 884 standard voids have been dealt with by the Maintenance Team City this year. Performance for the same period in 2008/09 was 6.63 days against a target of 6.5 days.

We have recently introduced service testing of the void lettable standard within Maintenance. Some of our customers from our Repairs Customer Focus Group are carrying out an independent inspection of the property once it is ready to be relet and comparing the standard against the published lettable standard.

With regards to grounds maintenance, 348 reactive jobs were completed in the same period and 148 void gardens cleared.

A total of 8136 standby calls were answered with 5042 of these job calls attended.

09-10	Actual days	Target Days
Qtr 1	6.14 days	6.5 days
Qtr 2	5.72 days	6.5 days
Total	5.93 days	6.5 days

New business

In the first 6 months of the current financial year the New Business team from Gentoo Sunderland received 2,908 phone calls relating to New Business.

The table below provides an overview analysis of the number and type of request for service the repairs and maintenance team in the first half of this financial year.

	R & M	Arbor	GM	TOTAL
Central	50	10	15	75
South	52	28	7	87
Washington	48	20	12	80
North	45	10	8	63
Houghton	55	7	12	74
Out of area	20	5	2	27
	270	80	56	406

Subsequently this has generated over 1,376 requests for services provided by the section of which 406 jobs have been won equating to an overall success rate of 29.5%.

Requests continue to be varied and have included enquiries about, provision of an out of hour's standby service, CCTV installation and monitoring; in addition to day to day maintenance requests.

The work carried out by the section includes, routine repairs, home improvements, production of energy performance certificates (both commercial and domestic), grounds maintenance, landscaping works, arboriculture services, in addition to consultancy services. The most popular services requested are plumbing, joinery, gardening and electrical, with the majority of referrals being through word of mouth.

- New business testimonials

Paul Hayman, Operation Director, Multiassistance Limited:

"I would like to pass on my personal thanks and congratulations for all of Gentoo's efforts and actions. Multiassistance is fast approaching a critical point in the project and our collective efforts and co-operation is of the utmost importance if we are to continue to deliver excellent service."

Che Thornton, Grangetown, Sunderland:

"The service we received from Gentoo was fantastic – they turned up on time and the work was done competently and quickly. We will definitely be using Gentoo again."

Chris Gilliead, Director, Pattinson Scientific Services Ltd:

"We have worked with Gentoo since 2001. Close bonds and relationships have built up over the years giving us a level of trust and satisfaction in the work they carry out on our behalf. Gentoo's professional staff ensure high standards that have been set, are continuously maintained, but also provide a comfortable and friendly solution to our business requirements."

Angela Reed, Doxford Park, Sunderland

"We used Gentoo because we recognised the name and were happy with the quote. The staff that came to our home were extremely efficient, friendly and helpful and we were so

impresses we've already gone back to Gentoo to have some other work done on our garden!"

Repairs and Maintenance also house the Grounds Maintenance service and Arbor team. Both teams have successfully won several large contracts for new business based on quality of work. Grounds maintenance have recently introduced GIS, an innovative system of working which will allow grounds maintenance to accurately plot areas of land and tasks on a visual information system. This allows us to interrogate land for new business quotes and also monitor productivity more easily.

To comply with the change in regulation Gentoo Sunderland also now employ their own team of energy assessors who are responsible for producing the required energy performance certificates. This will also allow us to look at new business in this field.

Community

Gentoo Sunderland Repairs and Maintenance have recently completed a new initiative to help some of our most vulnerable customers to manage their tenancies. The five-week programme was offered to seven of our customers aged between 16 and 25, with the aim to teach them basic life skills.

Christine Smith, Service Implementation Manager at Gentoo Sunderland initially came up with the initiative during a customer involvement focus group. The group were discussing how to involve more of their young customers in the organisation, when Christine had the idea of offering repairs and maintenance training to younger customers.

The programme taught seven selected customers, skills in areas such as joinery, tiling, plumbing, plastering, gardening and cleaning.

The initiative helped to support our young customers by teaching them basic skills which will help them to look after their homes in the future.

This is a demonstration of customer involvement at its best, as the customers received first class training from tradesmen and managers from the repairs and maintenance division. They will then be able to use the skills they learn for the rest of their lives.

John Turner, Deputy Director Asset Management said: "The commitment of both young people and staff has been fantastic and we have a great blue print for future projects. This course is really the beginning of a partnership with our young customers and I want to take this opportunity to build and develop the work that has been done so far and engage with as many willing young people as possible."

Young people testimonials:

Amy Johnson: "If you are a single woman moving into your own flat, with no idea, this course is ideal."

Dave Turner: "I have found something I really like to do and I want to take it further."

Alex Williamson: "I have a little boy so I need to be able to do things and this scheme has really helped."