



Gentoo Allocations Policy

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Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy.
Printed versions may quickly go out of date – contact Head of Neighbourhoods for support and advice.

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Introduction and scope

This is Gentoo’s allocations policy. It has been developed to improve access to housing in Sunderland and to allocate properties in an open and transparent way offering as much choice as possible for applicants. It also includes the allocation of properties outside of the Sunderland area where there are agreements with other local authorities.

Gentoo is the largest social landlord within the City and responsible for the management of almost 29,000 properties.

In developing this policy, Gentoo has worked closely with Sunderland City Council who have statutory (or legal) duties for housing in Sunderland and associated responsibilities which come with this. For example, the responsibility for the prevention of homelessness and assistance for those who are homeless lies with Sunderland City Council.

The scope of this policy covers:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Gentoo Group | X |
| Gentoo Homes | |

It applies to:

| | |
|---|---|
| General Needs rented properties | X |
| Supported Housing | X |
| Sheltered Housing | X |
| Leasehold/Shared ownership | |
| Temporary Accommodation | X |
| Stock owned but not managed by the Group | |
| Communal Areas, including those relating to Leasehold/Shared Ownership properties | |
| Commercial Property (offices, depots etc) | |
| Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party | |
| Garages and outbuildings | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc) | |
| Curtilage | |

Our core purpose, vision and priorities

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

Our vision is to provide great homes, strong communities, and inspired people for Sunderland.

The safety of our customers and colleagues will always be our number one priority. We have identified six further priorities which will guide the delivery of our services. We live our values in everything we do from the boardroom to the front room, to deliver our priorities for our customers.

- We know our customers.
- We provide great homes.
- We help communities to thrive.
- We are a great place to work.
- We spend our money wisely.
- We are well governed.

Our values

Our values are what we stand for and what we want to be known for. They are what makes us, us.

- We care about people.
- We take accountability.
- We shape the future.
- We bring leadership.
- We deliver.

Consumer Standards

We are guided by the Consumer Standards, which describe ways to improve things for people living in Social Housing.

- The Safety and Quality Standard
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-and-quality-standard>)
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/transparency-influence-and-accountability-including-tenant-satisfaction-measures>)
- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neighbourhood-and-community-standard>)

- The Tenancy Standard (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenancy-standard>)

Roles and Responsibilities

As a Registered Provider, we have a statutory responsibility to meet all relevant regulations and legislation in relation to the allocation of our properties. Our Regulator sets out the Tenancy Standard which we must meet. Failure to properly carry out these responsibilities could lead to a serious detriment or other judgement from the Regulator if we breach the Standards in place at the time.

The Director of Customer is accountable for ensuring this policy takes into account all legislation, regulation, and best practice and for delivering this policy effectively

The Director of Customer is accountable for adequate resourcing and having effective processes in place to deliver his policy.

The Heads of Neighbourhoods are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of this policy.

Definitions

In this policy:

- ‘Customers’ are those who have signed a tenancy agreement and those occupants of a customer’s household.’
- ‘Prospective customers’ are those who are currently on our waiting list and wish to live in one of our social or affordable rent properties.’ ‘City’ means within the Local Authority area of Sunderland.

1.0 Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 This policy outlines Gentoo’s approach to offering its empty homes, in line with legislation, Gentoo’s charitable objectives and the Regulatory Standards. It should be read in conjunction with Gentoo’s Allocations Procedure. We recognise that the way homes are allocated is a matter of real importance to people. Our policy seeks to allocate homes in a way which meets people’s needs, offers choice, and makes the best possible use of housing stock, while promoting the development of balanced and sustainable communities.
- 1.2 As part of the Group’s Vision of ‘Great Homes – Strong Communities – Inspired People’, we aim to provide customers with a good quality home in an area that they want to be in, which meets their household needs and which they can afford.
- 1.3 All applications will be dealt with sensitively and in line with the Data Protection Legislation (as amended and updated from time to time).
- 1.4 We are committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation and aim to:

- meet the needs and choices of people from all backgrounds.
- ensure that our services are relevant, responsive, and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers.
- ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal access to our services.

This policy will ensure that customers and prospective customers are treated as individuals and with fairness and respect. An Equality Assessment has been completed on this policy.

- 1.5 Gentoo operates a banding system for allocations. This incorporates our nominations agreements with Sunderland City Council, South Tyneside Council, Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council and Middlesbrough Council under which we assist them in discharging their statutory and contractual housing duties (see Section 7). Some properties may be directly let to customers in exceptional circumstances (See Section 8). All other properties are advertised through Gentoo's banding system (See Section 9).
- 1.6 Gentoo will offer accommodation to those it is appropriate for us to house as a charity. Gentoo's constitution allows for the provision of housing to:
- customers in financial necessity on terms appropriate to their means and
 - elderly, disabled or chronically sick customers in need of re-housing
- (See Section 18 for further details).
- 1.7 To minimise delays to prospective customers and costs incurred by existing customers, all properties will be let as quickly and efficiently as possible. Gentoo report allocations performance on a regular basis to the Customer Committee (See Section 25).
- 1.8 Gentoo will not let properties to Board and Committee Members, Gentoo employees and their relatives except in line with the highest standards of probity and governance and in line with the rules, ensuring any conflicts are dealt with in accordance with the law and good governance.
- 1.9 All customers are required to disclose as part of the Allocation process, any relationship with any Board Member, Committee Member, employee or any letting made to an applicant with any such relationship will be subject to independent scrutiny to verify its probity. A record of such disclosures is maintained.

2. Our Service

- 2.1 The policy sets out the framework by which Gentoo will let properties to create balanced and sustainable communities.
- 2.2 All applicants must complete an application to join Gentoo's housing register. Assistance will be provided to those who may need help in completing the application, or who have language or literacy difficulties. Any applicants with a disability or severe medical conditions will be offered a home visit where appropriate.
- 2.3 An applicant can register alone, jointly with a partner or with another adult who

wishes to live with them, including family members. The register operates as an open housing register, which means that anyone aged 16 years or over can apply, subject to the results of an eligibility assessment and 2.5 and 3.1 below.

- 2.4 We welcome applicants who live outside of the Sunderland area.
- 2.5 All qualifying applicants will be permitted to access the register, however as Gentoo is a charity, we must house people who are in the greatest need. Some people who have the financial means to obtain suitable alternative accommodation may not be eligible for social housing accommodation with Gentoo. Therefore, a financial discussion based on the applicant(s) income and any savings/equity will take place prior to a formal offer of property.
- 2.6 Existing Gentoo customer are not eligible to apply for access to the register within the first 12 months of their tenancy. If there is a priority need for housing within this timescale, this will be assessed based on individual circumstances. (See section 4).

3.0 Applying for Housing

- 3.1 Applications for Gentoo's housing register are available to all eligible applicants online via our website at www.gentoo.org.uk. Applicants will only be able to access Gentoo's housing register if they are deemed to be eligible or qualifying persons as set out in Section 16.

Those aged 16 and 17 will not be disqualified from registering for a tenancy; however, a person cannot legally hold a tenancy until they are 18 years old. Therefore, any tenancy granted to a 16 or 17-year-old will be an equitable tenancy held in trust. This means that a Guardian or Guarantor will need to sign for the tenancy and hold that tenancy on behalf of the young person until they reach 18 years of age.

- 3.2 Applicants will be required to provide information in support of their application, both at application and offer stage. The information will be used to verify the accuracy of the application and will include, but is not limited to:
 - a full housing history for the last five years, which Gentoo will check for any housing related debt, for example rent and mortgage arrears, and for unacceptable behaviour, eviction, etc.
 - proof of identity
 - proof of residency where possible (for example utility bill, letter from the person an applicant is staying with). If this is not possible, we will consider each case on its own merit
 - evidence of an applicant's immigration status if they are not a resident in the UK or have come to the country from abroad
 - proof of income, to assess whether the applicant(s) can afford the property offered
 - proof of joint custody, if applicants would like to be considered for a property larger than the household needs
 - proof of pregnancy to show the need for an extra bedroom where applicable

- proof of fostering, adopting status or any long-term childcare arrangements if an applicant would like to be considered for a property larger than the household needs
- proof that applicant and their partner cannot share a bedroom for medical reasons
- proof that 2 children cannot share a bedroom for medical reasons
- proof of an overnight carer from outside the household, if a larger property is needed to accommodate the carer

We may seek references to determine whether an applicant is suitable to receive an offer of a Gentoo property, this may include, but is not limited to:

- current and former landlord references
- criminal record check

3.3 Applicants will be placed in a band, which is appropriate to their current circumstances and need, as set out in Appendix 1. There are four levels of need (bands) into which all registered applications will be categorised. We will review applicants in band 1+, 1 and 2 on a regular basis to assess whether their circumstances have changed and to ensure they are effectively accessing the register or if they need support to do so. The minimum frequencies within which reviews will be carried out are detailed below:

3.4 **Bands :**

Band 1+: Gentoo Renewal Area – Priority given for 12 weeks initially. We will work with the applicant and review the banding need periodically.

Band 1: Urgent Housing Need – Priority given for 12 weeks initially. We will work with the applicant and review the banding need periodically. If the applicant declines three offers which are deemed to be reasonable after reviewing suitability, their priority status for housing may be removed and the application placed into Band 3 (General Needs). This includes offers of properties in which we have bid for them and properties that would have been offered, if the viewing they were invited to had been attended. However, where the priority is awarded by Sunderland City Council, under the Nominations Agreement, the applicant may receive one reasonable offer and then priority status may be removed. This decision sits with Sunderland City Council. Applicants have a right to request a review of the decision to refuse to extend band status.

Band 2: Priority Housing Need – Priority given for 12 weeks initially. We will work with the applicant and review the banding need periodically. If the applicant declines three offers which are deemed to be reasonable after reviewing suitability, their priority status for housing may be removed and the application will be placed into Band 3 (General Needs). This includes offer of properties in which we have bid for them and properties that would have been offered, if the viewing they were invited to had been attended. However, where the priority is awarded by Sunderland City Council, under the nominations agreement, the applicant will receive three reasonable offers and then priority status may be removed. Applicants have a right to request a review of the decision to refuse to extend band status. This decision sits with Sunderland City Council.

Band 3: General Needs – All other applicants, including all out of city applicants, will be placed into this Band.

- 3.5 For applicants in Bands 1+, 1 and 2 who have not engaged in the bidding process, Gentoo may introduce supportive bidding on behalf of the applicant (see Section 5.1). This will offer the applicant extra support with the process.
- 3.6 Only the person with parental responsibility and has primary care of a child should qualify for a family home. When an applicant does not have primary care of the dependent child, but shares care, either as a result of a court order or an informal arrangement, Gentoo will consider their circumstances on an individual basis. Primary care is based on individual merits, but takes into account:
 - Receipt of Child Benefit
 - Court Orders
 - Percentage of time spent caring for child(ren)
 - Regularity and permanence of arrangement
- 3.7 If an applicant declares a mobility and/or disability, or mental health condition, we may carry out an assessment to see how well the person is managing in their current accommodation. We may need an Occupational Therapist (for non Gentoo) or Support Coordinator's (Gentoo's Wellbeing Team) advice to ensure the best use of accommodation to meet the person's needs. If we need to consider medical advice, we may require the person to provide evidence from health or social care professionals who have direct knowledge of their condition. Further details regarding this can be found in Appendix 3.
- 3.8 Applicants are required to inform Gentoo if they have any changes in their circumstances, which may affect their application.
- 3.9 Where an applicant, or a third party acting for the applicant, knowingly or recklessly provides false information which leads to the granting of a tenancy, Gentoo can seek possession of the property under Ground 17, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988. Where Gentoo has provided a tenancy working with a Local Authority (for example, via a nomination), that local housing authority may take legal action (Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996). Anyone found guilty of such an offence may be fined up to £5,000 and could lose the tenancy if they have been re-housed as a result of providing false information or deliberately withholding information.

4.0 Registration

- 4.1 Eligible applicants are always required to complete an online application. Applicants will create their own online application using their email as their username and their own password, Gentoo do not have access to this. Following successful registration applicants can bid for properties via the online lettings system. Once an application is accepted, the applicant will be sent an email confirming their date of registration and which band they have been placed into.

Where an applicant has indicated a priority need for housing, we will begin the assessment process to see if the applicant meets the criteria for a priority band and carry out the applicable evidence checks, for example a mobility assessment.

Following assessment, the priority band decision will be communicated to the applicant who has the right to request a review of the decision (see Section 19).

- 4.2 Registration reviews will be carried out to check if applicants wish to remain on the register.

5.0 Supporting vulnerable applicants

- 5.1 Gentoo recognises that some applicants may require support with their housing application. We will provide support to the applicant, which can include completing or updating application forms and arranging viewings. Supported bidding can also be put in place. This process is where Gentoo colleagues match properties to suitable applicants and place bids on behalf of an applicant. Supported bidding will only be used in the following circumstances:

- For vulnerable applicants who need extra support in the bidding process.
- Where an applicant has been assessed and placed into the urgent, priority or renewal bands and fails to engage in the bidding process, a review of their circumstances will be carried out and supported bidding may be introduced.

- 5.2 To ensure this objective is achieved, partnership arrangements will be developed and maintained with statutory and non-statutory agencies that support, advise and advocate for customers within the community. Family members and close friends may also support the customer.

- 5.3 For current Gentoo customers, who are vulnerable applicants with a severe mental ill-health disability, and housing is having a detrimental impact on their lives, we can support their application in line with our banding criteria. Medical evidence will be required to enable this.

6.0 Property Eligibility

- 6.1 Property criteria will be set for each property advert. This gives information on the accommodation and the type of customer that would be best suited to the property. Information may include:

- The minimum and maximum number of people who can be accommodated in the property.
- Any age restrictions, for example, 60 years+ for some bungalow, or children in upper flats or flats with a communal area
- Any adaptations (for example walk-in shower) which will make the property suitable for someone with specific needs or requirements.

7.0 Nominations

7.1 Gentoo has in place a nominations agreement with Sunderland City Council, South Tyneside Council, Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council and Middlesbrough Council. This means that a proportion of our empty properties will be let to customers who are referred from the relevant Council's waiting list, together with people deemed to be homeless or in statutory housing need. Those customers will be placed in the appropriate Band (See Section 3.4 and Appendix 1) and can then express an interest in properties.

8.0 Exceptional circumstances

8.1 All properties managed by Gentoo will be advertised unless a property needs to be used for exceptional circumstances. Under exceptional circumstances, Gentoo may deem it necessary to act outside of the allocations scheme. We have the discretion to directly allocate outside the bands for emergencies such as fire, flood, severe repair issues including damp and mould and those at serious risk where there is a detrimental impact to health and wellbeing.

9.0 Advertising and Offer of Property

9.1 Available homes will be advertised by Gentoo on a weekly basis.

9.2 A shortlist will be automatically generated at the end of the advertising period. The table below shows how we will create each list to identify the successful applicant.

| Band | Listed by: |
|--------------------|---|
| 1+: Gentoo Renewal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching the property label criteria • Date and time accepted into the Renewal band • Date and time application was received |
| 1: Urgent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching the property label criteria • Date and time accepted into the Urgent band • Date and time application was received |
| 2: Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching the property label criteria • Date and time accepted into the Priority band • Date and time application was received |
| 3: General Needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching the property label criteria • Date and time application was received |

9.3 Following the shortlist process, customers will be invited to a viewing based on the shortlist. Where the customer fails to attend a viewing, they may be bypassed on the property shortlist.

9.4 After the viewing, an initial offer is made to the customer who is highest ranking, subject to offer checks. The applicant will have 48 hours to decide if they wish to accept the initial offer. Where the applicant fails to respond within this timeframe, they may be bypassed on the property shortlist. If the initial offer is

refused, the next ranked applicant in descending order on the list will be offered the property, subject to checks as above. This process will continue until the list is exhausted.

9.5 When a customer has been shortlisted we will confirm the details on the application form are correct and undertake further offer checks including, but not limited to:

- Current and former landlord references (where applicable)
- We may inspect an applicant's current home. For Gentoo customers their current property should be in a satisfactory condition to allow immediate relet
- Income verification
- Police checks (if an applicant has declared a criminal conviction or we have reason to believe applicants have committed criminal offences or been involved in anti-social behaviour or there are significant gaps in an applicant's housing history)
- Proof of identity
- Right to Rent / Right to remain share code

10.0 Continuous advert

10.1 Continuous adverts are used when a shortlist has been exhausted and the property is advertised again. This will allow bids in line with the label and for the advert cycle to be closed at any point to allow allocation.

10.2 All continuous adverts will consider:

- Gentoo's charitable objectives
- Different types of accommodation and demand within each area
- Best use of housing stock
- Not unduly disrupt Gentoo's ability to meet the housing need of Sunderland
- Be fair, will not unlawfully discriminate and will meet the requirements of the appropriate Regulator.

11.0 Extra care housing and supported housing schemes

11.1 The term 'Accommodation with Care or Support' refers to housing specifically designed for people with a care and/or support need which enables them to live independently in their own home, with access to care or support tailored to meet their needs.

11.2 Due to the special nature of this type of accommodation, Extra Care and Supported Housing Schemes will be let via the exceptional circumstances route (see Section 8), and we will work in conjunction with Sunderland City Council to allocate these properties.

11.3 This does not include sheltered housing or accommodation used to prevent homelessness.

12.0 New build properties

12.1 New build properties will be allocated by the applicant's date of registration and property eligibility criteria only, they are not subject to banding priority. This means that new build properties will be open to all eligible applicants, allowing us to maximise the opportunity to create balanced and sustainable communities.

13.0 Armed Forces

13.1 Gentoo has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant. This means we will work with Sunderland City Council and the applicant to support those leaving HM Forces and veterans to find suitable accommodation.

14.0 Owner occupiers and private rented tenants

14.1 Our register is open to applicants from all tenures. However, our priority is to help people who are in the greatest housing need. As a result, some applicants who have the financial means to obtain suitable alternative accommodation may not be eligible for social housing accommodation with Gentoo.

14.2 A financial discussion will take place before any formal offer is made. This assessment will cover income and any equity and savings levels the applicant may have. It will also consider the local housing market. If the applicant could financially afford to purchase or pay market rent for a similar property in the area suitable for their housing needs, then the application may not proceed.

15.0 Applicants moving to take up an employment opportunity ('keyworkers')

15.1 Gentoo recognise the importance of attracting key workers into the city; our Policy allows us to provide some priority to help essential workers moving to the area find permanent, secure accommodation. Keyworkers are defined as those people that provide essential services necessary for the continued economic growth in Sunderland, and those who fill skill shortages within the city. An applicant will have received an offer of key worker employment within the city. Gentoo will require written evidence from the employer.

16.0 Eligible applicants

16.1 Gentoo will apply the following eligibility test prior to making an offer of property in accordance with the Localism Act, amended by the Housing Act, which enable registered providers to disqualify people whose behaviour makes them unacceptable for an offer of property. These criteria will apply regardless of which way an applicant comes to Gentoo for housing.

16.2 In accordance with Section 166A(5) of the Housing Act 1996, applicants will not be considered for an offer of property if we are satisfied they or a member of their household:

- Has been found guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to

make the person unsuitable for housing with Gentoo in line with our suspension policy.

17.0 Suspension

17.1 Gentoo has a Suspension Policy, which means we may suspend an applicant from the register for a pre-defined period of time. A review will be completed at the end of the suspension period. Whilst suspended, the applicant will not be able to bid for a property.

17.2 We may suspend an applicant in the following circumstances:

- Unacceptable behaviour, which would justify possession proceedings
- Breach of tenancy agreement or covenant
- If further investigation is required to process an application.
- Current or former tenant arrears, mortgage arrears or landlord debt

17.3 Where an applicant is suspended, Gentoo will write to the applicant informing them of the suspension, reasons for our decision, and informing them of their right to request a review of the decision.

18.0 Charitable Objectives

18.1 Gentoo can offer an applicant a property based on our charitable objectives, as set out in Section 1.6 of this policy.

18.2 In exceptional circumstances, Gentoo may offer accommodation to applicants who do not meet our charitable objectives, where this does not prejudice our status as a charity.

19.0 Right to Review

19.1 If we decide an applicant is not eligible or does not qualify to join our housing register, we will notify them of our decision and the reason for it. We will also inform them of their right to review.

19.2 Gentoo has the right to reject an application for housing, a nomination or to refuse to make an offer of accommodation in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in this policy. Applicants have the right to appeal against decisions in respect of their application for housing or refusal to make an offer of property.

20.0 Removal from the housing register

20.1 An application will be removed from the housing register for the following reasons:

- Applicants or a member of their household no longer qualify for housing
- An applicant asks for their application to be removed
- An applicant has provided false or misleading information

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- An applicant fails to provide information in support of their application
- The applicant is assigned, has exchanged, or succeeded a tenancy
- The applicant fails to respond to a register review
- The sole applicant has died
- The applicant purchases or part purchases their own property

20.2 An application may be removed from the housing register for the following reasons:

- An applicant refuses or does not respond to three reasonable offers of accommodation (in priority band)
- An applicant refuses or does not respond to one reasonable offer of accommodation (in priority band)

21.0 Sign up

21.1 When applicants sign their tenancy agreement, they will be required to provide or complete:

- Payment of a minimum of one week's rent, this may be part of the week depending on the day of tenancy commencing (in exceptional circumstances Gentoo will review any cases in which a different approach is required to allow someone to secure a tenancy).
- Housing Benefit/Universal Credit application and any associated information required
- Proof of Right to Rent or Right to Remain in the UK

21.2 Gentoo will ensure that all applicants are provided with a welcome email which provides information and advice about Gentoo services, contact details and other helpful information about their new home.

21.3 During the sign-up discussion, the Gentoo colleague will go through the Tenancy Agreement and Tenant Handbook with the applicant in detail, to make them fully aware of their rights and responsibilities and answer any questions they may have (this may be in electronic format).

22.0 Type of Tenancy

22.1 The type of tenancy offered will be decided in conjunction with the Tenancy Policy and Neighbourhood Management Policy. The Tenancy Agreement will clearly state which tenancy type the applicant has been granted.

23.0 Partnership Working

23.1 Gentoo will:

- Provide and share information with Sunderland City Council (SCC), South Tyneside Council, Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, Middlesbrough Council and other agencies to enable them to fulfil their strategic housing role and statutory duties
- Co-operate with all local authority partners in helping fulfil their statutory housing duties, including those relating to homelessness, homelessness prevention and priorities relating to safeguarding and protecting vulnerable people
- Ensure that priority allocations are given to those in greatest housing need in accordance with current legislation, regulatory guidance and our charitable objectives
- Participate in any scheme which promotes mobility between different regions.
- Provide basic housing advice and information to applicants with housing problems and inform them where more detailed advice and information can be obtained from.
- Where appropriate, enter into partnership arrangements with a variety of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable applicants engage and actively participate in the register.

24.0 Implementation

- 24.1 This policy requires Board approval for any reviews resulting in any changes. The Director of Customer is accountable for the delivery and review of this policy.
- 24.2 Gentoo will let properties in line with the highest standards of probity and governance and in line with the Rules of the organisation.
- 24.3 Under the Delegated Authority, contained within the Standing Orders of Gentoo, it is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that their work is carried out in accordance with this policy and any procedures relating to it.
- 24.4 Gentoo is committed to the highest standards of service to our customers and will apply this policy in accordance with the standards published and the Gentoo approach to putting tenants at the heart of the business.

25.0 Monitoring and Review

- 25.1 Gentoo will:
- Record and monitor details of all lettings to ensure fair treatment of all applicants regardless of age, gender, race or disability in line with the continuous recording of the lettings system (CORE)
 - On receipt of a termination of tenancy, we will seek to understand the reasons a customer is ending their tenancy
 - Undertake continual demand analysis to inform the development of allocation strategies
 - Provide periodic performance information to the Regulatory Body and any local authority partners (where required)
 - Publish service standards and performance information to customers
 - Where relevant information is available, Gentoo will benchmark its

performance against other similar organisations to ensure the highest standards of service delivery.

26.0 Policy Review

26.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with business needs. It will be subject to audit in line with the agreed Audit Plan, or in line with business needs.

26.2 This policy will be analysed for any equality impacts at every review.

27.0 Risk

27.1 All risks that fall within the scope of this policy and its service areas have been identified and are contained within the Gentoo operational risk plans.

28.0 Escalation

28.1 Where the Board has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with allocations it must escalate these concerns to the Executive Director of Housing.

28.2 Where a member of staff has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with allocations, they must escalate these concerns through their management structure.

28.3 Where a member of staff continues to have concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with allocations, they should refer to the Group Whistleblowing Policy and Toolkit for further guidance.

29.0 Legislation, regulation and other documents

29.1 The Director of Customer will ensure this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice, including but not limited to:

- Regulator of Social Housing Tenancy Standard
- Consumer Standards
- Homelessness Act
- Charities Acts
- Data Protection legislation
- Housing Act 1996
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014
- Children's Act 1989
- Children Leaving Care Act 2000

- Equality Act 2010
- Family Law Act 1996
- Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing – England
- Under-occupation Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Neighbourhood Management Policy
- Suspensions Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy and Plans
- Right to Rent/Right to Remain
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

30.0 Records

- 30.1 All records and documents relating to allocations will be stored in the relevant document management system. Application information and details are stored within the on-line application system.

Appendix 1 – Allocation Bands

| Allocation bands | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Band 1+ | Band 1 | Band 2 | Band 3 |
| Applicants living in renewal area | Statutory or Urgent Social Housing Need - applicants who have an immediate need to move | High housing need - applicants who have a priority housing need | General Need - Open to all applicants |
| Living in a Gentoo renewal area | Accepted homeless households where Sunderland City Council need to discharge their full statutory duty - (this will include applicants who are statutory overcrowded and who are living in property unfit for occupation) | Applicants assessed by Sunderland City Council as being at risk of homelessness | Applicants with no or low-level housing need |
| | Gentoo tenants or a member of their household who are unable to cope in their present home due to mobility and/or disability issues (rating A or G or equivalent). This includes children with mobility and/or disability issues which includes mental health conditions. | Gentoo applicants who need to move for a Welfare reason - moving on from supported accommodation i.e. Core, Holmewood. | All out of city applicants |
| | Gentoo tenants who are experiencing severe harassment and have been assessed as being at risk if not rehoused | Applicants assessed as under occupying a house by 2 or more bedrooms (Gentoo tenants only) | |
| | Gentoo tenants who are experiencing domestic abuse and have been assessed as being in immediate risk if not rehoused | Applicants assessed as overcrowded by 2 more bedrooms (Gentoo tenants only) | |
| | Applicants leaving HM Forces who are homeless and owed a duty | Applicants with children under 16 years of age who are living in an upper flat/apartment or a flat/apartment with an internal communal area (Gentoo tenants only) | |
| | Applicants eligible to succeed or assign to a Gentoo tenancy and who have a need or expressed a wish to move to alternative accommodation | Applicants with a mobility and/or disability need or mental health condition which can be eased or improved by rehousing | |
| | | Applicants assessed as needing to move to take up a permanent employment opportunity | |
| | | Applicants who need to move to avoid financial hardship | |
| We have the discretion to directly allocate outside of the Bands for emergencies such as fire, flood, severe repair issues including damp and mould and those at serious risk where there is a detrimental impact to health and wellbeing | | | |

Appendix 2 - Housing Needs Assessments - Mobility/Disability Ratings

Mobility/Disability Rating A – Highest Priority and the applicant is identified as being in urgent need. This means that the applicant will qualify for Band 1 priority from Gentoo for 12 weeks initially, subject to review periodically. The applicants, Gentoo and the Local Authority can apply for suitable property via the online allocations system.

The applicant may be totally wheelchair dependent or have very limited mobility. This mobility rating may also be used for a person(s) with a degenerative condition (e.g. MND, MS, Huntingdon's), which could indicate that specialist/alternative housing may be necessary in the near future.

A mobility A rating would indicate that the applicant will need specialist/alternative housing which is either suitable for wheelchair access or has the potential for adaptation. Such accommodation will usually need to be level access/ground floor level (e.g. bungalow or ground floor flat), although depending on the size/needs of the family, a house may be necessary. Any house will need to be suitable for a wheelchair user or have potential for adaptation. Mobility A rating could also be awarded where there is an imminent risk of health deteriorating, as a result of the unsuitability of their accommodation or the unsuitability is such that daily living is seriously affected, and a change of accommodation could reasonably be expected to alleviate the problem.

This rating can also be awarded to applicants if they require immediate hospital discharge, and they are not able to return to their current home in the long term.

Mobility/Disability Rating B – This means that the applicant will qualify for Band 2 priority from Gentoo for 12 weeks initially, subject to review periodically. The applicants, Gentoo and the Local Authority can apply for suitable property via the on-line allocations system.

A mobility B rating would indicate that the applicant has very limited mobility. Applicants in this category will not generally require a fully adapted property and may manage one or two steps at access, although any property may need to have potential for adaptations in the future. Applicants living in a property with stairs/steps and where a stair lift or external adaptations (e.g. ramping) would not be appropriate may also qualify for a mobility B rating.

A mobility B rating may also be awarded for other health reasons. Examples of this could be where a person may have severe breathing difficulties (e.g. COPD, emphysema), or where their mental health is being impacted by their current living arrangements.

Mobility/Disability Rating C

An applicant given a mobility C rating will tend to have limited mobility on level surfaces but will not be dependent on a wheelchair either indoors or outdoors. The applicant will be unable to negotiate stairs even with assistance, although the existing property will have potential for adaptation with a stair lift if necessary.

Note: No housing priority will be awarded for this rating.

Mobility/Disability Rating D

An applicant given a mobility rating of D will tend to have some problems with mobility, but will not require a wheelchair at all. The applicant may be able to manage a few steps or stairs but may have difficulty negotiating a full flight of stairs without a high level of assistance. The property will have the potential for adaptation with a stairlift if necessary.

Note: No housing priority will be awarded for this rating

Mobility/Disability Rating E

An applicant given a mobility rating of E may have restricted mobility but does not require a wheelchair at all. An application with this mobility rating will be able to manage a full flight of stairs independently, they may have some difficulty and we would therefore look to provide minor adaptations to assist with mobility.

Note: No housing priority will be awarded for this rating

Mobility/Disability Rating G

This is a rating which is most often used for children with mobility and/or disability issues, which includes mental health conditions. This rating covers situations where the person or child urgently needs more suitable accommodation for health reasons, which may not be covered by the other categories.

Mobility G is the highest priority and the applicant is identified as being in urgent need. This means that the applicant will qualify for Band 1 priority from Gentoo for 12 weeks initially, subject to review periodically. The applicants, Gentoo and the Local Authority can apply for suitable property via the on-line allocations system.

Note: Occupational Therapist Report / Housing Needs Assessment will be required to assess for any disability rating. Medical evidence will also be required.

Version Control

| Version | Reason | Issuer | Date |
|---------|---|--|------------|
| 0.1 | Initial draft for comment | Mel Smith | 17/08/2016 |
| 0.2 | Approval from Legal – Alison Dixon | Mel Smith | 02/09/2016 |
| 0.3 | Clarify in Band 2 that SCC will make 3 reasonable offers, not 1, as part of prevention. | Sam Humble | 8/12/2017 |
| 3.0 | Updated format | Sarah Treadwell | 23/03/2018 |
| 4.0 | Updated as per Sam's comments | Sarah Treadwell | 22/06/2018 |
| 4.1 | Changes name of Access to Housing Team to Housing Options Team | Samantha Humble (Kirsty Collins made change) | 01/08/2018 |
| 4.2 | Changes to job titles and front page | Mel Smith | 19/02/2019 |
| 4.3 | Added that Gentoo will carry out a property inspection where appropriate (22.2) | Samantha Humble (Kirsty Collins made change) | 11/03/2019 |
| 5.0 | <p>Initial draft for comment to Director of Housing and General Secretary and Group Counsel</p> <p>New policy items implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gentoo tenants not eligible to apply for housing until tenancy reaches 2 years - Provision to assist those in housing need in Gentoo tenancy less than 2 years - Priority banding for Gentoo tenants with children in flats with an internal communal area - Changes to job titles and responsibilities - Minor grammatical, spelling and format errors (including item 12. Previously omitted - Externally validated by Weightmans Solicitors | Michael Donachie and Michelle Banks | 02/03/2021 |

| | | | |
|-----|--|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 6.0 | Amended wording from Local Lettings to Flexible Lets, approved by Group Board. | Susie Thompson and Chloe Appleby | 30/03/2022 |
| 7.0 | Addition of the paragraph relating to New Build refusals at 13.2 and Approved by Group Board | Susie Thompson and Chloe Appleby | 27/07/2022 |
| 8.0 | <p>Full policy review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gentoo customers not eligible to apply for housing until 12 months (amended from 24 months) - removal of new build refusals - Changes to job titles and responsibilities - Removal of affordability checks, replaced with income verification - Updated core purpose, vision and priorities - Consumer standards added - Banding table amended to include mental health for children under mobility G - Removed the stipulation only allowing 5 bids per week - Refer to mental health specifically in point 5.3 under vulnerable applicant | Bethan Wilkie | 20/5/2024 |
| 8.1 | Minor amendments | Steven Gordon | June 2024 |
| 8.2 | Minor amendments | Steven Gordon | August 2024 |
| 8.3 | Minor amendments made to the contents page | Steven Gordon | August 2024 |