

The Social and Economic Impact of Large-scale Housing Investment

*Report for the Housing Corporation and Gentoo Group
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1. Introduction

The main aims of this project are to measure the social and economic impact of housing investment in Sunderland and develop a methodology that can be used by other organisations involved in the delivery of housing and regeneration. This report presents the results of the first stage of a longitudinal study that will analyse the impact of Gentoo's¹ investment in Sunderland, particularly the £600 million that are being invested in improving and replacing social housing in the city. However, since the transfer of around 36,356 homes from Sunderland City Council to the Sunderland Housing Group (SHG) in 2001, there have been important management and cultural changes within the new housing organisation that must be taken into consideration when looking at SHG/Gentoo's impact on the city. There are new internal processes and activities that affect the way staff work and how they relate both to each other and to their tenants. These changes have also had an impact on the way the organisation relates to other stakeholders in the city and region and, in particular, on the capacity of this housing provider to create partnerships with other organisations in the pursuit of wider social and economic change.

The £600 million investment is therefore one aspect of a wider process of change in the city and its impact can only be judged in this context. The complexity of the inter-relationship of agencies with responsibilities for housing, employment, health, education, crime reduction means that it is not possible to disentangle relations of cause and effect at this time. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, however, it should be possible to map out and analyse the social relations of change as various combinations of partners act together on different issues in a variety of neighbourhoods in the city. This project is a first step in this direction.

The project seeks to identify and rationalise a number of spatial units of analysis, such as post codes, output areas, super output areas, housing management areas and city wards, in an attempt to make them meaningful for both city managers and the resident population. Through both stages of the project, the intention is to carry out an analysis of both primary and secondary data at a neighbourhood level, analysing this information in relation to housing management and other objectives that seek to promote the creation of sustainable communities. The sources of secondary data are a number of central, regional and local government agencies, along with management information from Gentoo. A new household survey provides the main statistical source of primary information. The intention is to bring the information from this variety of sources into a common spatial structure that can be used by housing providers and their funders. This is combined with an interpretive methodology that derives information from key informants and residents, through interviews and focus groups. In later stages of the project, updated data will allow a longitudinal analysis of change in the city at the neighbourhood or community level².

¹ At the start of this project and through the period of the fieldwork, the Gentoo Group was called the Sunderland Housing Group.

² For the purposes of this study we assume that communities are defined by social relationships, whether or not they are bounded by space; and neighbourhoods are spatial entities, which may nevertheless be defined differently by different people and organisations at different times. Both are organic and may change over time, but can be defined at a particular point in time. A ward is neither a community nor a neighbourhood. Neither are Output Areas (OAs) nor Lower Super Output Areas, but OAs can be aggregated up to correspond with the boundaries of defined communities and neighbourhoods.

Building on a methodology developed for Optima Community Association in Birmingham³, the main objectives of the project were to investigate:

- * The social, economic and ethnic make-up of households in the private and social rented sectors within regeneration and renewal areas;
- * Social statistics relating to the housing, health, education, crime and employment of residents;
- * The relationships between these social indicators;
- * The experiences and views of social rented and private sector residents with respect to quality of life and social exclusion indicators, such as health, crime and community safety, education and skills, and employment;
- * Satisfaction with neighbourhoods, housing quality, housing management and area management;
- * Turnover and vacancy rates in particular property types and areas, and how this impacts on the social, economic and ethnic make-up of different neighbourhoods;
- * The impact of new-build on the social, economic and ethnic make-up of neighbourhoods;
- * The experience of vulnerable client groups, such as lone parents with children, black and minority ethnic groups, refugees and asylum seekers, elderly residents, and young people (aged 15-19 years).

The intention was, therefore, that this would be the first phase of a longitudinal study with fieldwork carried out at two different points in time. The model for the research is a 'before and after' study. Although the stock transfer from Sunderland City Council to Sunderland Housing Group (now Gentoo) took place in 2001, it was felt that there was value in carrying out the first phase of the fieldwork in 2007 in order to develop and try to test a model that would provide an insight into what was happening in Sunderland and would be useful in other areas where there was similar large-scale housing investment taking place.

The study proposes, therefore, to investigate the relationships between secondary data that is available from agencies such as the City Council, the regional health authority and the police, the data that was gathered by Sunderland Housing Group for management purposes, and primary data that would be gathered by the survey, interviews and focus groups. It was never intended that we should seek causal relationships between the financial investment and any social and economic outcomes in the different neighbourhoods in Sunderland where the housing investment was being made. Rather, we were looking for a model that would use quantitative and qualitative information to investigate relationships between various social and economic inputs and outputs in different neighbourhoods over time.

The main outcomes of the project address key issues of concern for the Gentoo Group and the Housing Corporation. Through the household survey, focus groups and meetings with key informants in the city and region, the project investigates the impact of Gentoo's £600 million housing investment programme on the quality of life

³ Middleton, A and Loftman, P. (2003) *Assessing the Impact of Housing Investment in Area-based Regeneration: A Best Practice Approach for Registered Social Landlords*, Centre for Public Policy and Urban Change, University of Central England, Birmingham.

of the residents in the areas for which Gentoo have management responsibility. It also seeks to develop a methodology that will answer questions that are relevant to the Housing Corporation's Investment Division in that it will link housing investment to changing social structure, analyse the relationship between physical investment and social change, and create an analytical process for investigating the changing relationship between different social indicators in the context of large-scale housing investment. As we shall see in Section 3 of this report, there were difficulties in obtaining secondary data at consistent spatial units of analysis, which made the finalisation of the model extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the findings from the exercise of trying to obtain consistent and usable data from various government agencies in Sunderland allow us to say something about what action is required for the development of evidence-based policy for deprived communities.

Through a methodology that investigates the perceptions, experiences and levels of satisfaction of stakeholders, the exercise provides us with information about the impact of large-scale investment on housing and environmental conditions, social structures and the well-being of residents - including the limits of what we should expect from such investment. It was intended that the main outputs of this phase of the project would therefore be a methodological tool and a baseline analysis of the impact of housing investment in Sunderland. Given the difficulty in obtaining consistent and coherent information from different agencies, the baseline analysis is not as well developed as we would have hoped. Nevertheless, the tool has been developed to a level where it would benefit from further testing through the use of data from these agencies.

It was also intended that the methodology could be refined and tested in other parts of the country and the model would become more sophisticated as this occurs. We originally proposed that the tool would be of interest to officers and the Board of the Gentoo Group; The Housing Corporation, Government Departments; Market Renewal Pathfinders; Registered Social Landlords; Local and regional housing & planning authorities; Organisations involved in growth areas and significant new developments in the South; health authorities; police authorities; education authorities; social services; organisations involved in large regeneration initiatives; and academics. All of these groups and organisations should have an interest in the discussion of the relationship between evidence and policy in Section 3. The findings in relation to the methodological tool, however, should be of particular interest to the Department of Communities and Local Government and the new Homes and Communities Agency.

In addition, the baseline analysis of the impact of housing investment in Sunderland will be of interest to local residents and community-based groups. Equality and diversity issues are at the core of this project. Interviews were carried out with local members of voluntary and community organisations and focus groups took place with vulnerable groups such as residents with disabilities, young people, families with children, elderly residents and BME residents. The needs, views and expectations of these groups are central to the project. Within these groups, the needs of women have been analysed.

This study, using both qualitative and quantitative information, is therefore both empirical/scientific and interpretative. Since no one method is suitable for the purposes of the study, an appropriate range of mixed methods have been used. As we

have indicated above, we are not looking to determine causation, only relationships. Given the complex nature of the interrelationship between social and economic forces, it is not possible at this time to disentangle individual impacts of one variable on another. We cannot say, for example, that £x of investment in housing will cause an increase of y in educational performance or a decline of z in crime. A change in one variable, such as investment in housing, can have an impact on a number of other variables, such as employment or health, which in turn can have impacts on each other or on other variables such as education.

In theory, it should be possible to build a model that takes account of the changes and predicts outcomes at a community or neighbourhood level, but to test the model requires data that can be aggregated for each of the variables into neighbourhoods. This, however, requires that the information on relevant variables is collected in spatial units that are being capable of being aggregated to correspond with defined neighbourhoods.

Similarly, the activities of any organisation can have an impact on a number of variables that are thought to be the professional concern of another organisation; and many organisations can have an impact on one variable. There are clear associations between different elements of disadvantage, such as poor housing, health problems, low levels of educational attainment, unemployment, crime, etc.; and there is a good understanding of the extent to which these problems are mutually reinforcing at a city or regional level. There is therefore a consensus that there is a need for multi-agency working to tackle deprivation at a city level, through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), or in New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas. NDC areas, however, such as the one in Sunderland, can encompass a number of different neighbourhoods with different communities with different types of problems. In theory, this partnership working should lead to multi-agency working at the neighbourhood level and there are clearly some good examples of this across the country, but there is little evidence of the impact of inter-agency working on deprived neighbourhoods beyond case studies of 'good practice'. This evidence is mainly anecdotal.

It is generally the case that the smallest geographical level of analysis that is used by government agencies is the politically defined territory of the ward. It is well known, however, that ward level data can hide important pockets of poverty and deprivation from view. Within relatively wealthy wards, there can be pockets of ill-health, poor educational attainment, unemployment and crime. Within deprived wards, disadvantage is not equally distributed. Even the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) information can divide disadvantaged neighbourhoods and disguise marked inequalities. For analysis of the distribution of disadvantage across different neighbourhoods, these spatial units are too crude. In the past, wards provided useful proxies for neighbourhood deprivation and therefore for the allocation of resources. In an era of evidence-based policy, inter-agency collaboration, sustainable communities and sophisticated computer technology, this is no longer adequate.

As we will see when we look at Indices of Deprivation for certain neighbourhoods in Sunderland, the composite index which shows the overall measure of deprivation, masks differences in its component parts. This implies that when we get below the ward level, or even the LSOA level, different combinations of agency collaboration are needed in different communities. Front-line professionals instinctively know this,

but strategic managers who have responsibility for resource allocation often do not have the information that is needed to make rational judgements about the competing claims for resources of these front-line professionals. This is true within agencies, but it is even more important where partnership organisations come together to tackle particular problems that call for multi-agency solutions.

Not all agencies need to work together, with the same level of intensity, in a particular patch. Some combinations will be more important than others, depending on the scale of different problems – concentrations of elderly people, for example, will require different types of services from areas with young lone-parent families. While an LSP can provide a strategic framework, the need for the agencies that are represented in the LSP to collaborate with each other will vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. However, below the strategic level there is little evidence that allows the distribution of inter-agency professional resources on a rational basis. On the ground, there is ample evidence that these front-line professionals do collaborate, but there is often little recognition of this higher up the organisation and it has little impact on resource allocation. Evidence of need is anecdotal as, once again, is evidence of good practice.

In developing a methodology as the first step of a longitudinal study, we nevertheless have to recognise that this is a case study that exists in a specific geographical, social, economic, political, cultural and policy context. Before we discuss the secondary data that would feed into the model and analyse the primary information that we have gathered from the fieldwork, it is necessary to say something about that context.

2 The Policy Context

2.1 The National Context: Sustainable Communities and Evidence-based Policy

For the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), sustainable communities are ‘places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all’⁴. For communities to be sustainable, they must offer decent homes at prices people can afford, good public transport, schools, hospitals, shops, and a clean, safe environment. People also need open public space where they can relax and interact and the ability to have a say on the way their neighbourhood is run (for the Components of a Sustainable Community, see Appendix 1).

The 2006 Local Government White Paper⁵ declared the Government’s ambition to create strong, safe and prosperous communities throughout England through a new agreement between central government, local government and citizens. The most recent draft policy for consultation⁶ indicates that the key components of the new policy are likely to be:

- a recognition that **every place is different**, with distinctive strengths and needs
- a new approach by central government that creates space for distinctive **local priorities** and **local innovation**
- a commitment to widen and deepen the **involvement of local communities** in shaping their own future
- councils taking on the role of democratically elected **strategic leaders** and conveners of local partnerships in the **wider governance** of their localities
- a focus on **coordinated action** tailored to the distinctive needs and opportunities of each place and its people

There needs to be a broadening of local government’s remit – responding to long-term challenges such as public health, climate change and demographic fluctuations, ensuring continued economic prosperity and environmental sustainability, and building strong societies in which people want to live and work. This means:

⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (2007)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/sustainablecommunities/>

⁵ Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: Local Government White Paper*, London, CLG

⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government (2007) *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance: Draft for Consultation*, London CLG.

- a responsibility on councils to provide **strategic and political leadership** and involve the full range of stakeholders in developing and delivering a shared vision for their area
- all key local partners **working together** to address the risks and challenges facing the areas, using their combined resources to best effect
- **involving and empowering communities**, acknowledging that services will be improved and communities strengthened only if local people are effectively engaged and empowered, as individuals and through organisations representing them
- through elected local government, **wider and stronger local accountability** for public services and local outcomes, rebuilding trust between citizen and the state.

In the context of nationally set standards and priorities, central Government recognises that any local authority needs to develop policies that are appropriate to its needs. These local priorities will be developed by the local authority and its partners and a concordat will govern the relations between central and local government. This will provide an agreement on the rights and responsibilities of local government, ‘including its responsibilities to provide effective leadership of the local area and to empower local communities’. This represents a new settlement as part of wider reforms of the Governance of Britain⁷ and it aims to put the ‘governing’ back into ‘local government’ and ‘to empower citizens to make a real difference in their localities’.

In her Foreword to *Successful Neighbourhoods: A Good Practice Guide*⁸, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government indicated that:

“This Government has an ambitious vision: to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by where they live. To bring prosperity and opportunity to every community.....Sometimes [this] can mean working right down at the level of individual neighbourhoods. It is often here that pockets of the most stubborn social and economic problems are encountered – from crime, to anti-social behaviour, to patterns of worklessness”.

Following the Queen’s Speech in November 2007, the Minister said that:

"This Government believes that everyone deserves a place they can be proud to call home, in communities where people have the power to influence those things that matter to them most.....We want to empower citizens to shape their own lives and the services they receive - and one of the most powerful areas for this type of community empowerment is social housing The bills announced today will help us to achieve this: empowering tenants by giving them more say over how their homes are managed and supporting strong communities that bring people together."

The commitment of Government to sustainable communities is clear, as is their commitment to evidence-based policy. The 1999 White Paper on Modernising

⁷ Ministry of Justice (2007) Governance of Britain

⁸ Duncan and Thomas (2007) *Successful Neighbourhoods: A Good Practice Guide*, London, CLG/Housing Corporation, p. 5.

Government⁹ argued for government policy to be evidence-based and properly evaluated and since then evidence has played a greater part in these activities than had been the case in the past¹⁰. At the national level, this has meant putting ‘the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation’¹¹. Given that not all research is of sufficient quality to inform government policy making, a more systematic approach is thought to be required for searching for and analysing appropriate evidence. We have assumed in this report that if this is true at the national level, it must also be true for local government and the services that local and regional authorities provide.

Strategic policy at the local level should be informed by evidence at an appropriate scale, gathered and analysed systematically. However, in a situation where inter-professional collaboration in support of community cohesion and regeneration is being promoted, there are a number of questions about the most appropriate model of social science research, what would constitute evidence and what spatial scale is appropriate for the collation and analysis of information.

In the main research model that has emerged from the Cabinet Office, ‘scientific evidence’ is taken to mean information that is gathered using methods that are empiricist and comparable to ‘normal’ science. Davies acknowledges that over-reliance on this approach to evidence-based policy and practise may be misplaced, but this ‘scientific’ model is contrasted with other types of evidence that inform the policy process. There is a growing body of literature that points to different epistemological and methodological approaches in social and economic research, which offer a critique of this ‘scientific’ model¹².

Influences on government policy may include experience, expertise and judgement of civil servants and politicians, political ideology and other values, available resources, the habits and traditions of Parliament and Whitehall, lobbyists, pressure groups, the media and the pragmatic realities of everyday government. All of these influences will also operate at a regional and local level, albeit at a different scale. However, by putting the methods of natural sciences at the heart of social policy-making, there is the possibility that an essential aspect of all good social science will be overlooked. Researchers also bring experience, expertise, judgement, values, habits and traditions to the selection and interpretation of evidence. Their experience, expertise and judgement will always be important, for social science is necessarily interpretative. These elements will be at the heart of sound social science that takes us beyond the dryness of descriptive statistics. The availability of statistical data at an appropriate scale is important, whether these are from secondary or primary sources, but they are not sufficient for good social scientific evidence that informs policy. Qualitative research methods are an important tool in the social science armoury.

Social scientists are not free from the same pressures that impinge on the politicians and civil servants but, as Davies points out, policy makers should be able to rely on evidence that is gathered using sound research methods, whether qualitative and

⁹ Cabinet Office (1999) *Modernising Government*, London, Cabinet Office

¹⁰ Davies, P. (2004) *Is Evidence-based Government Possible?*, Paper presented to Campbell Collaboration Colloquium, Washington DC

¹¹ Davies, *op. cit.* p.3

¹² Major, L.E. What is evidence-based policy?

quantitative. If evidence is to be gathered for long-term strategic activities that will serve future generations of policy-makers and practitioners at the local level, we should also be looking towards gathering evidence that will serve inter-organisational collaboration, particularly in the fields of health, education, crime and social welfare. The complexities of the interaction of multiple variables in these fields are reasonably well understood at a national level, but there is little systematic knowledge of how they interact at a local level and impinge on the lives of people in specific neighbourhoods. Most of the information at the level comes from single studies, like this one in Sunderland.

Davies is critical of the use of single studies, since they can provide unbalanced and unrepresentative views on a policy issue, but of course such studies can produce evidence that is counter-intuitive and questions or refutes established thinking. Where he is correct, however, is in his insistence that by accumulating and analysing such evidence, systematic reviews are able to provide generalisations and help understanding of the limits of these generalisations.

Davies is also correct when he says that much of the evidence that is used in policy-making is less systematically gathered and appraised than proponents of evidence-based policy would suggest. There is also, as he suggests, a need for producers of systematic reviews to better understand the needs of policy-makers and to produce the evidence that meets these needs. But what if the evidence exists in different government departments and in different local and regional agencies, but there is no common, agreed method for collating, storing and analysing this information? This is the case for most of the evidence that is relevant for neighbourhood regeneration or any policy that seeks to challenge the 'post-code lottery' below the level of the local authority. This is particularly true if the spatial unit of interest is not the political unit of the ward. There is a lack of consistency in the treatment of spatial units.

Systematic reviews of cross-disciplinary evidence are extremely difficult to carry out, not because the subject matter is too complex to understand, but because the secondary information that is available from government sources is not gathered in a systematic way. The relationship between social science indicators is complex, but this relationship is obscured by different custom and practice in different government agencies.

If the vast majority of the research that is carried out by the UK Government consists of single studies that are not subject to a systematic review methodology, to what extent is this due to the fact that there is no overall agreed framework for gathering the data that provides the statistical context for these single studies? The point of the Sunderland study is to try to develop such a methodology and to investigate the barriers and pitfalls. It is a pilot study using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including analysis of central, regional and local databases that are held and disseminated by these different levels of government. A question that has arisen is about the conditions that hamper the successful gathering of evidence that can be used for implementation and evaluation. The descriptive surveys and administrative data that are gathered and held by government are successfully analysed at national, regional and local authority levels, but if we want to get down to the level of the neighbourhoods that are supposed to benefit from anti-poverty and social inclusion policies, it is extremely difficult gain access to the information and,

when it is possible, the data are not suitable for collation. The tools exist to gather this information, sometimes it is gathered successfully, although sometimes it is not because the staff who are supposed to gather it cannot see the point or never see it being used, and organisations have no agreed common methodology for its collation and analysis. While researchers have an obligation to make their findings accessible to policy-makers, a fundamental challenge for government social scientists and statisticians is to ensure that the evidence they gather is made available to researchers in a format that can be collated and analysed. Davis is right to argue that it is not sufficient for social science researchers to conclude that any problem is ‘very complex’¹³, which is usually already recognised. But if the main barrier to understanding the complexity is the difficulty of carrying out spatial analysis because the spatial units used by different department are inconsistent or irrelevant, the government has a prior task to get its own statistical house in order. The technical capacity to deal with the complexity may exist, but if the existing evidence that government produces or makes available is inadequate, the technical skills are going to waste.

Sometimes evidence in the hands of managers or bureaucrats is not made available in order to preserve power or for other personal reasons. Sometimes it is hidden in order to avoid political embarrassment. Clearly there are data protection issues with some information but reasons for not releasing information can be dressed up in data protection terms which could be simply overcome without compromising individual rights. Often, there is evidence available that is technically very good but that is of little use to policy-makers because it is out of date or does not address the spatial unit that is the object of policy. This is particularly the case with neighbourhood-based analysis, where collaboration requires that useful information can be shared across a variety of delivery agencies for agreed spatial units below the ward level. These issues are exemplified by this project in Sunderland.

2.2 The Policy Context: Housing and Sustainable Communities:

2.2.1 The Regional Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) provides a framework for the region’s public, private and third sector to deliver action for greater and sustainable prosperity¹⁴. There are two main aspects of the Strategy’s people orientation – one focuses on individuals with high skills and the other is concerned with those who are excluded from the benefits of growth. An integral element of the Strategy is a desire for the North East to have an international reputation for quality of life, so that talented people can be encouraged to stay in the region and highly skill, entrepreneurial and creative people can be attracted to live there. In addition to this focus on highly skilled workers, however, One NorthEast (ONE) will help businesses to engage with and locate in deprived communities and enable people who live there to increase their participation in the local economy. In order to get more people into the labour force and more of those who are economically active into work, ONE promises to offer practical support for people in deprived communities and those with health problems

¹³ Davies (2004), p.18.

¹⁴ One NorthEast (2006) *Regional Economic Strategy*, Newcastle upon Tyne, ONE.

to take up employment opportunities. This will involve promoting employment opportunities in areas where people lack basic and key skills, encouraging businesses to engage with these communities and providing support such as childcare. ONE also promises to work with banks and community organisations to help people from deprived communities to achieve financial inclusion.

ONE will also seek to raise excluded people's aspirations through initiatives such as ASPIRE and will promote the development of social capital through the promotion of cultural, sporting and volunteering activities, as means of achieving full participation. In particular, equality and diversity will be at the heart of their activities, helping those groups concerned with different dimensions of equality and diversity (age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and faith) to work with employers and public sector organisations to achieve inclusive economic growth.

These are indeed laudable aims but a fundamental question for ONE and for agencies that buy into their vision in relation to people living in deprived communities is: how will we know when these aims have been achieved? What evidence will be brought to bear to substantiate any claim that the most excluded residents of the region are participating more in the benefits of economic growth than in the past? What level of spatial analysis will be used to identify the communities that are to benefit from the resources required? How do you find, identify and target excluded people in deprived communities who by definition are hard to find? The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) can help with this, as can Census data, but this begs further questions: how is this information currently being used to inform policy and, if it is mainly being used for ward-level analysis, how can we reach through to touch the most deprived and excluded communities that exist in both deprived and relatively wealthy wards? There are in fact questions that are appropriate to address to the public sector organisations that deliver the services to these communities, particularly those organisations that can influence people's capacity to participate – such as education, health, community safety and housing.

These aspirations for excluded communities are also expressed in the Regional Economic Strategy Action Plan¹⁵ and they are to be found in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RES Action Plan states that priorities will be based on a clear rationale and evidence-base for investment, along with evidence that the investment will contribute to achieving sustainable growth: 'A robust evidence base is required to underpin the proposed interventions in the Action Plan and place the Region on track to meet its commitments'. Significant work is planned to improve the regional evidence base, including the development of a Regional Strategic Research programme, the proposal for a national centre of Excellence on Spatial Economics, supporting regional and sub-regional partners and investment in a regional presence for the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The North East Regional Information Partnership (NERIP) is developing a Monitoring Framework which features key regional indicators that measure progress against the goals set out in the RES and the priority themes of the Action Plan.

¹⁵ One NorthEast (2007) *Regional Economic Strategy Action Plan: 2006-2011*, Newcastle upon Tyne, ONE; URSUS (2007) *Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Regional Economic Strategy Action Plan*, Leamington Spa, URSUS Consulting Ltd.

At a regional level, these are important developments. However, if we look at the priorities for vulnerable groups and deprived communities, there are questions we have to ask about the existing evidence base and what will count as evidence of progress. To promote economic inclusion, the Action Plan will focus intervention on the priority target groups of incapacity benefit claimants, those with disabilities, offenders and ex-offenders, lone parents/women returners, carers, older people, young people and BME groups.

The Action Plan also says that:¹⁶

We will raise economic participation in deprived communities and under-represented groups by ensuring that measures to improve the region's economic performance benefit people from deprived areas. We will focus activity to raise aspirations and attainment within these communities.

We will target employability interventions at deprived communities and maximise the use of local partnerships, resources and activities.... to engage individuals in employability and wider economic regeneration activity. Employability interventions will be developed alongside other actions to address social and environmental issues in communities, such as health, education and transport.

The 'People' section of the Action Plan concentrates on skills, education and training and it restates the need to 'raise aspirations and achievement', focusing particularly on the most disadvantaged areas and groups and complementing other social and economic regeneration programmes. In response to the 'empowering people to work' and 'reducing welfare dependency' programmes of Central Government, ONE will concentrate on the most deprived urban and rural communities and groups.

This implies that, for monitoring purposes, the Census information and other statistics will need to be gathered, collated and analysed at a community or neighbourhood level. There is no evidence that this has been the case to date and from the evidence of this project we would argue that there are serious obstacles to be overcome before the impact of these interventions can be measured. After five years of the Action Plan in 2011, it will be possible to use the Census of that year to measure the employment and activity levels of these groups and compare the data with the information from the 2001 Census. As we will see, the census information can be used to create neighbourhood profiles and measure changes in these profiles over time. For evidence-based policy, however, a much greater level of detail is required on a more regular basis. The information in the 2001 Census is already seven years out of date and there is no coherent framework for gathering the other data from the range of agencies that need to be involved in the delivery of sustainable communities.

In recognition that these activities cannot be carried out effectively by action at the regional level alone, the voluntary and community sectors are to be given central roles in delivery. The Regional Employability Framework (REF) will be delivered at the sub-regional and local level, involving these sectors in a 'flexible multi-agency approach to engaging client groups and meeting their employability needs at a local

¹⁶ ONE (2007) *op.cit.*, p. 30.

level'¹⁷. While neighbourhood census information can be aggregated from Output Area statistics, there is no coherent approach to statistical gathering and analysis from any of the agencies involved in the delivery of services at the neighbourhood level. And there is no mention in the RES or the Action Plan of two organisations already involved in these types of activities – Gentoo as a deliverer of services or Tyne and Wear Research and Information as a potential source of neighbourhood-based data analysis.

Under the heading of 'Sustainable Communities' in the Section on Quality of Place, it says that¹⁸ :

Local authorities, developers, housebuilders and other partners will work with local communities to offer people attractive places to live, more sustainable lifestyles and a good quality of life. Investment will see the creation of sustainable communities well connected to areas of economic activity, with then right mix of housing that meets the needs of residents and attracts talented people currently outside the region to live here.

This statement expresses sentiments that are repeated in all the major strategic documents for the region, including the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy. The detail of how these aims are to be achieved, monitored and evaluated, however, is not considered.

2.2.2 The Regional Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)¹⁹, which sets out the spatial planning framework for the vision for the North East to be realised, identifies four key themes:

- Delivering sustainable and inclusive economic prosperity and growth.
- Delivering sustainable communities.
- Conserving, enhancing and capitalising upon the Region's natural and built environment, heritage and culture.
- Improving connectivity and accessibility within and beyond the region.

The Strategy is based on four planning principles:

- To promote an urban and rural renaissance
- To contribute to the sustainable development of the Region
- To reflect a sequential approach to land allocations
- To include appropriate phasing and plan, monitor, manage mechanisms for planning and implementation of new development

The central theme throughout the strategy is to achieve and maintain a high quality of life for all. In this project for the Housing Corporation and Gentoo, we are mainly interested in the aim of delivering sustainable communities and how three of these

¹⁷ ONE (2007) *op.cit.*, p.30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹⁹ Government Office for the North East (2007) *North East of England Regional Spatial Strategy*, Newcastle, GONE.

principles – namely promoting urban renaissance, contributing to sustainable development and the monitoring of planning and implementation - can support this aim. Sustainable development is to be delivered through a number of environmental, social and economic objectives. There are nine social objectives and three economic objectives:

Social Objectives

- To tackle the social, economic and environmental impacts of multiple deprivation.
- To raise educational achievement across the region and improve skills of the workforce.
- To ensure everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent and affordable home.
- To improve the quality and choice of housing through market renewal and new development.
- To reduce crime and the fear of crime, particularly through good design.
- To improve health and well-being while reducing inequalities in health.
- To ensure good accessibility for all to jobs, facilities, goods and services in the Region particularly by public transport, walking and cycling.
- To reduce the need to travel by private car.
- To increase public involvement in decision-making and civic activity.

Economic Objectives

- To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can share and contribute to greater prosperity
- To achieve high and sustainable levels of economic growth by focusing on the Region's strengths and alleviating weaknesses
- To reduce adverse impacts of economic growth on global communities by supporting the use of local labour, materials and produce.

All of the social objectives, including those relating to transport which we are not dealing with in depth here, are relevant for Gentoo and the Housing Corporation. The experience of this project is particularly relevant for assessing how these social objectives can be met through delivering sustainable communities. If meeting these social objectives is to be an integral part of achieving an urban renaissance that is sustainable, how can we monitor what is happening in deprived communities and confirm that changes are indeed taking place in levels of well-being, relative to other communities in the region and nationally. The Annual Monitoring Report, which will be produced by the North East Assembly each year, will address the key indicators of GVA growth; population growth and migration; housing provision, take up and phasing requirements; delivery of housing market restructuring areas; employment rates; employment land provision and take up; and development on previously developed and greenfield land. There is no mention, however, of the social objectives or of the impact of all of the above on the spatial distribution of deprivation.

A key issue is what is meant by the concept of 'community' in this context. The RSS Locational Strategy emphasises the City Regions as the main drivers of economic development and Sunderland is one of two core areas within the Tyne and Wear City

Region (the other being Newcastle). The RSS will support housing, economic and infrastructure investment in these areas in order to deliver sustainable communities²⁰. The concept of community is not defined, but it appears to be referring to cities and towns when it is used in the context of the discussion of the City Region. In Sunderland, the programme for sustainable communities will support ‘the integrated housing market renewal initiatives and programmes’ of the Sunderland Arc area. This is not the concept of community that is inspired by the social and economic objectives of the Strategy, for the Sunderland Arc is mainly about reclaiming derelict land for new mixed development, including some housing for sale, mainly for young professionals. If, as the RHS suggests²¹, around 90% of the housing that will exist in the region in 2022 is already in place, what is the role of social housing providers in the programme for sustainable communities and where do the social objectives fit in?

When discussing urban and rural renaissance, ‘sustainable communities are cohesive, mixed and socially inclusive communities with a sense of place and identity with opportunities for people to maximise their health and quality of life’²². The design and layout of settlements can influence crime and fear of crime, the quality of living environments, and the opportunity to access locally provided jobs, facilities and services. ‘Sustainable communities are also places with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership’²³. According to the RSS, delivering sustainable communities requires a multi-agency approach, tackling spatial issues that are not always directly within the remit of the planning system.

In the pursuit of sustainable communities, which would be based on a diverse economy, a high quality environment and a multicultural, inclusive and cohesive society, the main objectives of the RSS are expressed as:

- Stabilise and then increase the Region’s population.
- Focus housing development on previously developed land and buildings in sustainable locations within the conurbations and main settlements; housing market restructuring areas; towns in regeneration areas; and rural service centres.
- Focus all types of retail, commercial, leisure, recreation and service development, particularly high trip generating uses, within city, town and rural service centres.
- Provide a more appropriate mix of type, size, mix, tenure and affordability of decent, high quality homes by housing market restructuring and through additions to the Region’s housing stock.
- Reduce the amount of vacant housing in the region to 3% by 2011.
- Promote new development where jobs, housing and key services and facilities are accessible by public transport and modes other than the car.
- Build to design standards that minimise the consumption of natural resources, both in construction and operation, and contribute to stimulating local economies.

²⁰ GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p.49.

²¹ North East Housing Board (2007) *The North East England Regional Housing Strategy (RHS): Quality Places for a Dynamic Region*, Gateshead, North East Assembly.

²² GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 109

²³ GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 109

Not surprisingly, since this is a strategic document about regional spatial policy, all of this is about delivering at the regional level and, since it was written by planners, it is mainly about land and buildings. However, when it goes into more detail on ‘Delivering Sustainable Communities’, it becomes clear that the issues relating to the social objectives were mainly introduced by the Secretary of State following consultation. That is, much of the social content of the delivering sustainable communities appears to come as an afterthought following criticism. Perhaps because of this, the question of evidence and the consequences for monitoring are not thought through.

The RSS says that ‘delivering sustainable communities requires consideration of spatial issues that are both directly and indirectly affected by the planning system’²⁴. It then goes on to outline the strategies, plans and programmes that are needed to deliver sustainable communities. Once again, these are mainly related to the use of land for buildings, infrastructure and transport, but there are references to some of the spatial issues relating to the social objectives of the Strategy. In particular, it mentions the potential contribution of *design* to²⁵:

- Linking development to provision of education, health and other social facilities and services.
- The potential contribution of development to reducing health and social inequalities including fuel poverty, and to meeting the needs of an ageing population and the disabled, through design and the provision of accessible health, sports, community, recreational, and other facilities including suitable provision of play space, with new development.
- The potential contribution of development to the strengthening of local communities and their social cohesion.
- The potential contribution of development to secure crime prevention and community safety by design.

The strategy also points to the need to support ‘the use of local labour markets and materials’²⁶.

In this section, the concept of sustainable communities is relevant for spatial units below the level of cities and towns and, by referring to local communities, raises the possibility that communities might actually be based in neighbourhoods which, as we have suggested earlier, are normally conceived in spatial terms. However, there is no clear indication that this is the case and there is no consideration given as to how the social objectives might be monitored at this level. How are we going to measure the conditions of spatially defined neighbourhoods and monitor the changes that take place in them over time? It would appear that this is assumed to be un-problematical. It is in fact an issue that becomes even more serious when it is proposed that housing professionals and the deliverers of other services have to work together to achieve the vision set out for sustainable communities.

²⁴ GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 110.

²⁵ The first two bullet points were inserted by the Secretary of State after the consultation process.

²⁶ GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 112.

2.2.3 Housing and the RSS

Housing demand in the region is characterised by pockets of high and low demand. In areas of high demand, the less affluent get priced out of the market. The RHS and the RSS both note that the areas of low demand closely reflect the distribution of disadvantage²⁷ (RSS, p.116). As noted above, a key argument is that the availability of high quality housing and living environments are essential in supporting economic growth by helping to attract and retain the Region's workforce. It is also recognised that attractive housing and living environments are essential for delivering and maintaining sustainable communities, particularly where they are part of integrated packages of policies that include housing, retail employment, transport, regeneration, crime prevention, community safety and environmental protection and enhancement²⁸:

Not all of the Region's housing problems are directly related to the dwelling stock and not all of them will be solved through housing-based solutions. Delivering sustainable communities within the North East will therefore require physical, social and economic regeneration through an urban and rural renaissance. However the Region's existing dwelling stock is important because it represents the vast majority of housing choice over the RSS period.

It is recognised therefore that generating and sustaining sustainable communities, at whatever scale, will require housing solutions as well as other types of social and economic regeneration, and that existing stock will continue to dominate housing supply through the RSS period. It is also recognised that demolition of some of that existing stock will be required, but the RSS has nothing more to say about how the existing stock or the effects of demolition will impact on quality of life or affect the sustainability of communities. It argues that the planning system has a limited role in tackling housing issues within existing stock, which is highly contestable. It points to a number of regeneration initiatives around the region that 'take an integrated approach linking housing, planning, economy and other policy areas to improve properties and living environments tailored to local circumstances and needs'. It highlights Sunderland Arc as one of these initiatives but, as in the case of the RSS, there is no mention of the role of housing organisations such as Gentoo.

Following Government changes to the RSS, it is recognised that the age structure of the regional population is changing, that there will be more elderly people in the future and that housing provision needs to reflect these changes. This is consistent with the pre-existing theme that an appropriate mix of dwelling type, size and tenure in sustainable locations will be important to provide sufficient choice, create inclusive mixed-income communities, improve quality of life and reduce social polarisation. However, the main concern of the RSS remains with new housing supply and affordability. The role of social housing, particularly where it is in need of improvement as part of an integrated package to meet its social objectives, is marginalised and, despite the fact that in 15 years time around 90% of the region's

²⁷ GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 116.

²⁸ GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 116

housing will be homes that are already in place²⁹, the spatial redistribution of services in relation to the changing populations that inhabit these homes do not figure in the RSS. Through the Government's intervention, the needs of families with children, single person households, the disabled and older people were introduced into the RSS but the provision of improved schools, health, community and other services continue to be linked with only new housing development³⁰ (RSS, p. 129). At the moment, clearance and new build attract the headlines in relation to housing renewal programmes³¹ but the improvement and remodelling of existing stock are much more important for achieving sustainable communities. As we shall see, the claim that planning has a limited role in dealing with these housing issues is not only being overtaken by events nationally but it is also far from true in the case of Sunderland.

Both the RES and the RSS are concerned with people and communities that are marginalised from the benefits of economic growth. Delivering sustainable communities is an integral theme of both documents and the need for partnership working in clear, but the concept of community is vague and the question of shared evidence to support inter-agency working at a neighbourhood or local area management level is ignored. In the Regional Housing Strategy, the problem of evidence is recognised, but the responsibility for gathering and analysing it is passed on to others.

2.2.4 The Regional Housing Strategy.

The four strategic objectives of the 2007 Regional Housing Strategy (RHS), aiming to target market failure and market exclusion, are³² (sic):

- 1. To rejuvenate the housing stock, including the provision of high quality housing for rent, for sale and for shared ownership to meet 21st century aspirations**, replacing market failure with high quality housing in the right locations to help create successful, cohesive and sustainable communities;
- 2. To ensure the supply, type and mix of new housing for rent and for sale meets social and economic needs, provides choice and supports growth.** This will reflect the diversity of urban and rural communities and the needs for affordable, family and executive housing;
- 3. To secure the improvement and maintenance of existing housing** so that it meets required standards, and investing in sustainable neighbourhoods; and
- 4. To promote good management and targeted housing investment to address specific community and social needs**, including an ageing population and the needs of minority communities; aligned with the

²⁹ North East Housing Board (2007) *The North East England Regional Housing Strategy (RHS): Quality Places for a Dynamic Region*, Gateshead, North East Assembly, p.65.

³⁰ GONE (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 129.

³¹ NEHB (2007) *op. cit.*, p.65.

³² NEHB (2007) *op. cit.*, p.13.

Supporting People programme and will promote greater community involvement.

The Regional Housing Strategy acknowledges that the rejuvenation of the housing stock in the North East is important to the region's economic success and vital for ensuring long-term sustainable communities. This continues to be the top priority. However, a key role of the strategy is also the development and implementation of renewal programmes – planning for high-quality housing replacement and working with communities to achieve their involvement and cooperation. This is a long-term process that also requires the private and public sectors to provide investment for transport, community facilities and good local services.

The Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) indicates that around 90% of the housing that will exist in the region in 2022 is already in place and that the improvement and remodelling of this stock is of fundamental importance for the future of housing in the region³³. It also says that successful delivery of its strategic objective for the Improvement and Maintenance of Existing Housing is based on community involvement from the outset³⁴. For the creation of sustainable communities, there is need for a holistic approach that integrates housing improvement, design, accessibility and management strategies with community and neighbourhood renewal strategies. The RHS recognises that these community and neighbourhood based strategies are a priority for residents and tenants and therefore should be a key activity for local authorities. Housing providers have an important role in neighbourhood management and may lead on local community/neighbourhood based initiatives. The RHS sets out a range of potential interventions that all housing providers in the region should address³⁵:

- Sponsoring and championing the community in pursuing and securing other support which will improve opportunities and services, including good neighbour/community award schemes and customer reward pilots.
- Bringing together the different agencies and professionals to deliver the range of skills required and integration of local strategies.
- Community capacity building and involvement.
- Helping residents access training and employment opportunities, especially in work arising from housing investment, maintenance or management.
- Supporting the establishment of local projects and services, through sharing premises or support staff.
- Developing community safety, through their local presence, management role and participation in local community forums.

In Sunderland, Gentoo has clearly been committed to creating sustainable communities, defined as 'places with affordable homes that meet the needs and aspirations of customers, in neighbourhoods that are prosperous, safe, attractive and

³³ NEHB (2007) *RHS*, .p65.

³⁴ NEHB (2007) *RHS*, .p72.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

served by quality services and facilities'³⁶. This translates into a set of objectives for their regeneration and renewal activities that seek to provide:

- A well-integrated mix of homes of different types and tenures to meet the aspirations of a range of household sizes, ages and incomes, including good quality homes that can meet different needs over time.
- A safe and healthy environment with well-designed and maintained public spaces.
- Pride involvement and ownership of local people in the community.
- Good quality local public services, including education and training opportunities, health care and community facilities.
- Good public transport and other transport infrastructure.
- A successful local economy to provide jobs and wealth to the local community.

These objectives are consistent with the wider planning and regional spatial strategies of the City of Sunderland and the Region³⁷. They commit Gentoo to collaboration with a range of service providers across the city in the pursuit of sustainable neighbourhoods.

Gentoo, in setting out its objectives for regeneration and renewal activities, is positively responded to the RHS agenda. Strategic objective four in the RHS, concerned with meeting specific community and social needs, is seen as one of the most challenging to deliver, because of the number of different issues entailed and the number of agencies involved. Crucially, there is acknowledgement that 'there is currently a lack of evidence of the level and nature of need for some of the groups in this objective'³⁸. The document argues that local housing needs studies should identify geographical gaps in specialist provision and the needs of specific community groups. Much of the available evidence on specialist housing needs is based on the experience of specialist working with vulnerable groups, but 'little is supported by robust evidence or research'³⁹. However, there is a question as to whether it is sufficient to rely on local housing needs studies to deal with this issue of the inadequacy of evidence.

The NEHB recognises that the pattern of needs is complex and it will inevitably continue to change, but appropriate responses cannot realistically be planned, nor can priorities be decided, without better evidence and cross-service co-ordination at a 'sub-regional' level. In order to develop successful approaches to housing the most vulnerable members of the community, sub-regional housing agencies have a leading role in bringing together the expertise of housing providers and other service delivery agencies. The Board will support housing strategy teams to ensure that housing investment and management guidance priorities arising from Supporting People Strategies are properly identified and agreed and that investments are better aligned

³⁶ Sunderland Housing Group (2007) *Regenerate Doxford Park: A Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment*, Sunderland, SHG, p.1. Repeated in the NRAs for Pennywell, Ryhope Village, Southwick & Hahnemann Court and High Ford.

³⁷ Local Development Framework (LDF), Planning Policy Statements (PPS); Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS); Regional Economic Strategy; Regional Housing Strategy (RHS)

³⁸ RHS, p. 77.

³⁹ RHS, p. 78.

with health and social service provision⁴⁰. The NEHB also recognises that research is needed to support these aims.

The key targets of the approach include investment to provide housing to meet the priority needs of particular excluded groups, particularly the disabled, returning prisoners, drug and alcohol users, and homeless people across all vulnerable groups. Disadvantaged people and those with erratic lifestyles not only need specialist accommodation but also have particular support needs, often in a number of different inter-related categories. Priorities for vulnerable groups are the maintenance of an adequate supply of social housing, maintaining them in their own homes as long as possible and preventing homelessness. As part of the wider sustainable communities agenda, their specific community and specialist needs need to be considered. Such groups include older people, residents with physical and learning disabilities and people experiencing mental health problems and, where possible, they should be supported to live in their own homes.

This of course raises questions for the Supporting People agenda, which ‘enables the provision of housing related services to help vulnerable people maintain or improve their ability to live independently’. Most of the services target individuals, but resources are often allocated to spatially defined management or administrative areas. For the efficient allocation of these resources, we need to know where the target population live. If resources are to be allocated geographically, to what spatially defined management areas should they be directed?

The key focus of the Supporting People programme is getting the right services to vulnerable people, which means that the work of the service providers needs to be co-ordinated, their work needs to be integrated, and the services should be user-focused. The existence of a wide range of vulnerable groups, often with multiple issues in any household, makes it difficult to join up services. People in receipt of care and support in one field of service provision may be at risk, or may have other household members at risk, in another field. For people with chaotic lifestyles, the provision of support can also be chaotic, and this is not helped by a lack of information about where problems and services overlap, and where they do not. The difficulty is often compounded by an unwillingness or inability to share information between organisations or even between departments within an organisation, an issue to which we will return in a moment.

The RHS recognises the problem of the lack of reliable evidence for tackling the needs of vulnerable people and communities, but this problem is passed down to the ‘sub-regional’ level, with a plea for more research. This raises the question as to whether the situation with respect to evidence for neighbourhood or community-based analysis and policy-making is any better at the sub-regional or city level.

2.2.5 Sunderland’s Strategy for Housing

Sunderland City Council’s Interim Strategy for Housing Land responds to an earlier version of the Regional Housing Strategy and, consistent with the City’s planning

⁴⁰ RHS, p. 79.

policies, it seeks to reduce population loss, increase the supply of new housing and ‘contribute to building viable communities in sustainable locations’⁴¹. It also takes on board the main messages of the Regional Spatial Strategy. In the City’s Community Strategy, ‘housing and the housing environment’ is a key priority and this document also emphasises the importance of housing for stabilising the population through economic, environmental and social improvements. The emphasis of the strategy is on new housing but it seeks to move away from a ‘predict and provide’ model for new housing towards a ‘plan, monitor, manage’ approach.

Sunderland City Council’s Housing Strategy (SHS)⁴² says that ‘housing is the cornerstone of any sustainable community’ and an integral part of the Council’s approach to ensure the highest quality of life for residents. At a local level, the strategy promises to ensure that the housing needs and aspirations are identified and resources are spent on meeting local objectives. However, it also recognises that addressing housing issues cannot be done in isolation, for it has to be part of creating sustainable communities. This means working in partnership to achieve shared outcomes around health, social care, education, community safety and the economy. This leads to three major aspirations that involve improving housing to reverse the trend of outward migration, to ensure that sustainable communities are created and to meet the needs of Sunderland’s diverse population. The SHS identifies ten priorities to meet these aspirations:

1. Make the case for the city.
2. Monitor local housing markets.
3. Intervene in areas showing symptoms of decline.
4. Improve access to affordable housing in the city.
5. Make sure all housing in the city is decent.
6. Identify and tackle poor standards of management in the private sector.
7. Improve planning and design of the City’s housing environment.
8. Improve the way we deal with vulnerable people.
9. Partnership working.
10. Respect.

These priorities respond to national, regional and local concerns, but it is the last three we are particularly interested in. Dealing with vulnerable people involves working with partner agencies and addressing the Supporting People programme. Partnership working (Priority 9) is therefore the key to delivering Priority 8 and, since the City Council is no longer a housing provider, to the whole of the Strategy. In embracing the Respect Agenda, the council promises to ‘tackle crime and anti-social behaviour *in neighbourhoods throughout the City*’⁴³ as a contribution to sustainable communities.

If they are to be strategic, rather than reactive, with respect to supporting vulnerable people and tackling anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods through out the city, what evidence do they have about where support is currently needed and how will this commitment be monitored? One assumes that planning, monitoring and management

⁴¹ Sunderland City Council (2006) Interim Strategy for Housing Land, Sunderland , SCC, p.10.

⁴² Sunderland City Council (2006) *Housing for the Future: A Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2006-2011*, SCC.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.6. Authors’ Italics.

are also appropriate for meeting these aims, which of course imply a focus on current housing supply in vulnerable communities. Since stock transfer in 2001, responsibility for achieving the Council's vision has largely fallen to Gentoo. The SHS identifies their partners as the Sunderland Partnership, the Tyne and Wear Housing Partnership, Sunderland Strategic Housing Partnership, Private Sector Forum and the Registered Social Landlord's Forum. According to the SHS, 'these partnerships have a responsibility to ensure that all priorities are tackled and addressed and that the strategy is monitored and evaluated'. That is, monitoring and evaluation are not the responsibility of the 'sub-regional' City Council. It would appear that housing providers like Gentoo, who participate in most of these partner organisations and have responsibility for the delivery of most of the council's ten priorities are also at least partly responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

While all levels of government in the region recognise the importance of evidence for the development of strategic policy, it would appear that no one wants to take responsibility for this evidence at a local level. If we are to achieve the delivery of sustainable communities, particularly through multi-agency activity where information needs to be shared, there needs to be an agreed protocol in which responsibilities are identified and agreed. Our experience of what we found when we tried to collate data for a variety of government sources confirms this.

3. Secondary Data and Neighbourhood Analysis

3.1. Introduction

In the previous sections, we have pointed to some of the issues around gathering and analysing secondary data that would support evidence-based policies for sustainable communities in Sunderland and the North East Region. We have noted a lack of strategic approach to these issues, particularly in relation to responsibilities for neighbourhood-level statistics that could be shared among the different agencies who deliver services concerned with social and economic well-being. In this section, we will focus more on the practical difficulties associated with neighbourhood level spatial analysis. These difficulties do not refer to the technologies and techniques for spatial analysis, for these are fairly well developed. Nor do they refer to indicators quality of life and well-being, for the Government has identified around 200 of these. The problems are mainly the result of a lack of coherence around the administrative and spatial boundaries used by government agencies, the low priority given to collecting and using neighbourhood statistics and a lack of willingness to share what little information is available.

3.2 Issues with the Collection of Secondary Data for Neighbourhood Analysis in Sunderland

3.2.1 Spatial Units and Neighbourhood Activity

The aim of this section of the report is to set out some of the key issues and problems that were experienced through the secondary data collection element of the project. Undertaking this task has provided not only a chance to acknowledge the problems experienced, but also to draw together a set of conclusions and recommendations that could influence the future of evidence-based policy for neighbourhood regeneration. The key issues were:

- The lack of coherence in the administrative boundaries used by public sector organisations;
- The different spatial units of analysis used by government agencies
- The unavailability of information at the lowest levels, such as postcodes or output areas.

Throughout the project, we have been gathering information on health, education, crime, employment and housing management. We wanted to be able to compare the changes that had taken place since 2001. However, the information we have been interested in is in a number of different formats. The data is gathered and presented by different organisations on the basis of:

- a. Post codes [e.g. Education statistics]
- b. Output Areas (OAs) (plus lower, middle and upper super-output areas)[e.g. 2001 Census data, recent health data, crime data]
- c. Leaf codes [representing Sunderland Housing Group/Gentoo's management patches]
- d. Wards [all of the above can be aggregated to ward level].

Ward level data appeared to be the easiest data to obtain. However, ward data do have limitations for use in this project, as the ward boundaries in Sunderland changed quite considerably in 2004. This has created a number of problems:

- For those who have switched to using 2004 ward boundaries, any comparison at ward level between 2001 and 2006 is meaningless.
- Ward boundaries changed in 2004 but at the beginning of the project, most authorities still appeared to be using old ward boundaries for analysis.
- The ward boundaries are, in any case, too crude for our purposes. Meaningful housing management areas, like estates, lie across ward boundaries.
- Census data was gathered on the basis of enumeration district (EDs) before 2001. Some authorities did not change to OAs until later.
- Lower Super Output Areas are not co-terminus with housing management areas and they cannot be aggregated up to allow a fit with housing management information.
- Within Gentoo, the investment data was not held in the same spatial format as other housing management information.
- Gentoo management data has been difficult to link to the other data because of the way it is gathered and stored. For example, all addresses are post-coded, but post codes are not always recorded or used in the analysis.
- The Output Area boundaries and aggregated data for Super Output Areas (SOAs) are not co-terminus with 2004 wards.
- Census data, gathered in 2001, is not only already six years out of date but is also presented in terms of 1982 wards by some agencies⁴⁴.

When collecting data from all of the agencies, there were difficulties in obtaining data that was useful for neighbourhood analysis. Most of the data was not available at the lowest level, such as postcode or Output Area level. Many agencies and organisations approached needed to carry out substantial amounts of work to get their data down to this level, which suggests that they themselves do not work with small area / localised data.

A major issue appeared to be the difficulty in identifying who exactly holds large-scale data sets and management data within the organisation. This was especially the case with the Health Authority. The implication of this was that it was extremely time consuming trying one potential contact after another in search of the key person to give you some information. A vast amount of time was wasted in this activity.

In many cases once the request for certain types of data and at what level had been put to the agency there would be a long gap before they came back to us. When the requested data was produced it often did not match the request at all. It would appear patchy, presented at an incorrect level and sometimes completely incomprehensible.

Understandably, many organisations expressed concern about how we would use the data. After much explanation about the purpose of the project and who we were carrying out the work for, data was passed over to us but with the caveat that we did

⁴⁴ Ref: Public Health reports; Gentoo NAM

not put it into the public domain. Some of the hold-ups and reluctance that we experienced while collecting secondary data may be attributable to this problem.

3.2.2 Collection of Data from SHG/Gentoo

SHG have a system in place to collect secondary data according to a suite of key thematic indicators (health, crime, education etc.), mainly for the purposes of Neighbourhood Assessment Matrix. The Matrix was developed by the Group to measure the stability and sustainability of neighbourhoods and has been used to inform investment priorities. It involves the collection and analysis of housing and socio-economic indicators, as well as assessing the perceptions of staff about individual neighbourhoods. However the amount of data held for each indicator was quite sparse and it varied across the themes as to what geographical level it was provided at. This was an issue of the availability of data from reliable external sources, which we were also to run into. Gentoo staff recognised these problems and, as we jointly tried to organise internal and external data in a coherent manner, other difficulties with the management of internal information began to emerge. These difficulties were systemic and at all times Gentoo staff were extremely helpful in identifying blockages and trying to overcome them.

Being able to get a handle on how the SHG management patches, leaf codes and other geographies such as output areas and postcodes linked up proved to be extremely difficult. Part of the problem was that different departments in SHG were using different geographical boundaries and they were themselves restricted by what was available from other agencies. Within Gentoo, the geography of their investment figures did not correspond with the geographies of their management areas. The refurbishment and renewal investments were allocated to the City Council's old lettings areas, rather than Gentoo's neighbourhood management areas, as identified by their Leaf Codes. The organisation was using different spatial units of analysis for different purposes and there was no central control over the geographies. Just before the end of the project, for example, we discovered that one of the three company areas had reconfigured their leaf code areas without reference to any central authority. The reconstitution of management areas is part of an organic process of evolution of an organisation like Gentoo, as it responds to changes in its operating environment. It is something that can be accommodated in spatial analysis if it is known about and agreed. As far as we can tell, however, the consequences of this change were not discussed with those responsible for policy analysis.

As we will see when we come to analyse the movement of tenants, there is an uneven approach gathering and using data. The same forms are used across the organisation for most purposes and these forms contain identifiers that would permit spatial analysis. Post codes appear on almost all Gentoo forms concerned with property and their tenants, and these spatial identifiers can be linked to neighbourhood information on social and economic indicators using the Output Areas that are the basic spatial building blocks of the Census and other public data. However, not all parts of the organisation gather the information with the same care. Forms are often not completed properly and therefore cannot be used for trend analysis and subsequent policy decisions. Part of the reason that the data is not collected effectively is that those responsible for completing the forms for it do not see their value. Collecting the

information is not immediately relevant for their day-to-day work. They also may perceive that the data is never used. However, in this Catch 22 situation, it may not be used because it is inadequate and therefore unusable.

In the course of the research it became clear that these problems were making it difficult for the organisation to gather the information that was needed for evidence-based resource allocation. Different geographies, changing spatial configurations and inadequate data make trend analysis impossible. The Neighbourhood Assessment Matrix, Gentoo's tool for evidence-based resource allocation, makes good use of the data available and, although external data in particular is inadequate, the NAM is potentially a very important management tool. For decision-making about resource allocation, both in terms of financial investment and human resources, it is a tool that could also be adapted for use by the Housing Corporation and other RSLs. However, at the moment, it suffers from all of the above problems with internal data. It would also be a much-improved tool if it could access more reliable information at the right scale from external organisation that are Gentoo's potential partners in delivering a better quality of life for the people of Sunderland.

We initially thought that some of the difficulties in obtaining information from various agencies could have been avoided to some degree if SHG had already maintained strong links with the agencies in question. There appeared to be few links between SHG and other organisations that would have enabled us to find the information we needed quickly. However, it became clear later that although the Group had developed links with providers of information within the local authority in particular, the problem had more to do with the lack of information in the first place and the unwillingness of certain individuals or departments in partner organisations to share it when it did exist.

That said, Gentoo staff did provide us with all the information we asked for that was at their disposal and the Group has committed to address the issues with internal data management. They also produced numerous maps that allowed us to understand the geographies of the city and of their management areas, which in turn allowed us to develop a framework for spatial analysis.

3.2.3 Socio-Economic Data and Census Data

One of the central tasks of the secondary data collection phase has been to collect and organise socio-economic data such as age, gender, ethnicity of residents and also employment status, type of employment and benefits data for the baseline year of 2001 and then the comparator year at 2006. The data (mostly passed on from SHG) for this has been presented in a table that shows:

- Census statistics for 2001 (baseline) grouped according to SHG management areas we are interested in (North, Central and South) and for Sunderland as a whole.
- CORE data from SHG for 2001/2002 and 2005/2006 for the North, Central and South SHG management areas.

Although SHG did send the information above, there were gaps and additional information that needed to be found to supplement this. National Statistics Online, more specifically the Neighbourhood Statistics section, does provide a reasonable service that helps to get some of the available data. However, while they hold comprehensive databases for 2001 census, obtaining up-to-date (2007) statistics that can be reconfigured for neighbourhood analysis is much harder. Most of the Government's Neighbourhood Statistics are, in fact, quite inadequate for their intended purpose. The data is not available at a level that allows aggregation to neighbourhood boundaries and the quality of information for different geographical levels varies considerably. The following illustrates what data is available at each level:

Neighbourhood Statistics

Output Area Level

- Majority of Census 2001 data
- Very little other data at this level is available for years other than 2001.

Lower Super Output Level

- Majority of Census 2001 data
- Some 2005/2006 education data
- Some 2005/2006 benefits data
- Population estimates up to 2004
- Very little socio-economic data other than for the year 2001

Ward Level:

- Majority of Census 2001 data
- Some 2005/2006 education data
- Some 2005/2006 benefits data
- Population estimates up to 2004
- Very little socio-economic data other than for the year 2001
- Again, there is very scarce information relating to socio-economic characteristics of ward areas other than for 2001.

The implications of all of this are that it was not possible to assemble a comprehensive database with all of the socio-economic and thematic data found at Output Area level. This level of data does not seem to be readily available. With the exception of the Census data, which is now 7 years out of date, these 'neighbourhood statistics' are currently of little use for neighbourhood analysis.

A further issue complicating matters is that as some of the data is very patchy, such as the employment data, and it has been difficult to coherently collect and then relate this to Gentoo Management areas. One way to approximate to this would be to collect at ward level and then aggregate the wards according to which Gentoo management area they fall under. However, on further examination it appeared that the management areas do not match up to the boundaries of the wards. This can then lead to the danger of double counting.

In order to acquire more socio economic data, contact was made with a data provision agency in the North East called Tyne and Wear Research and Information (TWRI). Sunderland City Council uses this organisation to acquire statistics on their behalf and so it seemed logical to approach them to fill in the gaps. Their website does provide some data and there is a tool available to probe their databases but this is only available to the local authorities in the area and not to the general public. Initially, a request for different types of data was sent to TWRI but unfortunately they were unable to provide very little of what was asked for. Towards the end of this phase of the project, TWRI did allow us to look at the information they hold, on condition that it is treated as confidential. However, we shall return to this in a moment to look at what could have been done with the 2001 census data, had we been able to access it.

Contact was also made to Sunderland City Council in attempt to gather data economic data such as employment/unemployment figures. They were extremely unhelpful and unable to pass on any information at all - most of the information they use apparently comes from NOMIS and National Statistics – the implication was that we could visit these websites and obtain the information ourselves – but this information is inadequate for neighbourhood analysis.

In general, it did feel that if you were looking for very up-to date data e.g. 2006 figures for population, gender, age, ethnicity, employment that it just did not exist or was not freely available.

Other problematic data to gather included democratic turnout. The Elections Department in Sunderland City Council were approached for these figures and are able to provide figures for the last three years (until 2004). Figures from before that have been archived. The real problem lies in that comparing 2001 to 2006 figures would be a meaningless exercise, due to the ward boundary changes in 2004. The elections department do use smaller geographies to aggregate up to ward level (polling districts) but these do not match up to any of the other geographies such as output areas or leaf code areas that are used in the project to help us relate to the Gentoo management areas and estates.

3.2.4 Health Data

The main issue with health data was pinpointing who within the Health Authority held large-scale data sets on the kinds of data we needed. The NHS is a huge organisation and with more than one PCT operating within the Sunderland area, finding the correct person to approach proved to be extremely difficult. The Teaching PCT was approached first and the general Communications team were approached. From then on, we were passed between 3 employees in the organisation until eventually it was agreed that the Information Services team could help us out in getting some of the primary and secondary care data sets. On the face of it, it looked like the Health service did not really know themselves who could provide important data on the running of the service.

In 2002, a report carried out for ONE⁴⁵ pointed out that important information systems in the Region were not organised in a way that easily facilitated the type of analysis presented in the report or could easily inform NHS participation in a more active and informed economic role in the region.

Factors that influenced the depth and nature of analysis that could be carried out were:

- *Purpose* – because we were often requesting data in non-standard formats, some data could not be extracted from existing systems within the timeframe of this study.
- *Availability* - some data is captured and stored electronically while other data is not. Of particular concern was the lack of more localised data e.g. where NHS employees live; supplier postcodes to identify spend through local suppliers
- *Structural change* – the changeover from primary care groups and health authorities to PCTs and Strategic Health Authorities in 2001/2 meant that certain datasets are no longer comparable or even exist.
- *Level* - to ascertain the economic impact of the NHS as employer, it will be essential to consider the local impact of the NHS as an employer in wards. The timeframe of this study and the associated time it would take to extract this data (where it exists) precluded such an analysis at this point.

Having identified these limitations, the report said that the various agencies now had a better understanding of these challenges and were considering how such data could be collected, used to address cross-cutting issues and provide a firm basis for future regional and sub-regional developments. As far as we could see, there was no evidence of this having happened.

When contact was eventually established with the Information Services team, it emerged that the service was undergoing a reorganisation and so manpower was limited to actually undertake our request and it was made clear that not all the information we had requested would be made available to us. When we eventually received the data requested from the PCT, it actually was of little use - it was not at the correct level, was patchy and did not make sense.

As we required both Primary / Secondary care data and Public Health data we had to deal with these separately - the PCT did not hold Public Health information.

In order to get some Public Health data, the North East Public Health Observatory based at Durham University was approached. They agreed to provide the data needed but again to get the data to the lowest level possible - Lower Super Output Area in this case - they would have to carry out a substantial amount of work and would have to charge for it. We paid for some information but this was of limited use.

There were some problems in presenting public health figures for Standard Mortality Ratios (SMRs) for different diseases. These include:

⁴⁵ ONE (2002) HAD Report.

- The fact that the figures are very small and had to be manipulated by NEPHO to make it easier to analyse.
- For this reason the 2001 data relates to the years 2001-2002 and the 2004 data relates to 2003-2005.
- Comparisons between LSOAs should not be made when conducting any analysis; they should only be compared to the reference population (Sunderland, NE or England).

3.2.5 Crime Data

This proved to be the easiest to obtain. SHG already had a contact within the City Council who could provide them with crime statistics.

This contact was utilised and they were able to provide us with the majority of the data needed and at the level required. The only data not to be collected was Output Area data for 2001 – it was not readily available although the reasons for this are not clear. Data was provided at Ward level for 2001 but this is not without its problems – as the ward boundaries changed in 2004 this data is hard to reconcile with data then produced for years after 2004.

The Council also raised concerns about how this data would be used. The data was only supplied on the proviso that it was not reproduced in the public domain.

We eventually agreed with Tyne & Wear Research and Information that they would produce information for Gentoo's management areas, based on Leaf Codes, to which we will return later.

3.2.6 Education Data

There is a large amount of education data available on the DfeS website that details performance on a school-by-school basis at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

However, further information is needed on an individual pupil – postcode basis that the local Education Authority generally holds. There are data protection issues around issuing data at post-code level, but this information could be aggregated up to Output Area level and linked to other information through this spatial unit of analysis.

The City Council Education office was contacted and it was agreed that work could be done to get the data we needed. However, as it was extra work for an employee to fit around their other work, it has meant that it took a long time to receive any data from them. When it arrived, it was not what we thought we had agreed.

We tried several other routes to obtain this information, through the Local Strategic partnership, two departments of the City Council and the Tyne and Wear Research and Information office (TWRI) only to discover that it was not made available to other departments within the City Council or to TWRI. The information exists and it could be useful for policy analysis, but it cannot be obtained.

3.2.7 The Next Phase

For the next phase of the study, we cannot assume that very detailed, complex data is readily available. The organisations and agencies approached in this study all had to carry out some work on their part to be able to pass over the data at the required level and detail. Consistent spatial organisation of data ought to be a regional and national priority if evidence-based policy for neighbourhood regeneration and the promotion of sustainable communities are to become reality. TWRI have Census and some other data at the required spatial level, but access to this needs to be negotiated and paid for. Costs therefore need to be written into the budget, but more open access to this information must be in the public interest. Given their interest in neighbourhood statistics, it is also an issue that the Department for Communities and Local Government ought to look closely at.

Gentoo needs to manage its internal data better. There ought to be some central control and consistency across the organisation in the spatial units that are used and front-line managers ought to be asked to ensure that allocation and other forms are completed accurately. If the information is worth gathering, it is worth gathering correctly. If it is not going to be used, don't gather it, for it only becomes an unnecessary burden on front-line staff. Data entry and report writing for strategic management purposes will be made much easier if forms are designed to gather information that is necessary and will be used.

4. Social and Economic Indicators

4.1 Introduction: Key Facts

Seventy per cent of the 2.6 million population of the North East Region live in urban conurbations along the Tees, Tyne and Wear Rivers. Over the past 25 years, the economic base of the region has been severely affected by the decline of the mining, shipbuilding and heavy engineering industries and the Region includes some of the most deprived communities in the UK. Twelve local authorities are on the list of the 50 most deprived in the country. In relation to population, the business base is over 40% smaller than the UK average at 203 businesses for every 10,000 adults; a higher proportion of the population claim income support than elsewhere; the health status of the North East is the poorest in England; and the North East's low economic activity is mainly due to older people leaving the labour force - between the ages of 45 and 65, 28.8% of all NE men were neither in work nor seeking work, 2.5 times the UK rate, with most describing their state as 'permanently sick'⁴⁶.

According to the 2006 estimates of population, there are 1,087,600 people living in Tyne and Wear, of whom 280,600 live in Sunderland⁴⁷. The City is the largest population centre in the region, with the largest number of households (116,400)⁴⁸, larger than Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the Region lags behind the rest of the country in all the major employment and education indicators. In Tyne and Wear, employment in manufacturing (12.1%) has been overtaken by Business and Finance (17%), Trade (16.4%) and Health and Social Care (13.3%). Manufacturing in Sunderland accounts for 16.8% of all employment, behind Business and Finance and Trade⁴⁹. Employment in the construction sector is below the national average at 5.1% in Tyne & Wear and 4.4% in Sunderland.

Sunderland residents are less likely to be economically active than people in other parts of the region, they are more likely to be unemployed, and less likely to be seeking work. They are more likely to have no qualifications and, correspondingly, are less likely to have higher NVQ qualifications. Consequently, they have a lower earning capacity. At the time of the 2001 Census, 76% of jobs in Sunderland were full-time and 24% were part-time. The creation of a 'sustainable city', the provision of housing and support services for vulnerable people, and the development of communities through encouraging housing's contribution to social, environmental and economic regeneration will need to focus on the needs of poorer residents in deprived neighbourhoods if these aims are to be realised.

⁴⁶ Watson, J. and Lamprecht, R. (2002), *NHS Spend And The Regional Economy: A scoping study of the contribution of the NHS to the North East regional economy*, One NorthEast and Health Development Agency (North East Office).

⁴⁷ Tyne and Wear Research and Information (2007) *Tyne & Wear Key Facts*, TWRI, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

⁴⁸ Census, 2001.

⁴⁹ Sunderland City Council (2007), *Sunderland Key Facts*, SCC.

Table 4.1 Economic and Education Indicators

Indicator	Sunderland	North East	Great Britain
Economically Active	72.9%	74.8%	78.3%
Unemployed	7.2%	6.0%	4.8%
Economically Inactive	27.1%	25.2%	21.7%
Econ Inactive, not wanting job	23.4%	19.5%	16.6%
Qualifications			
NVQ 4 and above	15.3%	20.7%	25.2%
NVQ 3 and above	32.5%	38.9%	43.1%
NVQ 2 and above	52.6%	58.9%	61.5%
NVQ 1 and above	72.8%	75.4%	76.0%
No Qualifications	20.1%	18.0%	15.1%
Earnings, Gross Weekly Pay	£366	£384	£433

Source: Sunderland City Council (2006) *City of Sunderland - Case for a Regional Casino*, Sunderland, SCC, p.7.

The stock of wealth in the region and in Sunderland is also well below the national average. Table 4.2 shows that the value of the average house in Sunderland, for example, is only 62.1% of the national average⁵⁰. For all types of property, average prices in Sunderland are below those in the region.

Table 4.2**Average House Prices, April to June 2006**

	England & Wales	Tyne & Wear	Sunderland	Sunderland as % of E&W
Detached	300,300	242,700	223,700	74.5
Semi-detached	180,200	147,900	130,400	72.4
Terraced	158,500	125,600	98,800	62.3
Flat/Maisonette	185,700	108,600	93,700	50.5
Overall	199,200	138,300	123,800	62.1

Decent homes standards

The Government has set targets for achieving its decent homes standards in the social and private sectors by 2010. These are ‘to bring all social housing into decent condition, with most of the improvement taking place in deprived areas, and increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable people’⁵¹. This is seen as a priority for the regional strategy but it is also seen as a

⁵⁰ TWRI (2007) *op. cit.*; SCC (2007) *op. cit.*

⁵¹ CLG, *Public Service Agreement 7*.

minimum, since many local authorities and RSLs are expecting to go beyond decent homes standards.

Nevertheless, in the Region in 2006, around 90,000 council homes, or 56% of stock, failed to meet decent homes standards⁵². In the RSL sector, around 20% failed to meet the required standards. The RHS argues that major market changes across the region have not helped in bringing its obsolete housing stock to a decent standard⁵³, but this is clearly not the case for Gentoo, who by 2007 had already achieved the target set for 2010.

The region has already achieved the target set for the private sector by 2010: that 70% of vulnerable households⁵⁴ in the private sector should live in decent homes. However, this target is seen as too low by the NEHB and it is concerned that over 27% of vulnerable people in the region who are living in ‘private households’ (including the private rented sector) whose housing requires significant improvement. The RHS recognises that achieving the required standards in the private rented sector ‘is a particularly complex task’⁵⁵. However, an important question is whether, in the process of social housing improvement, vulnerable people are being displaced into the worst housing in the private rented sector, thereby working against the targets for this sector. We shall return to this question later.

Table 4.3

**Gentoo stock in the three core company areas
2001-2007**

	Stock 2001		Stock July 2007		Sold under Right to Buy 2001-07	% stock sold in each company 2001-2007	Loss of stock not sold 2001-2007
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
Central	7726	34.1	6459	34.5	322	4.2	12.2
North	7749	34.2	6371	34.0	871	11.2	6.5
South	7193	31.7	5888	31.5	816	11.3	6.7
TOTAL	22668	100	18718	100	2009	8.9	8.6

Note - % are calculated using 3 companies stock numbers and not the whole of Gentoo

At the time of stock transfer in 2001, Sunderland Housing Group inherited some 36,356 dwelling units from Sunderland City Council. By the time we were carrying out the fieldwork for this research, some 4,158 had been sold under the right to buy and 1,946 others have been demolished. The figures for the study area (Central, North

⁵² NEHB (2006) *RHS Statistical Appendix*

⁵³ NHEB (2007) RHS, p12

⁵⁴ Defined in the English House Condition Survey (EHCS) as ‘those in receipt of one of the principle means-tested or disability related benefits’. EHCS, 2004.

⁵⁵ NHEB (2007) RHS, p.69

and South Companies) show that they have lost 17% of their stock since transfer, around half of which has been sold (Table 4.3). The situation in the North and South areas are broadly comparable, losing around 11% of their stock through sales, while units in the Central area, which has a higher proportion of flats, have been selling at a slower pace. The distribution of sales and demolitions in the Central area is quite different from the other two company areas.

In the above regional context, One NorthEast, the Regional Assembly, local authorities and a range of other stakeholders have been developing policies to stimulate the regional and local economies and combat social exclusion.

4.2 Spatial Units and Secondary Social and Economic Data

4.2.1 The Use of Indices of Multiple Deprivation

It is generally accepted that there are pockets of poverty in affluent local authorities all round the country and that analyses that focus on well-being at the district or local authority level ignore concentrations of deprivation at the neighbourhood scale. Similarly, where ward level analyses of deprivation are carried out, pockets of poverty in wards that are mainly affluent are hidden from sight. In order to be able to identify and treat localised areas of deprivation, therefore, it is important to be able to carry out analysis at the level of neighbourhoods. The way that statistics are gathered, however, still makes this extremely difficult.

The presentation of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) has improved since 2000, when the analysis was carried out at the ward level⁵⁶. In 2000, there was only one ward in Sunderland (Southwick) that was in the bottom 10% of the most deprived wards in England and another three (South Hylton, Thorney Close and Town End Farm) that were in the bottom 20%. However, the old ward of Grindon, which lay above the bottom quartile in 2000, contained significant areas of deprivation in the Pennywell Estate.

In 2004, Sunderland was ranked the 22nd worst local authority in England for deprivation⁵⁷. This placed it in the bottom 7% of authorities. The data is now available at the level of the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) and the IMD data show that there were 51 LSOAs in the bottom 10% of LSOAs in England. Three of the city's LSOAs were in the bottom 0.5%, four were in the worst 1% and 25 were in the worst 5%⁵⁸. Of the four worst areas, two of them were within Southwick, the worst ward in 2000, but the other two were in wards that did not appear in the bottom 20% of the most deprived wards in the country (Thornholme and Central). Of the worst 10 LSOAs in Sunderland in 2004, only 5 were located within the four worst wards in 2000⁵⁹. The most likely explanation for this is that the ward level analysis is

⁵⁶ Spreadsheet IMD1. This spreadsheet is available on CDROM with this report.

⁵⁷ Spreadsheet IMD2. This spreadsheet is available on CDROM with this report.

⁵⁸ All percentages rounded to one decimal point. Spreadsheet IMD3. This spreadsheet is available on CDROM with this report.

⁵⁹ It is possible, but highly unlikely, that the situation in these wards changed over time and there is no reason to believe that the changes in the way deprivation was measured can account for this.

not picking up significant levels of deprivation. The ward is a highly unreliable spatial unit for identifying where action on deprivation should be targeted.

Following changes to ward boundaries in 2004, there were 188 LSOAs and 25 wards in Sunderland. This study is focussed on the 16 wards that are covered by the Central, North and South management areas of Gentoo. Within this area, we looked more closely at the LSOAs that fell within the most deprived 1000 LSOAs in England. There were 12 LSOAs in Sunderland that were in the worst 1000, which meant that they were within the 3% most deprived in the country. Eleven of them were within the study area⁶⁰.

Because there was no attempt to match wards with Census units of analysis in 2004, three of these LSOAs cut across ward boundaries. These worst patches of deprivation are within the current wards of Southwick, Hendon, Millfield/ Pallion, Sandhill, Redhill and Hendon/St Michaels.

There are two other levels of analysis of the LSOAs that can be carried out below the level of the ward. These are the neighbourhood and the Gentoo management area (identified by a Leaf Code) (IMD4).

1. The use of the LSOAs for neighbourhood level analysis remains problematical. Most of the LSOAs cover more than one neighbourhood (IMD5). For example, the 6th and 7th worst LSOAs cover both Ford and Pennywell; the 9th includes parts of Thorney Close, Springwell and Humbledon, and Humbledon is hardly a deprived part of Sunderland; and the 10th covers areas within both Springwell and Thorney Close.
2. If we drop down a level from these wider neighbourhoods to Gentoo management areas, the disjuncture between the spatial unit that is used to analyse multiple deprivation and the geographical area that is used to deliver services that might address deprivation, is even more apparent. The 9th worst LSOA in Sunderland, within the ward of Sandhill and including parts of Thorney Close, Springwell and Humbledon, contains parts of the geography covered by the management areas of Thorney close 2 and 3, Springwell and Humbledon, but not Thorney Close 1 and 4⁶¹.

The LSOA is a better spatial unit than the ward for analysing IMD data when trying to get evidence for neighbourhood policy, but it still not good enough. In the 11 most deprived parts of Sunderland, two of the LSOAs involve four Gentoo Management Areas and a further four LSOAs cover three Management Areas.

It could be argued that the Management Areas should be brought into line with the LSOAs, but this would not be advisable. The management areas are meaningful for both housing officers and residents. If the IMD data were made available at the Output Area (OA) level, it could be aggregated up to Management Areas and Estates, which would be more meaningful for policy purposes. There are between four and seven OAs in each LSOA. Matching OAs and Leaf codes still leaves

⁶⁰ LSOA E01008746 is in Hetton. See spreadsheet IMD4. This spreadsheet is available on CDROM with this report.

⁶¹ Since carrying out this analysis it has become clear that the area covered by Thorney Close 4 has been redistributed to other Gentoo Leaf Codes.

some minor overlapping boundaries, but these can be accommodated by slightly changing the boundaries of Leaf Code areas or by allocating OAs to the leaf codes that contain the largest number of properties within the OA. With some minor adjustment, the gains in evidence about neighbourhood and housing management areas would be substantial, as will be seen later in the analysis of crime statistics carried out for us by TWRI.

That said, the evidence at LSOA level is not useless. It is better than what was available previously and it indicates the following (IMD4):

- a. The most deprived part of Sunderland falls within the Southwick Management Area of the Southwick Estate (Leaf code 241). This area is in the bottom 0.3% of LSOAs in the country.
- b. The second most deprived LSOA constitutes part of the East End and Central Hendon (Leaf Codes 111 and 112).
- c. The third most deprived area is clearly within the East End (Leaf Code A111).
- d. The fourth most deprived area is the Marley Potts Estate (leaf Code A242).
- e. All of the above are in the most deprived one per cent of LSOAs in the country.
- f. The neighbourhoods and management areas indicated in IMD4 constitute some of the most severely deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

The above overall scores, however, are made up of constituent elements which do not score evenly.

- a. The worst overall area, in Southwick (Leaf Code A241), does not come out worst in any of the constituent parts. This is significant for collaborating agencies that might form local partnerships to tackle related aspects of deprivation in this neighbourhood. It is second in income, health and young person's education; 3rd in income deprivation affecting children; 4th in both employment and education; and 6th in crime. The spread of indicators clearly make this an area for multi-agency collaboration.
- b. The East End (Leaf Code A111) is spread over three LSOAs, sharing two of them with Central Hendon and South Hendon.
 - i. In the LSOA that contains part of East End but no other management area, the third worst overall in the city, we find the worst results for income and employment, second worst for income deprivation affecting both young and older people and third worst for health, education and the young person's education sub-domain.
 - ii. In the LSOA it shares with Central Hendon Management Area (A112), the second worst LSOA in the city, it is worst for crime and income deprivation affecting older people and second worst for employment.
 - iii. In the LSOA it shares with South Hendon, only its results for employment appear in the bottom 10.

- iv. This part of the city, close to the employment hub of the city centre, is an area in crisis, with particular problems of, paradoxically, employment and income, as well as health, education and crime. The deprivation is affecting both young and older people.
- v. This is also an area that is crying out for multi-agency working

The same need for multi-agency working can be said of Lower Pennywell North, High Ford and Marley Potts (ranking 4th, 6th and 7th in Sunderland), although they do not appear in the top ten for crime; and health problems do not figure as highly in Lower Pennywell North and High Ford. The lower down the ranking one goes, the more specialised the help that is needed. The need for inter-agency working becomes less clear.

In the Central, North and South Companies, there are key wards within which Sunderland's deprivation is concentrated, but within these wards there are census tracts within which there is severe deprivation:

- a. Hendon (LSOAs ranked 2, 3 and 12)
- b. Southwick (LSOAs ranked 1, 4 and 5)
- c. Millfield/Pallion (LSOAs ranked 6 and 7)
- d. Sandhill (LSOAs ranked 9 and 10)
- e. Redhill (LSOA ranked 11)

Some of these aspects of deprivation can be treated locally, some at the level of the city.

- a. Income and employment deprivation can be tackled both city-wide, through investment, and locally through education and training. (Combined, these account for 45% of the IMD score)
- b. Health and disability can be tackled both locally (prevention) and more widely (care). (13.5% of the score)
- c. Education, skills and training can be tackled through schools and colleges, and through the home. (13.5%)
- d. Barriers to Housing and Services are not a major problem in the study area. None of the LSOAs in Sunderland are in the bottom 5000 in the country and only 8 are in the bottom 10,000. (This counts for 9.3% of the IMD score)
- e. Crime can be tackled locally (there are three LSOAs in the bottom 100 and 12 in the bottom 1000) (9.3% of the score)
- f. The environment can be tackled both strategically and locally (9.3% of the score)

However, for most of these we need to know more details at the local level, in order to plan for the type of health care that will be needed at the local level, to judge the level of anti-crime resources that are needed for crime prevention, or to assess the educational needs of households with children whose education is failing. School performance can improve, but what happens to those pupils who continue to fail? It is

perfectly possible, and indeed highly likely, that as schools improve their performance this will be done on the basis of their best pupils, with significant numbers being left behind and greater inequality being created within schools. If the home is a factor in educational performance and if in the future resources are to be made available to tackle this, what are the family circumstances of failing pupils and where are they living? At the moment, we do not know.

Health is another area where prevention is becoming more important and, therefore, action in the community will become more relevant. In order to look a little more closely at some of these issues we will consider some of the strategic policy issues that arise from an ageing population that is distributed unevenly in space and has unequal access to resources.

4.2 Housing, Health and Social Services for an Aging Population

The Prime Minister recently announced that ‘The NHS of the future will do more than just treat patients who are ill – it will be an NHS offering prevention as well ... the NHS of the future will be one of patient power, patients engaged and taking greater control over their own health and their healthcare too’⁶². He offered a vision of the NHS based on prevention rather than cure.

The Government will be publishing a patient’s prospectus setting out how all 15 million patients with long-term illnesses will get a choice of ‘active patient’ or ‘care at home’ options. ‘A more personal and preventative service will be one that intervenes earlier, with more information and control put more quickly into the hands of patient and clinician’. In response to the Prime Minister’s announcement, Professor Chris Hams of Birmingham University pointed out that⁶³:

“The quality of specialist services like stroke care will require not only closer collaboration between providers, but also clinical integration between family doctor, hospital and out-of-hospital care”.

In the longer term, ministers could then explore how patients might choose between integrated systems, rather than just choose isolated elements of their care. He added: “If you take diabetes, the challenge for health, social and community services is to enable patients to self-manage their condition. But when things go wrong, patients need the right service, in the right place, at the right time, with the right expertise instantly available. The services need to work together, with patients not having to work out which part of it they need. That requires collaboration not competition”. There were, he said, “unresolved tensions” between patient choice, more local and community accountability for the NHS, and continued central initiatives.

There is clearly a need for more integrated prevention and care, which means integration with other non-health carers and providers of other services. This prevention and care will increasingly take place in the community and professionals from different agencies will need to share information if there is to be effective collaboration. It is not just health professionals who provide care for the elderly, but

⁶² *The Guardian*, 8.1.08)

⁶³ *Ibid.*

we might expect that there will be limits to what information on individual patients can be passed around from one agency to another. However, some information sharing is necessary if rational strategic decisions about resource allocations are to take place. With increasing care in the community, there needs to be some common understanding about how communities and neighbourhoods are defined. Some of the issues that are raised by this can be seen by looking at the aging population in different estates in Sunderland.

A major issue in the future will be older people living longer in the community, with slowly deteriorating health. Despite the efforts of the Supporting People programme to provide services to residents with care and support needs, across the region there is a shortfall in the units required for older people and a proportionately larger shortfall for people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and other vulnerabilities. The 2005 Regional Housing Strategy said⁶⁴:

Older people represent the biggest group requiring support to stay in either their current accommodation or one of the supported accommodation options. The proportion of older people is expected to increase by 5.8% over the next ten years and in 2011 will represent one-fifth of the population (and nearly one-quarter by 2021). Available evidence suggests that the existing stock of housing in our region is increasingly failing to meet the needs and aspirations of our older people

It is recognised that the providers of Social Housing, Health Care and Social Services will need to work closely together to meet the needs of this segment of the population, much more than in the past. A key objective of the NEHB is to promote good management and targeted housing investment to address community and social needs, including an aging population and the needs of minority communities, but there is little indication as to how this will be done in practice and little evidence about where these vulnerable groups were located. This information is clearly needed for such targeted support.

Addressing these issues implies not only an alignment of resource allocation policies at a strategic level but also an implementation plan at the local or neighbourhood level. There are, however, informational and organisational barriers that need to be overcome:

- Front-line professional in all three services will know where most of the elderly live and will interact with them as cases become known to them
- This information does not always rise up the information hierarchy of complex organisations, to reach the levels where decisions about resources are being made.
- There is a strategic issue about how the limited resources of organisations get distributed. Front-line professional will also be in competition for these resources and often it will be those who make themselves heard who will gain access to them.
- There is also a strategic issues about how the different organisation work together to deal with different aspects of the needs of the elderly.

⁶⁴ NEHB (2005) *A New Housing Strategy for the North East*, p. 20

- In order to tackle these strategic issues, reliable information needs to be available to the key decision-makers.

We should not assume that statistical information, usually gathered for other purposes, will in itself be sufficient to inform this decision-making. Reliable secondary data at the right geographical level, however, is fundamental for informing any debate about resource allocation.

If we focus on three key estates, where deprivation was amongst the highest in Sunderland, one in each of the Company Areas, we can see that there was considerable variation in the numbers of the elderly in each estate Table 4.4. This tells us something about the future demand for health-care and social services in each of these estates. It also suggests that the greatest demand may be in the estate with less social housing than the other two. However, if we dig down further, we can see that there are even wider differences within the estates than between them.

Table 4.4

Proportion of the population who were 65 years and older in three deprived estates, 2001

	% Male	%Female	% Living in Social Housing
Pennywell	11.1	14.7	62.9
Southwick	17.3	21.2	55.0
Thorney Close	13.0	16.0	67.8

In Pennywell, which is made up of 5 output areas (OAs), there are three output areas where more than 20% of males are 65 and over and two where less than 5% are in this age cohort (Table 4.5). For females, the aggregated figures are composed of similarly disparate results. The same pattern can be found in the other two estates.

High concentrations of the elderly may be related to the type of accommodation that is available, such as care homes for the elderly or flats that are designated for over-50s, but it is not related to tenure. Housing, health and social services professional on the ground will most likely know about these concentrations and be able to explain the reasons for them, along with the issues that arise in their day-to-day interactions with older people. The high visibility of areas where older people are concentrated is more likely to lead to clear strategies for supporting them. The extremely high concentrations of older people in Hahnemann Court, for example, where between 84% and 87% were living in social housing in 2001 (depending on which OA they belong to), have led Gentoo to focus on the special needs of these residents. From the focus groups and interviews, it is clear that the effect of this effort has been to greatly improve the experience of tenants living in Hahnemann Court. However, it is outside areas such as this that there are strategic issues for senior managers to consider.

Table 4.5

Proportion of the population in selected Output Areas who were 65 years and older, 2001

	Output Area	% Male	% Female	% Living in Social Housing	Leaf Code	LC Patch
Pennywell	FF14	23.2	32.7	69.6	A154	Petersfield L. Pennywell
	FF18	20.3	22.9	3.9	A141	S/N? L. Pennywell
	FS03	20.0	20.4	46.7	A141	S/N?
	FF09	3.7	7.4	81.5	A142	H. Ford 1
	FF19	3.3	5.1	72.5	A161	Grindon 1
Southwick	FC03	33.8	38.5	76.3	A242	Marley Potts
	FC14	61.5	72.0	84.4	A244	Hahnemann Ct
	FC16	46.3	50.8	86.8	A244	Hahnemann Ct
	FC12	5.2	4.2	80.1	A241	Southwick
	FC18	4.4	4.3	69.2	A251	Bond Cl./NR
	FT17	4.6	4.9	78.8	A242	Marley Potts
	FT19	5.5	3.9	91.1	A242	Marley Potts
Thorney Cl. ⁶⁵	FU13	18.3	18.4	62.9	A363	Thorney Cl. 2
	FU12	18.2	28.4	68.8	A362	Thorney Cl. 1
	FU16	17.9	17.6	57.0	A362	Thorney Cl. 1
	FU35	7.0	26.6	45.8	A362	Thorney Cl. 1
	FU23	7.1	7.1	68.2	A365	Thorney Cl. 4
	FU17	6.7	12.3	60.6	A365	Thorney Cl. 4

Providers of key services should wish to know where there are higher than average concentrations of older residents or where, on the basis of population projections, we might expect higher than average concentrations in the future. The distribution of older people by gender is also uneven across the city. In Thorney Close, for example, there appears to be generally less concentration of older residents than in the other two areas and this will also be true in 2011, but in one patch in particular there appears to be a very high proportion of elderly women.

A key issue is the extent to which partnership working across organisations needs to focus on particular locations, but not on others. For decisions to be made about this and for targeted inter-professional long-term strategic responses to be effective, spatially defined information needs to be available at the lowest management level within the organisations concerned. The geographies of these management levels will be different in different organisations but we should expect the building blocks to be

⁶⁵ Thorney Close 4 no longer exists but at the time of the analysis, Gentoo records had not been updated. Consequently we have used Thorney Close 4 in this section of the report.

the same (OAs for example) and for the areas to be meaningful for customers/clients as well as the service delivery agencies.

For strategic responses, population projections can be made based on age cohorts in 2001 and local knowledge about the type of accommodation that is available locally. This type of analysis allows planners to identify concentrations of people at risk and it allows organisations to move beyond personal perceptions of professionals who are competing with each other in the allocation of resources.

The question now arises as to how these different geographies can be brought together so that rational and effective resource allocation can take place.

4.3 Overcoming Secondary Data Problems

We have developed a method that will allow us to link Gentoo's leaf codes and neighbourhood management data to OAs and post-coded external data. This information is contained in a number of electronic spreadsheets appended to this report and the key elements are summarised in Tables 4.6 to 4.10:

Table 4.6	Spatial Units for all three areas
Table 4.7	Leaf Codes and OAs for selected estates
Table 4.8	Leaf codes, OAs, LSOAs and 2004 wards for all Neighbourhoods
Table 4.9	Summary education profile for Pennywell
Table 4.10	Sample education profile for Leaf Codes

4.3.1 Spatial Units for all three areas

This spreadsheet contains the following information for every property owned by Gentoo in the study area:

- a. The Company Area (Central, North, South)
- b. 1982 ward
- c. 2004 Ward
- d. Local Authority code
- e. Output Area
- f. Leaf Code
- g. Leaf code Name
- h. Property code
- i. Address
- j. Post Code
- k. Neighbourhood
- l. Whether in Renewal Area
- m. Whether New Build or not

If information on management, social or economic indicators is available for any of these spatial units of analysis, it can be attached to this spreadsheet and analysed at

other spatial levels. Ideally, the basic building block for all information would be the Output Area.

4.3.2 Leaf Codes and OAs for selected estates

In this spreadsheet, key neighbourhoods in Sunderland have been selected and their Output Areas codes attached to them. All the census OA codes for each management patch have been attached to the leaf codes and these can be aggregated up for key estates. We have done this for 10 estates, but it can be done for any estate or neighbourhood in the Gentoo management area.

4.3.3 Leaf codes, OAs, LSOAs and 2004 wards for all Neighbourhoods

In this case, we have added the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that correspond to each Leaf Code. Some of the LSOAs cover more than one Leaf Code but if data is only available at the LSOA level, as is the case with health data and Indices of Multiple Deprivation, approximate data can still be collated at the Leaf Code level. This is less accurate than data that is aggregated up from OAs directly to Leaf Codes, but it provides a useful proxy. It gives a more accurate reading for neighbourhoods than the current use of ward data. There is some overlap between LSOAs and Neighbourhoods but it is less frequent than LSOA/Leaf Code overlaps.

4.3.4 Summary Education Profile for Pennywell

Using the above spreadsheets, we have been able to produce social and economic profiles for neighbourhoods and housing management areas. The Tyne and Wear Research and Information Office (TWRI) allowed us temporary access to their Area Profiler2 database⁶⁶ to test the model. For reasons of constraints on access to the TWRI information⁶⁷ we have been unable to make full use of the database. However, using their 2001 Census information, we have produced this education profile for Pennywell as a demonstration of what can be done.

In addition to education, using TWRI's Area Profiler2 it is possible to produce neighbourhood profiles for crime, the economy, household structure, social profiles and simple profiles. We have produced profiles using these basic Census indicators for Pennywell, Southwick and Thorney Close, but these cannot be released into the public domain for reasons of confidentiality.

We also paid TWRI to produce maps of crime figures for 2006 for each of Gentoo's Leaf Codes and we shall return to this in a moment.

4.3.5 Sample profile for Leaf Codes

Area Profiler2 allows the same type of profiles to be created for Gentoo's leaf codes and these can be aggregated up in whatever combination is thought to be appropriate. Again, as an example of what can be done, the spreadsheet shows the education

⁶⁶ www.newcastle.gov.uk/twri

⁶⁷ Access is restricted to the five local authorities who support TWRI.

profile for the area covered by Leaf Code A111 in 2001. After the next census in 2011, the changes in the profiles of Gentoo's management areas in the inter-censal period can be calculated and these can be analysed in the context of the investment that has taken place in each area, in term of both finance and human resources.

The use of these spreadsheets for the collaborative delivery of services where they are most needed, however, requires that there is usable and relevant data available at one of the geographical levels. As suggested above, there will be constraints on what can be shared and planners need to take account of data protection issues. However, at levels above post codes, it should be possible to preserve confidentiality.

4.4 How the model would work

As we have suggested above, other than the census information, which is now seven years out of date, the only reliable information that is available in the region for neighbourhood level analysis are the crime data. We have seen that other researchers have had similar problems as ourselves when trying to access health data and, in the course of this investigation, we discovered that existing education data is not shared between departments in the City Council. It is also not made available to TWRI, who have had the same problems as ourselves. Sunderland is a member and funder of TWRI, but they are apparently not the only member organisation who is reluctant to provide data. There is a general problem across the region.

In order to demonstrate what the model would do if we had been able to access the data, we contracted TWRI to map the crime data for Sunderland for 2006 to the Gentoo management areas, as identified by Leaf Codes. This involved identifying the incidence of a number of recorded crimes in each Output Area and aggregating these up to the management areas⁶⁸. TWRI then produced maps that recorded the various levels of crime for Gentoo management areas across the study area.

Not surprisingly, the highest crime neighbourhood is the Grangetown/ City Centre (Leaf Code A121), mainly made up of theft and violence against the person. This area also tops the list for drug offences and fraud and forgery. As a city centre location, with clubs and pubs and weekend drinking by young people it will attract people from all over the city on Friday and Saturday nights. However, Gentoo's housing in this area has a high concentration of renovated high-rise flats, which are mainly populated by over 50s. Interviews with these residents indicated a high level of satisfaction with their homes and with living in the area. On the other hand, young Asians from Hendon indicated that it was a dangerous place for them.

Grangetown/ City Centre is closely followed by Millfield/Ashbrook (A123), the area that ranks second in theft and violence against the person. However, Millfield/Ashbrook is by far the worst area in the city for criminal damage, burglary (both dwelling and non-dwelling), robbery, theft of vehicles and theft from vehicles.

⁶⁸ For data protection purposes, where there were less than five incidents under any crime heading, the exact number was not identified. In a few cases, Output Areas cut across management area boundaries and therefore appeared under two leaf codes. We identified the total number of Gentoo households in these OAs and how many of them were located in each management area. The OA was allocated to the management area where the largest number of households fell.

In addition to Gentoo properties, it is an area where poor quality private rented accommodation sits alongside larger, expensive, good quality owner-occupied houses that the young Asians aspire to. Millfield Ward, covering both these neighbourhoods, has almost twice as much crime as Hendon, the ward that is the second most crime prone in the city. Hendon contains the East End and South Hendon neighbourhoods, which are ranked third and fifth, respectively. The East End neighbourhood is another one that is on the edge of the city centre, where Gentoo properties are dominated by high-rise blocks. It is another area that was identified by the young Asians as a dangerous place for them. South Hendon, on the other hand is predominantly private sector rental and in interviews it was suggested that disruptive anti-social families who are being displaced from Gentoo's estates are relocating in this area. At the moment this is anecdotal, for there is nothing in the official figures that can back it up. This is the second worst neighbourhood for criminal damage and first for sexual offences (although the numbers are small). Ranked between East End and South Hendon is Roker/Fulwell, in the North Company area.

Offences in these five Gentoo management areas account for 59% of all recorded crime in the city. As an organisation concerned with safety in the community but operating with limited resources for this purpose, collaboration with the police over the safety of their vulnerable tenants in these neighbourhoods would be a priority. The model can also identify who are the vulnerable groups, in this case mainly the elderly if we discount the young people who come into the city centre at the weekends and are the most likely to suffer from violence against the person.

Given the ready availability of the crime statistics, these figures do not tell the police or those people connected with the Safer Sunderland partnership anything new. More importantly, what they point to is a model that would be useful for Gentoo and other collaborating agencies for identifying critical locations for a broad range of quality of life indicators, including unemployment levels, health standards, social care needs, skill levels and education qualifications.

If similar information had been made available for education and health, it could have been mapped in a similar way, identifying the critical areas for intervention by collaborating agencies

4.5 Conclusions

The Government's Policy Hub uses Davies' definition of evidence-based policy as 'the integration of experience, judgement and expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research'⁶⁹. This involves bringing professional judgement to bear on 'valid, reliable and relevant research evidence'. Evidence is valid or reliable if it is gathered according to explicit and sound principles of scientific enquiry, including social scientific research. The Policy Hub identifies different types of research methods that can be used to gather different types of evidence:

- Experimental and quasi-experimental evidence,

⁶⁹ Davies, P.T. (1999) 'What is Evidence-based education?', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 108-121; www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy

- Survey and administrative evidence,
- Qualitative research evidence,
- Economic evaluation evidence,
- Philosophical and ethical evidence, and
- Systematic review evidence

As indicated in the introduction, the present study uses most of these methods in its attempt to assess the social and economic impact of large-scale investment in housing. It is seeking to develop a methodology that is quasi-experimental in nature, in that it is a longitudinal before-and-after study. However, the complexity of the inter-relationships between the social and economic variables make it far more difficult to achieve than any laboratory-based experiment. At this stage, therefore, the emphasis in relation to secondary data in particular is on the development of a methodology.

The study is also based on evidence from social surveys and administrative data. It gathers together secondary information from surveys that have been carried out for purposes other than those which drive this project, both internal surveys carried out by Gentoo and survey research that has been carried out by other agencies, including the 2001 Census. It also uses administrative data that is gathered by Gentoo. In gathering this secondary survey information and administrative data it has become clear that there are systemic problems for the government's aim of developing evidence-based policy for neighbourhood policy and evaluation. With the aims of the project specifically in mind, we have created a new primary source of information through a household survey in the study area, which can be replicated over time.

Qualitative research evidence comes from focus groups and face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in social and economic well-being in Sunderland and the North East region, seeking their opinions, attitudes and perceptions of the work that Gentoo is carrying out. All of the above are analysed in the context of a systematic review of relevant and available literature on the city and region. Using qualitative and quantitative analysis on primary and secondary data, in the context of policy documents that address city and regional development and regeneration issues, this study is therefore an attempt to devise a methodology that will provide controlled before and after evidence concerning the impact of large-scale housing investment. The key issue now is the availability of data that will test the robustness of the methodology.

In attempting to gather, collate and analyse the data that participating partners in the creation of sustainable communities might bring to any partnership, the following generalisable questions have arisen:

- What if the evidence exists but is not available?
- What if the means to gather the evidence are available, but are not used?
- What if valid evidence exists, but it is not relevant?
- What if relevant evidence exists, but it is not reliable or valid, because the evidence has not been gathered using sound scientific methods?
- What if relevant evidence exists for the subject matter of the investigation but it is not available in relevant spatial units or timescale?

If we are trying to measure the impact of investment that is spread across the city of Sunderland, there are several spatial units of analysis that can be used:

- The City as a whole
- Politico-administrative units such as constituencies and wards.
- Housing management areas in Sunderland
- Housing estates, communities or wider neighbourhoods that are meaningful for residents
- Spatial units that are relevant for management in other organisations, such as education, police or health authorities

It is the last of these, which is particularly relevant for inter-agency neighbourhood activities, that is the most problematical. The geographical shape of management areas respond to different professional needs. We are not suggesting that this should change – only that publicly owned information should be gathered and made available at the smallest spatial unit used in the census, so that they can be reconfigured to measure and monitor the need for collaborative responses.

Table 4.6 Spatial Units for All Three Management Areas

Ward 2004	Local Authority Code	Output area (1)	Output Area (2)	Leaf code	Leaf Name	Property code	House Number	Address	Neighbourhood	City	Post code	Renewal Area	New Build
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184001	1	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184003	3	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184004	4	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184007	7	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184008	8	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184009	9	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184010	10	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184011	11	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184012	12	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184014	14	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184015	15	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		
Hendon	00CM	FB	5	A111	East End	1184016	16	Maddison Court	Hendon	Sunderland	SR1 2DZ		

Table 4.7 Leaf Codes and OAs for Selected Estates

Central Management Area

Patch code	Neighbourhood	Output Area codes											
	GRINDON												
A161	Grindon 1	FF10	FF19	FF20	FF21	FF22	FF23	FF24	FF25	FF26	FF27	FF28	FF32
A162	Grindon 2	FF10	FF5	FF6	FF23	FF27	FF29	FF30	FF32	FF33			
A163	Grindon 3	FF21	FF24	FF25	FF26	FF28	FF30	FF32					
	PENNYWELL												
A141	Low Pennywell South	FF8	FF18	FS3	FS22	FS23	FS26	FS27	FS30	FS32			
A144	Low Pennywell North	FB17	FS9	FS13	FS16	FS17	FS19	FS22					
A151	The Pennies	FF7	FF8	FF9	FF11	FF15	FS22						
A152	Forum/Swifden Drive	FF10	FF11	FF12	FF15	FF16	FF17						
A153	Palmerston Road	FF10	FF16	FF17	FF19								
A154	Petersfield Road	FF12	FF13	FF14	FF17	FF19	FF20						
	SOUTH HYLTON GREEN												
A131	South Hylton Green	FS11											

North Management Area

Patch code	Neighbourhood	Output Area codes																
	SOUTHWICK																	
A241	Southwick	FC1	FC7	FC8	FC12	FC20	FT3	FT5	FT18	FT19	FT20	FT27	FT28	FT29				
A246	Southwick Renewal	FC12	FC16	FC20	FT19	FT27												
	TOWN END FARM																	

A211	Town End Farm 1	FA3	FA29	FA33	FX1	FX2	FX3	FX18	FX19	FX21	FX22	FX26	FX27	FX31	FX32			
A212	Town End Farm 2	FA29	FA30	FA31	FA32	FX4	FX16	FX19	FX21	FX26	FX27	FX29						
	REDHOUSE																	
A231	Redhouse 1	FT1	FT2	FT7	FT8	FT11	FT12	FT13	FT14	FT15	FT16	FT23	FT24	FT25				
A232	Redhouse 2	FT1	FT7	FT8	FT12	FX6	FX7	FX8	FX9	FX11	FX12	FX25	FX28					
A233	Redhouse 3	FT1	FT2	FT12	FT13	FT15	FT16	FX3	FX7	FX8	FX9	FX10	FX11	FX13	FX15	FX25	FX28	FX30

South Management Area

Patch code	Neighbourhood	Output Area codes																	
	DOXFORD PARK																		
A331	Doxford Park 1	FM8	FM9	FR4	FR28	FR29	FR33	FR34	FR35										
A332	Doxford Park 2	FR4	FR28	FR29	FR33	FR34	FR35												
	THORNEY CLOSE																		
A362	Thorney Close 1	FU2	FU10	FU12	FU14	FU16	FU17	FU19	FU21	FU35									
A363	Thorney Close 2	FU13	FU22	FU25	FU27	FU29	FU30												
A364	Thorney Close 3	FM27	FU19	FU24	FU26	FU27	FU28	FU29	FU30										
A365	Thorney Close 4	FU13	FU14	FU16	FU17	FU19	FU21	FU23	FU24	FU26	FU29	FU30							
	FARRINGTON																		
A352	Farringdon High	FM5	FM8	FM9	FM10	FM26	FM28	FM31	FM32	FM35	FM36								
A355	Farringdon Low	FM2	FM8	FM18	FM19	FM20	FM21	FM23	FM26	FM28	FM33	FM34	FM35						
	LAKESIDE																		
A353	Lakeside	FM4	FM22	FM25	FM29	FM30	FM33												

Table 4.8 Leaf codes, Output Areas and Lower Super Output Areas for all Neighbourhoods

Leaf codes	OA (1)	OA (2)	LSOAs	LC Name	N'hood	2004 Ward
A111	FB	5	016A	East End	Hendon	Hendon
	FB	6	013B	East End	Hendon	Hendon
	FB	13		East End	Hendon	Hendon
	FB	15		East End	Hendon	Hendon
	FB	19		East End	Hendon	Hendon
	FB	26		East End	Hendon	Hendon
A112	FB	26	016A	C.Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FW	4	016F	C.Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FW	5		C.Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
A113	FG	25	016C	East End	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	35	016D	East End	Hendon	Hendon
A114	FG	1	016C	W. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	5	024B	W. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	35	016D	W. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
A115	FG	4	016D	S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	5	024B	S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	8	016E	S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	11	024A	S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	12	016C	S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	15	016B	S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	16	013E	S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	24		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	27		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	29		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	30		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	31		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	32		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	33		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FG	35		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
A121	FW	6		S. Hendon	Hendon	Hendon
	FB	7	013B	Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
	FB	22	024B	Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
	FG	5	024C	Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
	FN	12	024D	Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
	FN	13	022B	Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
	FN	16		Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
	FN	17		Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
	FN	18		Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield
FN	24		Grangetown	City Centre	Millfield	
A122	FG	14	24A	Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels
	FG	17	22A	Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels
	FG	19	24D	Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels
	FN	1	24C	Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels
	FN	8	22E	Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels
	FN	9	22F	Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels
	FN	12		Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels
	FN	14		Hillview	Hillview	St.Michaels

**Table 4.9
Education
Profile for
Pennywell**

Source: TWRI, 2001 Census

	Population			Counts					Percentages					
	Total Population from 2001 Census	Total Male Population from 2001 Census	Total Female Population from 2001 Census	Count of People with No Qualifications	Count of People with Level 1 Qualifications	Count of People with Level 2 Qualifications	Count of People with Level 3 Qualifications	Count of People with Level 4/5 Qualifications	% of People with No Qualifications	% of People with Level 1 Qualifications	% of People with Level 2 Qualifications	% of People with Level 3 Qualifications	% of People with Level 4/5 Qualifications	
FF07	303	134	169	115	42	33	8	10	52.51	19.18	15.07	3.65	4.57	
FF08	321	149	172	126	38	37	13	9	54.08	16.31	15.88	5.58	3.86	
FF09	373	191	182	124	44	40	12	8	52.54	18.64	16.95	5.08	3.39	
FF10	311	146	165	108	32	39	9	9	51.92	15.38	18.75	4.33	4.33	
FF11	341	160	181	110	41	43	3	7	50.46	18.81	19.72	1.38	3.21	
FF12	353	175	178	130	41	35	11	9	55.08	17.37	14.83	4.66	3.81	
FF13	351	177	174	135	50	38	7	9	52.12	19.31	14.67	2.7	3.47	
FF14	330	148	182	109	40	32	10	14	50.23	18.43	14.75	4.61	6.45	
FF15	330	148	182	109	40	32	10	14	50.23	18.43	14.75	4.61	6.45	
FF16	316	155	161	98	35	37	10	6	48.76	17.41	18.41	4.98	2.99	
FF17	334	157	177	131	41	39	6	5	56.47	17.67	16.81	2.59	2.16	
FF18	262	130	132	68	45	35	14	20	33.17	21.95	17.07	6.83	9.76	
FF19	346	155	191	125	30	31	6	17	56.31	13.51	13.96	2.7	7.66	
FF20	286	143	143	90	38	26	14	14	43.27	18.27	12.5	6.73	6.73	
FS03	297	133	164	85	36	37	16	11	43.37	18.37	18.88	8.16	5.61	
FS09	306	138	168	143	32	35	6	7	60.59	13.56	14.83	2.54	2.97	
FS13	389	168	221	131	56	34	6	9	52.40	22.4	13.6	2.4	3.6	
FS16	338	168	170	119	37	45	10	13	51.74	16.09	19.57	4.35	5.65	

FS17	325	161	164	133	43	16	7	7	61.29	19.82	7.37	3.23	3.23
FS19	383	195	188	118	52	59	10	17	42.91	18.91	21.45	3.64	6.18
FS22	343	179	164	125	42	43	3	20	51.23	17.21	17.62	1.23	8.2
FS23	236	99	137	80	35	24	10	9	47.62	20.83	14.29	5.95	5.36
FS26	353	166	187	127	41	40	12	10	52.05	16.8	16.39	4.92	4.1
FS27	385	186	199	131	42	44	13	16	49.43	15.85	16.6	4.91	6.04
FS30	205	109	96	110	20	17	5	4	66.67	12.12	10.3	3.03	2.42
FS32	420	208	212	134	49	48	12	11	48.03	17.56	17.2	4.3	3.94
TOT													
AL	8537	4078	4459	3014	1042	939	243	285	47.66	16.44	14.72	3.90	4.51

Results generated by Area
Profiler 2

Table 4.10 Education Profile for Leaf Code A111

Education Qualifications Source: 2001 Census © Crown Copyright (Key Statistics)							
Counts and Percentages of Education Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4/5							
A111 East End							
	00CMFB0005	00CMFB0006	00CMFB0013	00CMFB0015	00CMFB0019	00CMFB0026	Total
Population							
Total Population from 2001 Census	331	168	310	299	788	280	2176
Total Male Population from 2001 Census	153	102	180	130	466	139	1170
Total Female Population from 2001 Census	178	66	130	169	322	141	1006
Counts							
Count of People with No Qualifications	162	81	128	92	109	129	701
Count of People with Level 1 Qualifications	27	15	33	25	50	23	173
Count of People with Level 2 Qualifications	28	10	32	24	54	17	165
Count of People with Level 3 Qualifications	5	8	17	9	292	6	337
Count of People with Level 4/5 2 Qualifications	10	9	20	5	238	13	295
Percentages							
% of People with No Qualifications	66.12	59.12	52.24	54.76	14.38	64.5	51.85
% of People with Level 1 Qualifications	11.02	10.95	13.06	14.88	6.6	11.5	11.34
% of People with Level 2 Qualifications	11.43	7.3	13.47	14.29	7.12	8.5	10.35
% of People with Level 3 Qualifications	2.04	5.84	6.94	5.36	38.52	3	10.28
% of People with Level 4/5 Qualifications	4.08	6.57	8.16	2.98	31.4	6.5	9.95

5. GENTOO'S CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

In Sunderland in 2003, one in six residents were dissatisfied with the environment of the immediate locality and one quarter of homes had some sort of major repair problem. There was also a continuing population loss to the city through migration, almost half being in the 35-44 age range and in higher income groups. There was a predicted continuing decline of 600 households per annum through to 2008. There are however, other figures that suggest that the demand for housing will increase. In 2001, the population of Sunderland was 284,600, showing a decline of 11,300 since 1991. The number of households was around 118,000, a rise of 4,100 over 1991, but 4,500 less than had been predicted. These changes were mainly due to out-migration but recently deaths have started to outnumber births in the city. There has been a net population loss of 1,700 persons per year in recent years but this will have been reduced by an unknown level of growth in international in-migration. Estimates predict a slowing of the rate of loss in the next few years to around 100 persons per annum. Reducing household sizes are, however, expected to increase the demand for housing by some 9,000 between 2004 and 2021⁷⁰.

Significant new investment is anticipated for Sunderland over the next 10-20 years, resulting in significant growth in employment of all types⁷¹. It is anticipated that over 20,000 new jobs will be created through major regeneration opportunities, along with job gains through indigenous growth, bringing the total to over 26,000. However, it is also anticipated that only half of these jobs will go to residents of Sunderland. Nevertheless, this implies an increase in demand for 5,000-6,000 homes by the households of new workers attracted to the city to work and current evidence indicates that a lack of suitable executive housing is leading incoming managers to look to areas of higher value housing such as Durham. Investment in detached housing in peripheral location in Sunderland and further growth in the supply of quality flats in the city centre, such as those that have been created in Sunnyside by Gentoo, could serve to meet this demand from senior managers and young professionals. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the existing residents of the city exhibit economic and educational characteristics that lag behind the rest of the region and the nation. Their housing needs and the development of sustainable communities for them to live in, ought to be a priority. It is against this background that Gentoo has invested in social housing in the city and has committed resources and staff to activities that address the social and economic issues in the City.

5.1 Gentoo, Housing and Regeneration

Improving the quality, choice and range of housing is an essential element of City of Sunderland's Local Strategic Partnership's Strategy for Sunderland⁷². Recognising the poor quality housing and undesirable residential environments undermine the sustainability of some areas of the city, the Strategy stresses the need for partnership working in these areas. One year after stock transfer, in March 2002, almost 60% of social housing in the city failed to meet the Government's 'decent homes' standard.

⁷⁰ Sunderland City Council (2006) Interim Strategy for Housing Land, Sunderland, SCC, p18.

⁷¹ Sunderland City Council (2006) Interim Strategy for Housing Land, Sunderland, SCC, Appendix 4.

⁷² Sunderland LSP (2004) *A Bright Future for Sunderland: The Sunderland Strategy 2004-2007*, Sunderland, COS/LSP.

By March 2004 this had been reduced to 4% and the target set for Gentoo for 2010, that all their homes should meet this standard, has already been achieved.

Up until stock transfer, the quality of housing and the quality of the environment were the two most significant push factors for people leaving the City to settle in other parts of the Region⁷³. Following the introduction of choice-based lettings, a growing demand for social housing has become evident. This is in contrast to the existence of areas of low demand in other parts of the region. However, since 2001, Gentoo has lost almost one quarter of its houses through the right-to-buy. At the same time, a number of vulnerable groups have been identified as in need of social care as well as housing.

In response to these challenges, Gentoo has:

- Made considerable progress in investing £600 million in the refurbishment and renewal of flats and houses.
- Completed mixed-tenure renewal schemes at South Hylton Green, Carley Hill, Albany, Chilton Moor, Castletown, Doxford Park and Thorney Close.
- Completed the development of new private sector apartments in iconic buildings in Sunnyside in the Centre of Sunderland.
- Introduced choice-based lettings.
- Tackled anti-social behaviour in its housing management areas.
- Developed activities with partners in support of community safety, employment and education.
- Developed specialist housing projects for single homeless people, young parents and people with physical and learning disabilities.
- Helped to reduce fuel poverty through energy efficient design of new and refurbished housing.
- Worked with health and social care providers to meet the needs of elderly and disabled households.

These changes have taken place against the backdrop of stock transfer and in an organisational context of management and cultural change. The new organisation has also entered into a new set of relationships with partner organisations in Sunderland and across the region. It has become involved in a number of community initiatives and staff have been encouraged to contribute to social development in the city through voluntary activities.

The most important of Gentoo's activities is the £600 million that is being invested in the City's social housing stock. Through improving the quality of housing, this is clearly improving the quality of life of the tenants of social housing and other residents in the most deprived areas of Sunderland. There have been some blockages in the process, to which we will return in a moment, but from the response of residents there is no doubt that this investment has enhanced their well-being. However, delivering the sustainable communities agenda is about more than financial investment in the physical stock. It requires a commitment to other community-based activities in partnership with a variety of organisations. Gentoo have been involved in

⁷³ Ibid, p. 44.

a wide range of formal and informal initiatives right across their management areas, the details of which can be seen in Appendix 2.

5.2 Gentoo's involvement in Community Initiatives

Pupils First

This is a City Council project, launched in 7 schools in 2 of the most deprived areas of Sunderland in 2003, which aims to help raise standards within schools and create opportunities for education and employment for young people. Since 2005 there have been 21 schools involved, specifically targeted at small groups of children that have been identified as unlikely to achieve the Government's minimum standards for education. Gentoo offer long-term work placements for up to 50 year 10 and year 11 pupils every year, bringing them into the workplace for one half day per week for 9 months. Pupils are allocated mentors who introduce them to the world of work, and hopefully give them aspirations to gain employment. Gentoo are on the Steering Group and other partners with the City Council include the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust.

Enterprising Futures

This is a new kind of enterprise partnership, which can help and guide people through the early stages of starting their own business. Supported by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, it operates across all wards in the city. There are several areas in which Gentoo participate: with new and existing local businesses, developing innovative business ideas, business start-up support services, and creating job opportunities for disabled people through social enterprises. Partners include Social Enterprise Sunderland, Sunderland Community Enterprise Network, Mental Health Care, Social Firms North East, Sunderland NDC and the City Council.

Community Kids

Community Kids is an 8 week programme designed to get children to 'own' their estate and take responsibility for their actions in the community. The programme has five main topics:

- Where I live
- Community Awareness
- Appropriate Behaviour
- Respecting Boundaries
- Vandalism/Graffiti/Damage

These incorporate topical issues such as bullying, harassment, rules, and asylum seekers and are a mixture of theory and practical sessions. Delivered to over 3000 primary school pupils since 1999, it is about promoting good citizenship.

Construction Challenge

This pilot programme, set up in 2003 with fifteen Year 10 pupils from Farringdon School, involves them studying towards a Foundation Certificate in Building Craft Occupations. In July 2004, the programme introduced real-life work experience by

providing practical on-site 'taster' sessions for pupils to test their interests and ability in bricklaying, joinery and painting & decorating. Last academic year, over 100 pupils studied towards a Foundation Certificate in Building and Craft Occupations. Gentoo trains young people on its building sites and partners include ETEC, CITB, Coalfields Regeneration Trust and the City Council.

Construction Challenge Adults

Started in September 2006, Construction Challenge Adults targets one hundred unemployed people who are not engaged in either employment or learning and gives them an entry route into employment in the construction industry. Funded by NRF and Urban II, the project was designed to be delivered in four phases over 12 months. Local construction employers such as Gentoo offer work placements during which participants study for an NVQ Level 2/CSCS qualification. After 50 weeks of training, participants have a clear progression onto NVQ Level 3 and sustainable employment. Partners include the LSP, Job Centre Plus, Sunderland NDC, and the Learning Skills Council. Gentoo are a Curriculum Centre for CITB and deliver a number of initiatives that correspond to this, such as Professional Development Placement days and Positive Action events. They also provide training for Construction Ambassadors and help to monitor the Science and Engineering Ambassadors programme.

Aspire Grants

A Gentoo Sponsored Community Grant Awards Scheme, Aspire provides grants of up to £500 to local voluntary and community groups. This funding is available to support a broad range of local and citywide activities and a variety of different groups and organisations. For example, it is available for: sports and leisure clubs; art, music and drama activities; young people's organisations; parent, toddler and play groups; after school clubs; sports days and community festivals; community renovation projects; and resident and community associations. With an annual budget of £50,000, it covers all wards in the city and has supported around 500 projects.

Business in the community

Gentoo are in partnership with Business in the Community (BITC) in 2005. BITC's primary objective is to create a public benefit by working with companies to improve the impact of business on society. Member organisations get involved in a wide range of community activities, including regeneration, education and health. All initiatives run by Gentoo through BITC focus on communities where Gentoo needs to target its resources, particularly as part of its creating sustainable communities commitment. Challenges have included providing a new kitchen for Sunnyside Methodist Church in Houghton and decorating the Scout Hut in Fatfield, Washington. 'Action Days' have also taken place and these are opportunities for the whole Group to be involved in helping underprivileged children in the North East. This has led to an employee volunteering scheme, 'Give Hour' where staff will be given the opportunity to help out in the community they work in. Gentoo are on the Regional Management Committee of BITC.

Wearside First Credit Union

This citywide credit union offers savings facilities and affordable loans, which Gentoo staff can take advantage of.

In addition to the delivery of housing, therefore, Gentoo are involved in a wide range of social and economic development activities. At the time of our household survey, however, the level of knowledge of these activities amongst their tenants was remarkably low. While external stakeholders in the city and the region knew about them, less than 8% of tenants said they knew about these types of initiative and only 0.3% could name one⁷⁴. It should be noted that the survey was carried out before Gentoo's re-branding and therefore before Gentoo Living was set up, but it indicated that at that time there was very little recognition of the community-based work that the Sunderland Housing Group was involved in. When we then asked those who said they had heard of community initiatives which ones they had heard of, none of those interviewed had heard of Construction Challenge or Wearside First, only one person mentioned Pupils First and two said they had heard of Aspire Grants. The best known was Enterprising Futures but, unprompted, only 17 people (1.4% of respondents) were able to recall the name.

Nevertheless, Gentoo's commitment is clear. In order to deliver the above training and education activities, Gentoo are involved in partnerships with some 35 primary schools and 11 secondary schools in Sunderland. They are collaborating in the Government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda and in addition to these activities, Gentoo is about to invest in turning Pennywell School into an Academy. It is therefore worth saying something about the plans for Pennywell School.

One of the conditions for securing capital funding for Sunderland's building schools for the future programme was that it replaced three underperforming schools, including Pennywell, with academies. All three academies have local sponsors, with the local authority as a junior partner. The sponsors, however, are committed to working as part of a local schools partnership, so that the commitment to collaboration in education across the city will continue⁷⁵.

Pennywell School

The school is a mixed comprehensive school providing full time education for pupils aged 11 to 16. It serves an area with multiple disadvantages in the City of Sunderland. Twenty-seven per cent of pupils have free school meals, which is above the national average. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage with only two pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The school admits pupils of all abilities but overall attainment on entry is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs at 32 per cent is well above the national average and the proportion of pupils with statements is above average at 3.4 per cent. A lower proportion of pupils than average joins and leaves the school during their education. Progress has been monitored through regular

⁷⁴ To put this into context, when we asked a similar question in Bournville in Birmingham, 28% said they knew about similar activities carried out by the Bournville Village Trust.

⁷⁵ Estelle Morris, A Declaration of Interdependence, *The Guardian*,

visits to the school by Her Majesty's Inspectors [HMI]. The school holds Sportsmark status and supports the training of new teachers in conjunction with Sunderland University (Ofsted, 2004).

Pennywell School Performance

Table 5.1 depicts key data relating to Pennywell School regarding the number of pupils, percentage of pupils with an SEN statement, numbers of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE's at grades A*-C and numbers of unauthorised absences. This data has been taken from school performance tables produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, of which some dates back to 1997, although most data were collected from the year 2000 onwards.

Table 5.1: Pennywell School Performance 1997-2006

	Number of pupils on roll	% of pupils with SEN statements	GCSE/GNVQ Improvement Measure 5+ A*-C (%)	Unauthorised absence
1997	**	**	7	**
1998	**	**	10	**
1999	**	**	13	**
2000	1136	3.9	13	1
2001	1181	4.4	13	1
2002	1155	4.6	17	0.9
2003	1107	4.2	21	0.9*
2004	1085	4	21	2.0*
2005	1021	3.5	32	4.4*
2006	941	**	39	**

(DCFS, 2000-2006) * Percentages of half days missed due to unauthorised absences, ** Data missing for these years

Pennywell School – Numbers of Pupils Achieving 5 or more GCSE's A-C*

Table 5.2 shows the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, for the years 1997-2006. It compares the results from Pennywell School, Sunderland LEA and England as a whole, which highlights the differences in performance across the three areas. Whilst Pennywell School's marks remain significantly lower compared to Sunderland and England, the proportion of children achieving the above grades has dramatically increased from 7% in 1997 to 39% in 2006.

Gentoo and the new Academy

At the time of writing, the Pennywell and Quarry View Academy had no official title, so it has been shortened to PQV, the acronym made up from the first letters of the primary and secondary schools involved. The PQV Academy is currently at the implementation stage where the main feature of this stage is the building work about

to commence. The structure of the PQV Academy is made up of a co-sponsorship model, where Gentoo are the lead sponsors, Sunderland City Council are the co-sponsors and a local business has acted as a private donor. Essentially the way the co-sponsorship model works is that all of the sponsorship money and donations get paid into an endowment fund and the interest earned is used to benefit learners to combat educational disadvantage and support community learning by working with children and their families. By Gentoo acting as the lead co-sponsor, their main contributions are supporting the Academy and the Chief Executive and they will also support the Academy through its various formative phases. Gentoo have a particular interest in this project because of the existing investment in the physical and community aspects of the local area, which is a long term commitment.

Table 5.2: Pennywell Pupils Achieving 5 or more GCSE's A*-C

	Pennywell School (%)	Sunderland LEA (%)	England (%)
1997	7	34	45
1998	10	32	46
1999	13	35	48
2000	13	38	49
2001	13	39	50
2002	17	42	52
2003	21	44	53
2004	21	44	54
2005	32	52	56
2006	39	55	58

(DCFS 1997-2006)

In total, Gentoo are investing between £60-70 million into Pennywell as part of an attempt to generate a sustainable community. For this reason alone the success of the Academy is vital, as it will contribute to the sustainability of Gentoo's own investment. The Gentoo brand is about investing in people and property, hence the whole approach to sustainable communities is summed up by this development

The area of Pennywell has suffered a long term period of decline. Despite a good deal of investment over the years, the area has been overrun with unoccupied houses in which Gentoo have been unable to place tenants due to its increasing unpopularity. Therefore Gentoo's involvement in this development will work towards replacing the houses through raising the aspirations of local people and the extended schools programme working through community learning. Gentoo are also a large employer in the local area and have a vested interest in the local workforce.

Before embarking on this development, Gentoo researched and benchmarked the Academy against examples of best practice both nationally and internationally and, through discussions with other Academies, Gentoo are convinced that the transformation of the schools and area of Pennywell can be achieved. Gentoo are also in the unique position of sponsorship reinforcing their capability to have long term

involvement in the area and ensure the development is handled properly. The refurbishment of the existing school building is scheduled to be finished in 2008. Work on the new building will commence in February 2008 and is due to open in September 2009.

From what we have set out above and from their commitment to Pennywell in particular, there is no doubting Gentoo's commitment to the communities where they own housing stock. It is not as well known amongst their tenants as it should be but the positive perception of what Gentoo is trying to achieve was confirmed in the interviews we held with staff, resident representatives and a range of external stakeholders.

5.3 Stakeholder Interviews

In the course of the research we interviewed over 50 stakeholders and ran 5 focus groups. The interviews included 23 members of staff, seven resident representatives, three Board members and 21 members of external organisations that collaborate with Gentoo.

5.3.1 Staff Interviews

All the staff who were interviewed, with three exceptions, transferred from Sunderland City Council at the time of stock transfer. All of these staff who transferred were positive about the change in the organisation and their working environment. They had worked in the most deprived areas of the city over a number of years and they now felt, for the first time, that they had an opportunity to have an impact on the lives of residents and make a difference to their lives. They said they had more resources to enable them to do their job and more freedom to make decisions than they had before. Instead of referring everything back to the office or to a line manager, they were able to deal with most tenants' issues as they arose. There was a clear conviction that they were indeed creating sustainable communities.

This was seen as part of a positive change in the organisational culture and it was reflected in a change in the relations with tenants. With the new freedom and resources, staff attitudes had changed towards other colleagues within the organisation. Instead of the departmentalism that characterised the culture of the local authority, there was a more open collaborative relationship with colleagues across the organisation. This is not to say, of course, that there are no organisational tensions. They also made the point that there were some residual issues with colleagues who found it difficult to adapt to the new culture. One person we interviewed who had worked with the Council for many years was clearly not as at ease with the changes as his colleagues. Overall, however, staff were extremely positive about the impact of the new culture on their working lives and on their relationship with their tenants. They saw tenants as generally now taking more pride in their homes and environment, although there were still concerns about some households.

There were some who sounded a note of caution, even if on balance they agreed that generally things were much better than before. One front-line officer was less optimistic about culture change, both in the community and the organisation. Young

people who had become involved in a planting project, planting flowers, shrubs and trees in a communal area and who had been positive about what they were doing came under pressure from a group of their peers, asking why they were doing this. The other young people were implying they were 'wimps'. This negative peer pressure is still alive and well in the area and, although the plants were still in the ground a few days later, the staff member was not convinced they would last.

One housing manager also thought that the investment that was improving the quality of the housing was having a negative impact on the community. He was a lone voice on this, but he thought that demolition and rebuild had broken up communities, destroying community spirit. As we shall see later in the survey, there is a low level of community engagement across Sunderland, not just in those areas where housing is being demolished and renewed.

A number of people from different parts of the organisation, pointed to difficulties with the design of some of the projects. They argued that there was a danger of making the same mistakes as in the past, designing in problems for the future because of their lack of awareness of local cultural pressures. However, other colleagues said that this was also changing.

At the time of the interviews, Sunderland Housing Group was in the process of restructuring and re-branding as Gentoo. The uncertainty about the effect of this was causing some concern amongst staff but there was a consensus that the management of the organisation were being open and transparent about the process. They said that there was a level of consultation that would not have taken place in the Council and there were meetings where senior managers explained what was happening and why. There was also a new level of accountability for repairs and maintenance staff, which involved more scrutiny of what they were doing when they were out of the depot, and these staff were expecting major structural change at the time. Not surprisingly, there was some apprehension about what this meant for their futures, but they were still positive about the organisational changes that had taken place up to that time. They were under pressure to deliver more outputs, but the organisation was supporting this with resources. They also saw the impact on tenants and on the communities where they worked and, although there were issues remaining to be resolved, the outcome to date was certainly seen to be positive.

For depot staff, management was thought to be much better. There are 'loads of meetings' and the staff say that they are told the truth. As an example, they referred to the closing a depot, for which they had meetings at the Stadium of Light, which from their point of view was infinitely better than what had happened in the past. However, they were concerned about the amount of paperwork they had to deal with. At present there is infinitely more paperwork, but soon they will be expected to use palm-tops. There is more surveillance and there will be trackers on the vans. With palm-tops, 'time will be all tied down'. There will be 'a massive jump in technology' but to work with computers in the future they will be trained. There was some nervous anticipation about this but their main concern was that in the transfer to the new technology the organisation could lose sight of the fact that the delivery of repairs and maintenance to the customer was the most important aspect of their work. Technological efficiency would not deliver their skills.

Front-line depot confirmed that tenants have their choice of fittings and they have more say with respect to housing quality. There is now an appointment system for repairs, which did not exist before, and the repairs are done immediately. Nevertheless, according to the repairs and maintenance staff, people still complain. For example, they said that there can be up to 21 electrical sockets in a 2-bed flat and the equipment that is installed, such as extractor fans and burglar alarms, are of excellent quality, but some tenants still complain about their new homes, even although they are only paying £5.25 a week rent. People don't know the cost of refurbishment. In Castletown, SHG demolished hard to let housing and built new bungalows that did not look like council housing. The vast majority of the people who moved back in were 'over the moon'⁷⁶.

Although the worst areas have greatly improved, there is still a drugs problem in some areas, which is perceived to be getting worse. Despite the improvements, many children have nothing and their 'parents don't give a damn'. In the North Company area, crime was said to be due to about 50 children and they are from well-known families. There was a common view that was most likely to be expressed by manual staff and confirmed by tenants, that some parents have no moral responsibility and that the children are the product of their environment, where generation after generation survive without a work ethic. However, variations on this view were expressed by members of external organisation across the region and it is seen as an aspect of a local sub-culture that Gentoo are addressing.

For all the staff we interviewed, the introduction of Excellent Customer Status for tenants was seen as a major force for dealing with bad neighbours and anti-social tenants. It was presented as a major policy tool for improving the lives of residents and, for some, it did not go far enough. From this point of view, it does not deal with the worst cases. There is no sanction other than the loss of status, which many people do not care about. In renewal areas, there was thought to be the danger of moving the same people back into the same areas after they had been improved, with negative consequences for the quality of life of their neighbours and a return to a downward spiral for the community. However, staff also recognised it does not work for everyone. They cited anecdotal evidence of particular cases where decisions not to award the status appeared to be unreasonable.

Collaborative relationships with external organisations also were seen to be mainly positive and this was upheld in the stakeholder interviews. Following stock transfer, there has been a difficult relationship with City Housing and Planning Departments, but the staff saw these difficulties as issues for senior managers. There were also strains with some parts of the voluntary sector, who saw SHG/Gentoo as encroaching on their territory. We shall return to discuss these issues in more detail following consideration of the interviews with members of these organisations.

The team who were responsible for community consultation were extremely positive about what was happening and they reported high levels of satisfaction among tenants about the improvements that were taking place to their homes and about the way they

⁷⁶ However, there were some who moved into the new-build bungalows and complained that they did not have oak kitchens and that SHG did not landscape the garden.

were being consulted. They did give an indication that members of the focus groups that they organise did not have as much power as they thought, but later interviews with tenants showed that, from their perspective, focus groups were seen as a means of management telling people what they were going to do. There was, in fact, a common understanding about the limits of consultation.

5.3.2 Resident Interviews

During the stock transfer process, the formal consultation document issued by Sunderland City Council set out six promises to its tenants⁷⁷:

1. Your rent would be guaranteed for five years
2. Homes would be improved
3. Better Security in your neighbourhood
4. A greater say in decisions that affect you
5. Your tenancy rights would be protected
6. Services would be made more convenient

From our interviews with residents and through the focus groups, which we will discuss later, there is a general consensus that the promises made under these headings are being kept. Nevertheless, there are a number of issues that have arisen that still require some attention.

The resident representatives that we interviewed agreed that they were kept well-informed. The level of consultation was a big difference between the council and SHG/Gentoo. There was some disagreement about whether this was because of the culture of the Council or a lack of funds to be able to organise the same level of consultation. However, there was a consensus that when the Council owned and managed the housing there was no information and no consultation. They said they ‘got nothing from the Council’, who had a ‘Victorian way of thinking’. They perceived that, although it was the same people in the new organisation, they had a different way of thinking. Nevertheless, they thought that there were too many focus groups, which they referred to as ‘the eyes and ears of Sunderland Housing Group’. The residents confirmed what SHG/Gentoo staff had hinted at: focus groups are organised to tell you what they are going to do or what has been achieved. There was a feeling that some of them could be combined, pointing to the possibility of over-consultation.

From the point of view of these resident representatives, the whole of Sunderland has vastly improved because of what SHG has done. They agreed that ‘when the job is finished, Sunderland will be a tremendous place’ to live. There was consensus that houses have been improved by SHG/Gentoo, which would not have happened under the Council, but there was also recognition that the Council could not make improvements because they did not have the funds. There was discussion about whether Sunderland City Council’s lack of action was due to these financial pressures

⁷⁷ Sunderland City Council (2000) *Your Home, Your Future, Your Choice: Formal Consultation on Sunderland City Council’s Proposal to Transfer its Homes to Sunderland Housing Group*, Sunderland, SCC.

or whether it was their 'very blasé attitude' to improvements that meant that their performance was 'abysmal'.

The improvements that were taking place were seen to be about both people and the physical attributes of places. Pennywell, Southwick and Top Ford were identified as areas that were particularly bad but pockets of stigmatised neighbourhoods and streets across Sunderland were mentioned. These were areas that were run-down and neglected, but the key issue for the people we interviewed was that they were inhabited by people who created problems for their neighbours. In this regard there was agreement between staff and tenants. With the exception of Doxford Park, the houses were generally seen to have no structural or other physical problems. However, there were stigmatised areas across the city where no one wanted to live because of their reputation. This implies that houses have been demolished for social reasons, rather than because of their physical fabric, and this has been one of the points of conflict with the City Council. On this issue, the residents were mainly on the side of SHG/Gentoo but with some reservations.

The residents indicated that they thought that there was now a good mix of people and housing, and it works. In some areas, long terraces of houses that the boy racers loved have gone, replaced by continental style neighbourhoods – 'the best thing that has happened'. They said, for example, that Pennywell has always been a problem area, the worst part has been knocked down and 'they have removed the bad element'. They also argued that Ford should have come down. However, there was also a view that SHG/Gentoo have knocked down too many properties and not enough have been rebuilt. The rate of reconstruction was an important issue, which is also related to the question of the relationship between Gentoo and the City Council.

Residents were also aware that SHG/Gentoo were losing houses under the right to buy and some thought that this was related to the improvements that were taking place. They pointed out that while the whole of Sunderland has improved, when SHG took over they had 36,000 properties and they had lost 8,000 under the right to buy and demolitions.

The interviews with the resident representatives showed a generally very high level of satisfaction with the improvements that had taken place and with the way they were carried out, which was later confirmed in the social survey. Information was provided, people were consulted and questions were answered by staff. They were impressed by the range of choices they had when new kitchens were being fitted, the extent to which they could influence the position of electrical points, the design choices they had and the freedom to choose decoration. Care was taken with the elderly and disabled during refurbishment, particularly but not exclusively when they had to move out of high-rise flats when their block was being modernised. Their temporary accommodation could become permanent if they wished to stay in it after their original block had been completed. They also indicated that the process had improved over time. At first there had been problems, but these had been resolved as more experience was gained.

There was a view that the Group has learned from its experience of delivering the modernisation programme. One of the first areas to be tackled was the Red House Estate and the process of improvement there was described by one resident as

'horrendous'. The kitchens and bathrooms were improved but everything was done at once, they had extremely short notice that the work was going to be done and then they had to 'live out of boxes'. There was little consultation at that time and they did not have the same choices as were available on later schemes. The booklets that offered tenants choices of kitchen and bathroom design came later and nothing was done to the exterior. As one of the early schemes, the residents felt they suffered from the lack of experience. It seems that the modernisation work was carried out by a private sector company on the Group's partnering panel, which residents believed was later removed from the select list of contractors. Their workforce was generally seen as professional, but it was felt that they should have been monitored better. The process was disruptive for the tenants but 'in the end it was worth it', despite the fact that they said they have had to call repairs more often than in the past. After this first experience, things clearly got better.

The internal improvements to the homes have been well-received and overall the SHG/Gentoo workers are seen to have been helpful and to have done a good job. There were some complaints about some of the improvements not being done properly, such as wiring not being completely replaced when new sockets were being put in, but these were more than balanced by the positive changes, such as having more sockets overall and in places that were convenient. The workmen were also praised as being helpful with things that were not part of the job description, such as a joiner helping to line up a fridge freezer for an elderly tenant. These examples are perhaps indicative of a slow culture change, referred to above. The Council's Public Works Department were described as 'rubbish' and when SHG took over this responsibility at first there was perceived to be sloppy workmanship. Repairs are clearly better than in the past, but there are still some problems. The tenants complained of calls not being registered and a lack of an adequate notification system. There were numerous apocryphal stories about jobs not being done properly, but on balance the verdict was positive and improving.

The external environmental improvements, such as new fencing and new drives where they have been provided, have clearly contributed to an improvement in the quality of life of the residents. The residents described the changes as 'marvellous' and some said that it has injected a community spirit into their area. However, some also pointed out that some improvements have caused jealousy, some policies are actually divisive and for some tenants, more could have been done. Where there have been environmental improvements such as new fencing, this has smartened up the whole area but new drives and fencing has also caused owner-occupiers to complain that they did not get these benefits. This has created some tensions in certain areas.

There was a good deal of discussion about people who lived in different streets and areas of the city and about how things had improved in relation to anti-social families who had been moved out. A few households brought stigma to whole areas and the residents were generally pleased that these people had been moved on. In some cases, a whole neighbourhood owed its stigmatised status to one extended family, who would take over a street and intimidate anyone from outside their clan who was allocated a property, so as to make it available for new family members. The residents were able to recount tales of the City Council spending hundreds of thousands of pounds on these areas in attempts to improve them, to no avail. Community facilities were burned down and incomers were harassed, including racial harassment. This

anecdotal evidence confirmed what repairs and maintenance staff had said about certain parts of the city and how these were being made liveable.

The one policy area where there was ambivalence about *how* things were being achieved, rather than *what* was being achieved, was concerning dealing with anti-social behaviour. As indicated above, there is general consensus that dealing with anti-social behaviour is essential for making a number of areas habitable and improving the quality of life of residents. Where it has been dealt with, the people who had to live with the problem are extremely satisfied with the outcome. However, there appeared to be no limits to it, uneven application across SHG/Gentoo, little training for those involved in making decisions about it, and no policy for dealing with malicious complaints.

One resident complained that in some cases, the application of the process for dealing with anti-social behaviour was in itself an abuse of human rights. It was pointed out that people are going to the housing offices to complain about people they do not like and that some housing officers are not dealing with this properly. They are listening to 'tittle-tattle' and 'malicious lies' that are causing community breakdown. 'Everybody thinks the person next door is complaining about them'. They spoke of a number of cases where, in their view, the tenants being complained about were not afforded the basic right of being innocent until proven guilty. Some of those involved in tenancy enforcement were thought to be over-enthusiastic. The way complaints about neighbours are dealt with across the Gentoo management patches is highly variable: some of those involved are good ('streetwise') but some think they are 'bouncers in a club'. The enforcement officers were seen by some as a 'housing police force' who should check that the information they are getting is correct. Since they are professional witnesses, there was a call for better training of those involved. They should not accept everything they are told at face value. When we asked Gentoo staff about policy in this area, some local managers did not recognise malicious complainants as an issue, some did and had had to deal with it, and there was clearly no overall policy position about it. Malicious complaining itself can be seen as an example of anti-social behaviour and we understand that Gentoo is reviewing its position on this.⁷⁸

These complaints were related to Excellent Customer Status, about which there were a variety of views, some positive and some negative. It was seen by some as an excellent tool for rewarding decency and good neighbours. As such, it helped to secure the quality of the living environment of everyone. It was particularly valued by the elderly, who aspired to it, but was seen as less relevant by the young, who were only too pleased to have obtained their first house and did not think in terms of where they might be moving to next. For others it is a 'load of tripe' that 'does not mean a thing'. The negative perspective is based on the view that the status is awarded if people have good furniture and are employed but, since the unemployed or otherwise poor cannot have good furniture, it is biased in favour of the stable employed working class and against the disabled, unemployed, elderly and poor. A number of cases were mentioned, one of which was that of disabled person being visited by the enforcement officer and being told that his grass was too long, after it had 'been raining for the last

⁷⁸ If it is libellous and Gentoo act on it, the organisation could end up in court.

week'. This type of insensitive and uneven handling of cases led some to the view that 'it should be abolished'. We shall return to this later as a policy issue.

Despite the generally positive view of SHG/Gentoo there still a number of tenants who view any 'participation' with the organisation as 'consorting with the enemy'. In the context of a Government commitment to community empowerment and the organisation embracing participation, for these tenants the organisation is still the landlord, the rent collector. One tenant who has taken community participation seriously and has become involved in trying to improve her neighbourhood is treated by some neighbours as 'a spy' for the organisation. She is subject to 'phone hate crime' and 'vindictive lies'. This case may be relevant for only a very small minority of those who do get involved in Gentoo's participatory mechanisms but it does draw attention to the possibility that, despite the positive view that tenants have of the organisation in general, for some it remains the rent collector. For these people, consultation and participation are treated with suspicion.

At the time of the interviews, there was some concern that there was no consultation with residents about the proposed restructuring of the Group.. Overall, however, the current situation was seen as a vast improvement on what it was like before stock transfer and there has been a level of empowerment since leaving the Council that would have been inconceivable under the old regime.

5.3.3 External Stakeholders

The vast majority of the external stakeholders we interviewed were extremely positive about the organisation, what it was trying to achieve and how it was going about its business. There had clearly been a difficult relationship with the City Council, which both sides genuinely appeared to be trying to overcome, and there were issues with the voluntary sector. We shall come back to these later. For the organisations involved in the delivery of regeneration, the contribution of Gentoo was highly valued.

5.3.3.1 Gentoo and Regeneration.

It is significant that, in surveying the economic regeneration literature of the North East, we could find no reference to the economic impact of the £600 million investment that is being made by Gentoo. Nor was there any discussion of the fact that the organisation is one of the largest employers in Sunderland. It is an organisation with a growing profile and its potential for contributing to the economic regeneration of Sunderland is considerable.

Despite the fact that Sunderland is the largest local authority in the region, the interviews with stakeholders indicated that there is a feeling that the City has a problem of identity. Within the region, Newcastle is the centre of professional services and retail and Teesside is known for its chemical industry, but for Sunderland there is a view that, following the decline of the traditional industries and beyond the football club, there is nothing unique about the city. The people of Sunderland point to Nissan and the headquarters of several national and international companies at Doxford Park, but there is a question as to the extent to which these are seen to be part of Sunderland by the business community.

Doxford International Business Park hold headquarters of key regional and national businesses but they do not see themselves as being in Sunderland. These companies see the Business Park as a good location, close to a major road network, but they do not relate to the City centre. Companies like Arriva, Leyton Group and Nike are very important employers, but they are disconnected from the city by the park's peripheral location and their executives do not live in the city. At the time of the interviews, Northern Rock was building new premises in Sunderland because they saw an opportunity to tap into a young, educated labour force. Given that people in Sunderland are reluctant to cross the river into Newcastle for work, there was an opportunity to engage more young people in Sunderland by investing in new premises in the Doxford Park.

Gentoo's head office is located in Doxford International Business Park but, other than through Business in the Community, there appeared to be little formal contact between Gentoo and the Business Community. The regional CBI wanted them to become more involved. The organisation was clearly held in high regard and the CBI wanted to discuss Gentoo's experience of the supply chain in the construction industry, how their work related to economic development and regeneration, and what their role might be in attracting and retaining skills in the region. The CBI have construction members at the regional and national levels and it was thought that Gentoo could be more involved with the business community at these levels. Up and down the country, housing associations were getting more involved, were engaging with their supply chain and were looking at economic policy issues, both nationally and regionally. Links are informal, but they want to involve them more. The CBI were aware that they do not have their housing development expertise on their regional council. If Gentoo continue to move more into development, they need to build their profile as economic actors in the region.

We raised the question as to whether Gentoo had perhaps underplayed their role as a force for economic regeneration and there was a feeling that, since they are as big as they are and important in Sunderland, they have a responsibility that is greater than them just as an organisation. As beneficiaries of large sums of public money, with Sunderland in their name as it was at the time of the interviews, the Sunderland Housing Group were seen to have a responsibility to promote the city. It is one of the few organisations that have a real interest in Sunderland. The international companies could go any time, but Gentoo have a clear spatial interest.

One of the challenges for Sunderland is to attract top executives of major firms to live in the area and, if they come, Sunderland will have to work hard to keep them. This is clearly a major strategic issue for the City Council, but interviews with the Council, the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and the Northern Housing Consortium indicated that Gentoo Ventures is seen as making an important contribution to addressing this issue. These executives are reluctant to move from the South East but when some directors do move they do not find it easy to find suitable family accommodation. There is an assumption that people moving from the South can move into the region and buy large properties at very low prices. The reality is that in the areas in which they want to live, it is highly competitive. There is very little executive housing and the prices are much higher than people imagine. There are also issues about other infrastructure, cultural activities and schools. In the past, businesses have said they have a potential candidate for a Chief Executive role who sounded really

keen, but when the family came up to look around, the partner was often unwilling to move. Sunderland Football Club has also indicated that they have similar difficulties when trying to attract top footballers. Good housing in the right place is a major concern for these families.

Attracting people back to Sunderland after they have left to go to university is also a major issue. In the region as a whole, after decades of losing people, there is evidence of population growth and returning graduates is part of this trend. It appears that this is not yet happening in Sunderland. The regional universities have good retention rates, but this may be due to the fact that a high proportion of the intake is local. Retention figures may be artificially high because people have not moved away to University in the first place. Students stay at home to study and do part-time work to support themselves, which may be linked to poverty in the first place. In order to retain these students after they complete their studies and to attract others to return, attractive and affordable housing is a key issue.

There is also an issue with a narrow range of economic sectors in Sunderland and this is compounded by a general lack of career structure – there are jobs at the bottom and jobs at the top, but few opportunities in terms of whole career spans. There is not enough critical mass in any sector except perhaps legal services in Newcastle or the Chemical sector on Teesside – that will allow people to plot a career in the region, either within or between companies. However, this has been further compounded in Sunderland by a lack of attractive places to live for young professionals. Some young people just out of university have chosen to buy in Sunderland. Not necessarily from the region, they have bought a flat overlooking the Wear at £100,000 less than one that is overlooking over the Tyne in Newcastle. As outsiders, they don't have a problem travelling across the river for 40 minutes to work.

Some of the work already carried out by Gentoo Ventures has already started to address this issue in the heart of Sunderland city centre. In partnership with English Partnerships and the City Council, the Sunnyside Regeneration Initiative to revitalise a number of buildings attracted positive comments from a range of local stakeholders. The creation of around 150 apartments in restored and converted listed buildings, such as the Royal Mail building, the old Water Board building, the Athenaeum and others, addresses a key issue for the future of the city's economy. However, in combining these housing developments with the creation of restaurants and other services, a negative aspect of Sunderland's cultural offer is also being addressed. At the beginning of 2007 it was difficult to find a good restaurant in Sunderland, but we are already seeing the beginning of a transformation in this regard. Future development of the Esplanade and Gentoo's contribution to the River Quarter will also add to the social, economic and cultural regeneration of the city.

Through Gentoo Ventures and Gentoo Construction, the Group will become more involved as developers, with public and private sector partners, than they have been in the past, which will mean that there is a greater role for them to play as a provider of housing for middle and upper managers. This could be on the periphery of the city as well as in the city centre and, in addition to a development close to the Sunderland Civic centre, there are already future developments planned in Carville, Alnwick and North Tyneside. The organisation is set to become a regional player, partnered by Communities England, local councils, the private sector and the Regional

Development Agency. Across the region, interviewees clearly saw Gentoo as a growing force, an organisation that is positively taking hold of its own future. The sentiments expressed about this future were positive but there were also questions about embedding the developments more deeply in Sunderland's deprived communities, ensuring that they were not to be left behind.

Gentoo's links to the local economy through its growing purchasing power was also an issue that was discussed. There are opportunities to procure locally and there was a general consensus that, all things being equal, organisations like Gentoo should look locally. However, the ability of growing organisations to do this diminishes with size, for large firms are not good at working with SMEs and purchasing through small tenders. As organisations grow, they are tempted to use larger suppliers and, as a consequence, it is normally the case that only a few national players can take on contracts. Corporate and public sector organisations devise pre-qualification criteria that exclude small firms and procedures become overly-bureaucratic. A question for Gentoo in the future is whether they can avoid these types of barriers and ensure that there is still trickle-down into the local economy. A recent study carried out for Gentoo suggested that for every pound sterling spent by Gentoo there was a local multiplier of more than two. The authors of this report think this is exaggerated, but the multiplier will nevertheless be significant and local procurement policies will be an important element for maintaining and increasing the value of this.

The use of local labour is also an issue that Gentoo is addressing, as part of their contribution to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in Sunderland. Helping young people into the labour market is an issue that is particularly important. At the moment Sunderland is a young city and there are enough skills locally to meet most of current and anticipated demand. However, there are parts of the city where unemployment is particularly high, where educational attainment is extremely low, where skills are in short supply and where there may be a culture of worklessness. Failure to address these issues in pockets of deprivation could have an adverse effect on perceptions of the city and have a negative impact on all the good work in regeneration that is taking place. These are areas of social housing, for which Gentoo has responsibility, and private rented accommodation, which it does not.

In common with the rest of the country, unemployment in Sunderland has been declining in recent years, but there are still pockets of very high long-term unemployment in some wards. The Economic Prosperity Group of the LSP has for some time been aiming at getting the long-term unemployed into work. Gentoo has participated in this group and has also been seeking to get the long-term unemployed into construction. The LSP considered that the regeneration and improvement activities of Sunderland ARC and Gentoo offered an opportunity for people to get people to an NVQ Level 2 qualification in construction, given that there was a large pool of unskilled young people in the city. At an LSP Board away-day, the CE of Gentoo suggested it could be possible to get 500 people into construction and after some consideration of the proposal, this was reduced to 100 and agreed as a target.

In the end, only 70 people passed through the scheme. There were major problems with getting placements, the main one being that local companies would not take the trainees. Even when they did, some of the young people were not used to the discipline of work, like getting there on time, turning up every day and travelling to

sites that were not close to home⁷⁹. According to the LSP, Gentoo ‘did a sterling job’ in that they have taken most of the first and second intakes. Gentoo took trainees, but there have been difficulties in getting them into private sector companies, despite the fact that there are incentives available. There is public funding available to pay for training costs, but the targeted group is not easy to place. They targeted the hardest to place group and, in order to deal with issues of people not turning up for work, some support measures were put in place. There have been some very successful placements, but they thought it would be the public sector companies that would take the biggest numbers of people, with maybe 10-15 going to smaller private companies, but this has not been the case. The whole programme has depended on Gentoo.

The Council are now building this in to their contracts. They are looking at the Building Skills for the Future programme to place local people and they are still hoping to get the ARC on board and to get their projects going. They missed some building works that were going on with City Hospital because the timing was not right and the University, who are going to be doing major building works, are keen to get involved. However, it is Gentoo who have been driving the process. They were the key partner ‘who really put their money where their mouth was’ and have taken a number onto apprenticeships, the majority of whom are being trained at the local college.

The number of long-term unemployed and people on incapacity benefits is very high in Sunderland and there is a major project with the RDA and Jobcentre Plus looking at targeting this. There are intergenerational problems in that there are households where there are three generations who have never been in employment. These are precisely the young people who need to be targeted, but no one underestimates the cultural difficulties that need to be overcome if firms in the private sector are to continue to support and employ them.

5.3.3.2 Relations with Council

It was clear from the interviews with Gentoo staff and the City Council that relations between the two organisations had been difficult following stock transfer. From the City Council’s point of view, Sunderland Housing Group initially did not consult them about their proposals for redevelopment. On the other hand, because they had lost the housing stock and their housing staff were reduced to a small residual number within a department that was dominated by health, no one was paying particular attention to significant decisions affecting housing in the City, including the Group’s renewal plan. Departmentalism within the Council also meant that there was very little discussion of housing issues within the Council at this time. Housing staff were

⁷⁹ Sunderland Arc also ran into planning issues with Tesco over the old Vaux factory site, which is owned by Tesco. The retailer wanted to put a large supermarket on site and ARC had plans for a more mixed use site that it thought was more appropriate for the redevelopment of the city centre. The ARC was expected to do a substantial amount of business in the city but development of this major employment source was held up and the ARC were unable to meet their original commitment to employment generation in construction. Another promised development site at Farringdon Row was not up and running at the time of the interviews, so a lot of the building works that were going to happen in the city did not coming to fruition.

marginalised and, as a consequence, the Council was not heavily involved in decisions around renewal and site assembly. This led to problems between Gentoo and the planners in particular over planning applications across a number of sites.

With respect to the acquisition of privately owned properties, Gentoo appears to have initially underestimated the difficulties involved and what they would mean for site assembly. In comparison with previous large-scale housing transfer such as Housing Action Trusts (HATs), Gentoo did not inherit planning powers with the stock. HATs were given their own planning powers when stock was transferred to them, meaning that they had, amongst other things, powers of compulsory purchase. Since they were responsible for properties within clearly and tightly defined geographical areas, this did not impinge on the statutory powers of the planners across the cities where they were set up. The local authority was still responsible for planning and housing across the rest of the city. In the case of Sunderland, when all of the stock was transferred, there was a clear potential for conflict between the two sets of professionals which no one appeared to pick up. Gentoo started to work on their renewal sites without the statutory right to compulsorily purchase the properties they needed to assemble sites for investment. They initially assumed they would be able to acquire all privately owned properties by consent, and they have made good progress in this regard, but in some areas home-owners refused to negotiate. It also became clear that the Group was constrained by the same planning laws as any other developer.

Within both organisations, there was a tendency to explain the difficulties in terms of personalities clashing and professional or personal jealousies. However, there were clearly systemic contradictions built into the stock transfer process that, seven years later, remain to be resolved. Most of the properties have now been acquired, but problems deriving from the initial lack of clarity about rights and responsibilities persist. A fundamental contradiction in the process is that while planners have a responsibility for all residents in the city, Gentoo's primary responsibility is to its own tenants. In fact, Gentoo have taken on board the aims and objectives of the sustainable communities agenda, which means that it is accepting a wider social responsibility than that of the traditional role of a landlord. Nevertheless, if the organisation's primary concern for its tenants' well being and quality of life leads it to demolish physically sound stock in areas that are so stigmatised that few people will live there, it is not surprising that this leads them into conflict with planners who want to maintain the city's housing stock levels.

Gentoo is also accepting a key role in the regeneration of Sunderland through Gentoo Ventures, through which it plays an important economic role for both the city and the region. As such, it is confirming its growing role as a developer, which everyone we spoke to was positive about, including the City Council. Gentoo and the Council are also collaborating in a number of activities, particularly through the Sunderland Partnership. There is clearly a willingness on the part of both organisations to work together to improve the relationship between them in the interests of the city and its residents. In 2005 there was a review of renewal activities and it was agreed that each of Gentoo's renewal proposals had to fit with the Council's strategic priorities and that Neighbourhood Renewal Assessments (NRAs) would be carried out. It was also agreed that some of the housing initially earmarked for renewal would be rehabilitated.

The NRAs were initially going to be carried out as a collaborative activity and jointly funded between the Council and Gentoo. This collaborative intent, however, did not come to fruition. The Group has commissioned independent consultants who have completed the series of NRA's as part of this joint review and these have taken a fresh look at renewal areas and have helped the Group to review its approach to renewal. Gentoo have funded and carried out the assessments, with the Council adopting the role of validator.

It has been suggested that the NRA process has helped the Group and the City Council to develop a shared agreement about the future direction of renewal and how the Group's proposals are helping to fill the Council's strategic objectives. Within the Council, housing and planning staff are now working together and relations between both organisations are gradually improving, but there is still some way to go. In the meantime, the time it has taken for the NRAs to be agreed continues to have a negative impact on the deprived communities who are waiting for action that will improve their housing and their living environments.

The systemic problems behind the above difficulties are not peculiar to Sunderland. They are potentially disruptive for all cases where the total housing stock is transferred to new registered social landlords. The process of transfer, rehabilitation and renewal would have been helped if there had been more central direction about the respective responsibilities and processes of the Council and the RSL immediately after transfer. On the other hand, if RSLs become more like developers, they must expect to be treated as such by the planners. The fact that there was confusion and a lack of communication initially has led to a negative impact on residents for whom both organisations have a responsibility, but the underlying contradictions may be more difficult to resolve.

5.3.3.3 The Voluntary Sector

Interviews with the voluntary sector took place before the reorganisation of Gentoo and the setting up of Gentoo Living, the Group's division responsible for care and support, community empowerment, social investment and regeneration. Social investment has been one of the Group's priorities for some time but the creation of Gentoo Living recognises the Group's desire to develop a more strategic approach to supporting vulnerable groups in the most deprived communities. The comments of the voluntary sector organisations we spoke to, therefore, refer to the situation as they perceived it at the time of the interviews. The interviews were also with individuals representing various organisations within the voluntary and community sector. These perceptions may now be historical, but there are worth repeating here since they may contribute to a benchmark for the future for Gentoo Living.

There was concern in the voluntary sector that Gentoo, at the time of the interviews, did not have a corporate strategy for addressing the needs of young people or working with voluntary groups to deliver youth services. There was a perception that Gentoo had contributed to poor and differential access to youth activities facilities for young people across Sunderland because in some geographical management areas, Gentoo was considering employing their own youth-work staff and delivering their own youth activities and services. This was seen as direct competition and duplication of voluntary sector youth work services. There was thought to be a need

for more consistency in the organisation's approach and there was a call for a strategy that promoted and supported a long-term relationship between Gentoo's youth activities and those of the voluntary and community sector organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

There was also a concern that there was no attempt by Gentoo to engage voluntary sector employment and training organisations in seeking to link training and employment to the physical regeneration work delivered by Gentoo. Whilst the Group works with several organisations in the delivery of projects like Constructions Challenge, there is a perception that the Group's focus was on working with FE colleges. There was a view that as part of Gentoo's construction training programme, the voluntary and community sector could have been used as the first stage of training for young people leaving school and for working with more hard-to-reach difficult young people who might struggle with immediately moving into a College environment.

It was also thought that there was a role for Gentoo to invest more resources in developing the social infrastructure of deprived areas, particularly the large-scale investment needed for community projects and work with young people. ASPIRE funding, Gentoo's community grants programme, was seen as being too limited and not providing for the scale of community project investment needed. On the one hand, ASPIRE was viewed as a good for one-off small scale community and resident-based initiatives. On the other, it was argued by some that Aspire is more of a 'sign that Gentoo are doing something' rather than an indication that they are taking community regeneration and development as serious issues in deprived areas. There was however consensus that much bigger resources were needed to meet the social and community challenges in deprived areas, especially with regard to young people. It was proposed that Gentoo should be looking to invest in developing the capacity of the voluntary and community sector and residents groups operating in deprived areas and facilitating better partnership working between the these groups and organisations and statutory agencies.

The level of voluntary and community sector activity in deprived areas varied considerably across the city. In the Ford estate, for example, there were no major funded groups, despite the challenges facing the area and the negative impact of the demolition work and blight in the area. A Ford Community Centre had been proposed as part of an SRB4 programme but it was not delivered, and there was a view that Gentoo did not supporting any community based youth work or outreach activity in the area. Young people 'with nothing to do' are a major problem and even though this is not Gentoo's sole responsibility the question was asked as to whether Gentoo had plans for developing a focus for community activity in the area.

In Pallion, on the other hand there are significant levels of voluntary and community activity. Whilst Pallion is an area where Gentoo's stock ownership is limited, we were told that there was no evidence of Gentoo support for community or voluntary group activity that would enhance the quality of life of its tenants and other local people.

There was a feeling in more than one organisation that Gentoo should be investing in supporting the development of voluntary and community infrastructure in their regeneration areas. The organisations we interviewed thought they could help support

and develop existing and new voluntary and community sector projects in deprived areas, but there was a feeling that no attempt has been made by Gentoo to support such projects. Rather the perception was that the focus had been on providing a small grant programme that does not deliver the infrastructure development needs of communities in the areas affected by regeneration & demolition programmes.

As we have seen above, Gentoo have been developing social investment and social care activities as a key part of their approach to sustainable communities. In addition to specialist housing projects for single homeless people, young parents and people with physical and learning disabilities, they are supporting community safety, employment and education initiatives and working with health and social care providers to meet the needs of elderly and disabled households. Following our discussion of the way in which different social needs are distributed spatially in Section 4, above, there is clearly a need for a strategic approach to social investment policy that focuses on specific needs in particular communities. Where voluntary and community sector organisations exist in deprived communities, there are opportunities to work with them. Where they do not exist, there are opportunities to help create community-based organisations as part of the local community infrastructure. The small grants are fine for one-off projects but, as we shall see when we discuss some of the survey findings, there is scope for the development of such a community infrastructure, based on local needs.

The Group has responded positively to these comments by the voluntary and community sector. The Group recognises that there seems to be a misunderstanding about the role of the Group and of Gentoo Living in particular, and this clearly requires a concerted communication effort by the Group.

The Group sees it as a positive sign that the largely disparate voluntary and community sector organisations are keen to work with Gentoo and that the Group is seen as being well placed to develop a strategic approach.

6. Social Cohesion in Sunderland

6.1 Social Networks and Trust

The concept of social capital is one that has become increasingly important in recent years and in the UK it has generated a great deal of interest within Government research and policy fields⁸⁰. Social capital is thought to be the glue that holds communities together. The concept has been used extensively in academic and policy discussions about deprived neighbourhoods, particularly where authors have emphasised the importance of community cohesion and empowerment for the regeneration of such neighbourhoods⁸¹. It has been used to examine issues of social exclusion amongst disadvantaged groups and the growth of social capital is seen as being important for improving the situation of deprived communities⁸².

The National Strategies for Neighbourhood Renewal launched in England in 2001 and in Scotland in 2002 is underpinned by the idea that an increase in social problems and a decline in social capital go hand in hand⁸³. Social capital is seen as the foundation on which social stability and a community's ability to help itself is built; and its absence is thought to be a key factor in neighbourhood decline. In neighbourhoods under stress, it is undermined by the rapid turnover of people, trust is diminished by increased crime and fear of crime and, as deprived neighbourhoods become increasingly cut off from their surrounding neighbourhoods, networks that support people in their search for employment also decline⁸⁴.

Community cohesion is seen to be based on contact between people, both informally with friends and neighbours in community facilities and more formally through local organisations. A government aim, with the aid of the voluntary and private sectors, is to rebuild social capital in deprived areas as a means of enabling community self-help. The assumptions in the consultation document about social capital led to policies for community empowerment in the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy⁸⁵. The Strategy argues that success can only be achieved if there is community ownership and it is underpinned by policies to simplify funding regimes for the voluntary and community sectors, make more money available for these sectors and institutionalise support for local community networks.

Neighbourhoods are defined not only as spatial territories but also as 'a series of overlapping social networks'⁸⁶ and neighbourhoods vary by the form and content of their social networks. It is argued that if communities are low in social cohesion, they

⁸⁰ Middleton, A., Murie, A. and Groves, R. (2005) Social Capital and Neighbourhoods that Work, *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 10, pp.1711-1738.

⁸¹ Forrest, R. and Kearns, A. (2001) 'Social Cohesion, Social Capital and the Neighbourhood', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 12, 2125-2143.

⁸² Social Exclusion Unit (2000) *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: A Framework for Consultation*, Cabinet Office.

⁸³ Social Exclusion Unit (2000) *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ See also Communities Scotland (2002) *Community Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal: A Review of the Evidence*, Communities Scotland Research Department Report Number 5, Edinburgh.

⁸⁵ Social Exclusion Unit (2001) *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan*, Cabinet Office.

⁸⁶ Forrest and Kearns, *op. cit.*, 2130.

are unable to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. Although there is ‘no agreement as to what, specifically, constitutes social capital’,⁸⁷ Putnam’s definition is widely used: it describes ‘features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions’⁸⁸. Although we have debated the value of this definition elsewhere⁸⁹, it is a useful starting point for considering the extent of social capital in Sunderland.

For Fukuyama, ‘social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in society or in certain parts of it ...;.... trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behaviour, based on communally shared norms, on the part of other members of that community’⁹⁰; and, ‘since community depends on trust, and trust in turn is culturally determined, it follows that spontaneous community will emerge in different degrees in different cultures’⁹¹. At the local level, Putnam says that the feelings of trust mean that people feel comfortable socialising with neighbours.

There are thought to be three types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking. The strong ties connecting family members, neighbours, close friends, and business associates are normally referred to as *bonding social capital*. *Bridging social capital* implies horizontal connections to people with broadly comparable economic status and political power and is measured by the extent to which residents join organisations with people like themselves. *Linking social capital*, consists of the vertical ties between poor people and people in positions of influence in formal organisations (such as local authorities, health authorities, RSLs, banks and the police).

If social capital is essential for social cohesion and for sustainable communities, to what extent is it present in the neighbourhoods in Sunderland that are managed by Gentoo? The household survey asked the residents of the Gentoo management areas a number of questions that allow us to analyse this. However, in order to understand the relative importance of the results and to put them in a wider context, it is worth looking at them in relation to responses to the same questions in another RSL management area. To contextualise the Sunderland survey, therefore, we will compare them with answers received from residents of the area managed by the Bournville Village Trust (BVT) in Birmingham. This part of Birmingham is a desirable and stable neighbourhood with good quality housing in an attractive environment. The BVT area also has a number of different social and economic characteristics that are different from the study area in Sunderland and it is thought to be a ‘neighbourhood that works’⁹² so the comparison should be treated with caution. Nevertheless, with these caveats in mind, it is a useful comparator.

⁸⁷ Temkin and Rhoe, 1998, Social Capital and Neighbourhood Stability: an Empirical Investigation, *Housing Policy Debate*, Vol. 19, Issue 1, p. 63.

⁸⁸ Putnam (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁸⁹ Middleton, A., Murie, A. and Groves, R. (2005) Social Capital and Neighbourhoods that Work, *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42 No. 10, pp.1711-1738.

⁹⁰ Fukuyama, F. (1995) *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, London, Hamish Hamilton; p.26.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹² Groves, R., Middleton, A., Murie, A. and Broughton, K. (2003) *Neighbourhoods That Work: A Study of the Bournville Estate, Birmingham*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Ways of measuring *bonding* social capital are to ask the extent to which people know their neighbours, feel lonely or isolated or have relatives living in the same area. The survey showed that the people of Sunderland do not suffer from feelings of loneliness or isolation (Table 6.1). In fact, they are significantly less likely to show these symptoms than the residents of the Bournville Estate⁹³.

The striking thing about the people we interviewed in Sunderland was the relatively high proportion of residents who had family living nearby. Two thirds said they had relatives living in the area, compared to just over one third in Bournville. In contrast, only 41% said they knew quite a lot or almost all their neighbours to have a chat with. In the area managed by the Bournville Village Trust, 49% said they knew a quite a lot or almost all their neighbours but only 37% said they had family living in the area. There is therefore a relatively low level of social networks in Sunderland beyond the family. This would indicate that the Gentoo and BVT areas exhibit different types of

Table 6.1

a. How many Neighbours do you know well enough to have a chat with?

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
None	48	4.0	31	3.1
One or two	318	26.5	175	17.5
A few	339	28.2	304	30.4
Quite a lot	290	24.1	305	30.4
Almost all	206	17.1	186	18.6
	1201	99.9	1001	100.0

b. Feeling Lonely or Isolated

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	77	6.4	93	9.3
No	1111	92.5	902	90.1
Don't Know	13	1.1	6	0.6
	1201	100	1001	100

c. Relatives living in the area

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	797	66.3	373	37.3
No	404	33.7	628	62.7
	1201	100	1001	100

⁹³ Since these household surveys were carried out at different times in different estates in two different cities, it is not strictly correct to carry out Chi-square tests to compare the results from the two areas, even although the two samples were random and the questions were the same. However, had the results come from the same sampling frame, this result would have been significant with a p-value of 0.0128. All other results in this section would have been significant at the 0.0001 level.

bonding social capital. Since the Gentoo residents are less likely to exhibit feelings of loneliness or isolation, it would appear that this may be the consequence of different type of social interactions. The family is much more important in Sunderland and neighbourliness is more important in Bournville. We shall see, however, when we come to look compare social capital in South Hylton Green and Pennywell, that the situation is not uniform across the Gentoo area.

When we asked questions relating to *bridging* social capital, concerning membership of civic organisations, we discovered that the residents of the housing areas managed by Gentoo were much less likely to join these organisations, either within the city or beyond. The fact that only two per cent of those interviewed were members of residents or tenants associations compares with 28% in the BVT management area (Table 6.2). In addition, 15% of people in Bournville were members of organisations within their neighbourhood and 23% were members of others that met elsewhere in Birmingham. In this question, 'Sunderland' and 'Bournville' were interchangeable and we have to remember that Bournville is only a small part of Birmingham. We might therefore expect that, when we ask about membership in Sunderland, this would correspond more closely to asking a question in Birmingham about membership of organisations inside *and* outside of Bournville. The area covered in the former is much larger than the Bournville estate. When comparing responses in Sunderland and Bournville, therefore, we should expect to find a higher level of membership in the former. The opposite is the case and the difference between the two management areas is quite marked. There are much lower levels of bridging social capital in the Gentoo management area.

When we looked at linking social capital, by focussing on the relationship between residents and the managers of housing, the comparison with Bournville is once again interesting. When asked if they thought residents have enough influence over the management of their housing, a very high proportion (56%) said they did not know (Table 6.3). In Bournville, only 37% said they did not know and residents in this estate were much more likely to say either yes or no than those in Sunderland. The fact that the same question was asked in both places suggests that it may have been less meaningful for the people of Sunderland. Influencing housing management is perhaps not something they are used to and it may not be something they aspire to. When asked if they would like a bigger say, only 7% said that they would, compared to 25% in Bournville.

As we have seen, the Government's housing and sustainable communities agenda places great emphasis on 'empowering citizens to shape their own lives and the services they receive – and one of the most powerful areas for this type of community empowerment is social housing'⁹⁴. They want to empower tenants 'by giving them more say over how their homes are managed and supporting strong communities that bring people together'⁹⁵ but it would appear that in Sunderland there is very little demand for this. We have already seen that Gentoo are extremely active in consulting tenants using a variety of methods. They may, in fact have reached the limits of

⁹⁴ Press release from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government following the Queen's Speech in November 2007.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

participation for the quality of service that they offer. If tenants are satisfied with their homes, the environment and the management of both, why would they need empowering?

Table 6.2

a. Member of Resident or Tenant Association

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	22	1.8	109	10.9
No	1179	98.2	892	89.1
	1201	100.0	1001	100

b. Member of other Organisations in Sunderland or Bournville

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	50	4.1	146	14.6
No	1151	95.9	855	85.4
	1201	100.0	1001	100

c. Member of Organisations outside Sunderland or Bournville

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	6	0.5	227	22.6
No	1195	99.5	774	77.4
	1201	100.0	1001	100

Table 6.3

a. Do residents have enough influence over SHG Management?

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	324	27.0	371	37.0
No	209	17.4	264	26.4
DK	668	55.6	366	36.6
	1201	100	1001	100

b. Would you like a bigger say?

	Sunderland		Bournville	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	86	7.2	248	24.8
No	1115	92.8	753	75.2
	1201	100	1001	100

There is, however, a further question that is worth considering. Is there any evidence that investment in renewal has any impact on social cohesion? In order to investigate this we looked at social capital in South Hylton Green, which is the only estate where renewal has been completed, and compared this with Sunderland as a whole. We then compared the South Hylton Green results with responses from Pennywell, one of the worst estates in the City, where renewal has been held up by the difficulties referred to earlier between Gentoo and the City Council.

6.2 Social Capital in South Hylton Green

A report on a survey of residents of South Hylton Green, carried out by Pathway Homes to discover their views of the new homes and neighbourhood where they lived, points out that the Government believes that effective social networks are linked to the creation of social cohesion, which in turn helps stabilise and sustain an area. As part of the social survey we added a booster sample of residents and interviewed a total of 42 residents of this scheme. In comparison with the Pathway Homes survey, where 91% of respondents were tenants, in our survey the respondents were 45% owner-occupiers, including those who had bought under the 'right to buy', and 55% tenants.

Social cohesion begins with residents identifying with the area they live in. When we asked residents where they said they lived when they met someone from another part of Sunderland, no one said South Hylton Green. Fifty two per cent said they lived in South Hylton, despite the stigma that attached to the area, but 17% said they lived in the city centre or 'the town' and the remainder gave a variety of street and other names.

When South Hylton Green is compared with the Gentoo management area as a whole, the redevelopment of the area appears to have had very little impact on people's perceptions of social mix in these areas; or whether people help each other or keep to themselves. Sixty per cent of residents think they live in a socially mixed area, the same percentage as is found in Sunderland as a whole, and 48% think that the people living there mostly help each other, rather than go their own way. This compares with 46% in Sunderland as a whole who think that people in their neighbourhood mostly help each other.

Where South Hylton Green does appear to be different from the norm in Sunderland, however, is in the connection of its residents to each other and to the members of their families. Only 38% have relatives living in the area, compared with 66% in Sunderland as a whole. This in fact is very similar to what was found in Bournville. In addition, a large proportion of incomers in a small total number of people interviewed in South Hylton Green may also have contributed to the fact that 17% said that people who were new to the area were not made welcome, compared to only 3% across Sunderland. Nevertheless, these features do not appear to have created any generalised feeling of loneliness or isolation. Ninety one per cent do not feel lonely or isolated (compared with 93% across Sunderland).

When asked whether their relationships with their neighbours had changed over the past five years, the responses of those who had lived in South Hylton Green for five years or more were not statistically different from those in Sunderland as a whole. Seventy nine per cent of those who did said that their relationship with their neighbours had not changed (compared with 74% in Sunderland as a whole). However, more than half the people living in South Hylton Green did not live there five years previously.

During our interviews with staff and residents, there was a suggestion that the social disruption caused by redevelopment had a negative impact on the community, in the sense that it was disruptive of community relations and cohesion. This does not appear to be the case in South Hylton Green. On the contrary, the response to the question about how well they knew their neighbours showed that the residents of this estate were more likely to respond that they knew quite a lot or almost all (Table 6.4). With 50% giving these responses, this was again very similar to that found in Bournville. The redevelopment, which includes a community meeting space and community-based activities, does appear to have enhanced community relations, rather than destroyed them.

Table 6.4

a. How many Neighbours do you know well enough to have a chat with?

	Sunderland		South Hylton Green	
	No.	%	No.	%
None	48	4.0	0	0.0
One or two	318	26.5	10	23.8
A few	339	28.2	11	26.2
Quite a lot	290	24.1	12	28.6
Almost all	206	17.1	9	21.4
	1201	99.9	1001	100.0

b. Relatives living in the area

	Sunderland		South Hylton Green	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	797	66.3	16	38.1
No	404	33.7	26	61.9
	1201	100	42	100

The residents of South Hylton Green were much more likely to say they had heard of residents or tenants groups in the area (41% against 28%) and to be able to offer a name of one (25% against 12%). However, in terms of *membership* of organisations, and therefore as a measure of *bridging* social capital, the residents of South Hylton Green were no more likely to be members of tenants or residents associations, members of other organisations in Sunderland, or members of any organisations that

meet outside the city. Bridging social capital in the area and across the city appears to be uniformly low.

The same is true for linking social capital. The residents of South Hylton Green were no more or less likely to want to get involved in the management of their homes. They were, however, more likely to be aware of the activities of Gentoo in the community.

In the Pathway Homes survey, over half the respondents were aware of some form of investment in the community by Sunderland Housing Group. Over 50% said they were aware of Construction Challenge, although there was little awareness of other schemes. In the survey in general, we have reported that only 7.6% responded positively when asked if they knew about any community initiatives supported by Sunderland Housing Group in their area. In South Hylton Green, 26% said they had heard of initiatives, much higher than in the city as a whole, but no one said they had heard of Construction Challenge. There was therefore a higher level of awareness of community initiatives in South Hylton Green, but Construction Challenge appears to have dropped off the radar for some reason. We can only surmise that this may be related to whether or not it was in the news immediately prior to the Pathway Homes survey but not during the run-up to the BCU survey.

In order to set these findings about social cohesion in a more local context, we took a closer look at social capital in South Hylton Green in comparison with the neighbouring estate of Pennywell.

6.3 Social Cohesion in South Hylton Green and Pennywell

Comparing South Hylton Green and Pennywell, there is clearly more community cohesion in the former than the latter. When we asked about how many of their neighbours they knew well enough to have a chat with, the residents of South Hylton Green were much more likely to say quite a lot or almost all (Table 6.5). The difference between the estates was highly significant and it is clear that if we compare the responses in Pennywell with those from across the whole study area, neighbourliness in this estate is extremely low. There is a significant difference between Pennywell and Sunderland as a whole, with the estate showing much less interaction between neighbours⁹⁶. Bonding social capital in Pennywell is even more dependent on family than we found across the city.

Because of the renewal in South Hylton Green, 54% of residents of did not live there five years ago, compared with only 22% of Pennywell. When we asked whether over the past five years the relationship with neighbours had changed, of those who did in South Hylton Green for more than five years, 79% said their relationship has not changed (Table 6.6). However, in Pennywell it was 95% who said it has not changed. However, although the residents of South Hylton Green are more likely to know their neighbours, they are no more or less likely to feel isolated. This is likely to be because the residents of Pennywell are almost twice as likely as South Hylton Green to have relatives living in same area (Table 6.7). Comparing the situation of neighbours and

⁹⁶ Chi-square= 18.7203; 4df; p=0.0009

family, it is not surprising there is no difference in loneliness and isolation between the two areas.

Table 6.5

How many neighbours do you know well enough to chat with?

	South Hylton Green		Pennywell	
	No.	%	No.	%
None	0	0	6	10.9
One or two	10	23.8	24	43.6
A few	11	26.2	12	21.8
Quite a lot	12	28.6	4	7.3
Almost all	9	21.4	9	16.4
TOTAL	42	100	55	100

Chi-Square Tests

Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
14.32318	4	0.0063

Table 6.6

Has relationship with neighbours changed?

		Did not live here 5 years ago			Total
		Yes	No		
South Hylton Green	Count	4	15	22	41
	%	9.8	36.6	53.7	100
Pennywell	Count	2	41	12	55
	%	3.6	74.5	21.8	100
Total	Count	6	56	34	96
	%	6.3	58.3	35.4	100

Chi-Square Tests

Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
13.93394	2	0.000943

Knowing many neighbours is taken as a generalised level of trust on an estate and there is clearly a significant difference between South Hylton Green and Pennywell. There is also a significant difference between Pennywell and the rest of the Gentoo

management area. Whether future investment in the estate will have an impact on this remains to be seen, but we would anticipate that renewal will improve relations between neighbours and that, outside Pennywell renewal area, the family will continue to play a major supporting role.

Table 6.7

Apart from people living with you, do you have any relatives living anywhere else in this area?

		Yes	No	Total
South Hylton Green	Count	16	26	42
	%	38.1	61.9	100
Pennywell	Count	34	21	55
	%	61.8	38.2	100
Total	Count	50	47	97
	%	51.5	48.5	100

Chi-Square Tests

Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
5.366029	1	0.020533

With respect to bridging social capital, in terms of connections into the community through knowledge and membership of groups, the residents of South Hylton Green were much more likely than those in Pennywell to have heard of residents or tenants groups (Table 6.8). Just as in the case of the city as a whole, however, they were no more likely to be members. They are also no more or less likely to be members of organisations that meet in Sunderland and no one is a member of a group that meets outside the city. There is no evidence of improved bridging social capital after renewal. However, it is worth noting that the residents of South Hylton green do not appear to count the activities of the local community house as participating in 'organisations'.

Table 6.8

Have you heard of any Residents or Tenants groups for this area?

		Yes	No	Total
South Hylton Green	Count	17	23	40
	%	42.5	57.5	100
Pennywell	Count	12	42	54
	%	22.2	77.8	100
Total	Count	29	65	94
	%	30.9	69.1	100

	Chi sq	df	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	4.4291	1	0.0353

The residents of South Hylton Green are much more likely to have heard of community initiatives but the level of knowledge was much lower than that found in the Pathway homes survey: only 26% of residents had heard of any of these initiatives. On the other hand, only one person in Pennywell had heard of any of them.

In the Gentoo management area, family networks appear to be much more important than other types of social networks. There are relatively low levels of contact with neighbours, little evidence of participation in organisations that would point to important levels of bridging social capital; and very low levels of willingness to have a bigger say in the way their housing is managed. Further empowerment is not high on the agenda of Gentoo's tenants. We have suggested that this may be a result of both existing levels of consultation and a reasonable level of satisfaction with the service that is being provided. Let us look at what the survey says about satisfaction levels.

7. Satisfaction with Housing and Neighbourhoods

7.1 Overall satisfaction levels in Sunderland

On the face of it, the people of Sunderland have much lower levels of participation than their counterparts elsewhere, they show lower levels of social cohesion outside the family and, if the thinking behind the Government's empowerment agenda is correct, we might expect that they would exhibit other aspects of social alienation such as low levels of satisfaction with their housing and their neighbourhoods. This was not the case. The levels of satisfaction with their homes, their neighbourhoods and with Gentoo were very high. As can be seen below (Table 7.1), there is an overall satisfaction level of 90% amongst tenants and those who have bought under the right to buy and less than 4% were dissatisfied with their property.

Table 7.1

Overall satisfaction with flat/house (Tenants and Owner Occupiers)

	No.	%
Very Satisfied	633	52.8
Fairly Satisfied	449	37.4
Neither S nor D Fairly	70	5.8
Dissatisfied	25	2.1
Very Dissatisfied	19	1.6
DK	4	0.3
	1200	100

We asked tenants if their houses had been renovated and, if that was the case, how satisfied were they with the work that had been done. The satisfaction rates in our survey were lower than those achieved in Gentoo's own satisfaction surveys, which are carried out immediately after the completion of the work when the impact of the improvement is strongest. Nevertheless, an overall satisfaction rate of 83% was achieved, compared with a dissatisfaction rate of 8% (Table 7.2). However, dissatisfaction with the work that was done combined with repair issues has an impact on overall tenant satisfaction. While 81% of tenants were satisfied with the organisation as a whole and only 3% were very dissatisfied, the main reason for dissatisfaction was repairs not being completed properly or on time.

It should also perhaps be noted that although Gentoo had a satisfaction rating of 81%, the City Council had an overall rating of 85% (Table 7.3). This may be due to the fact that the council is no longer responsible for housing repairs but there is also the issue that many residents did not distinguish between Sunderland Housing Group, as Gentoo was called at that time, and the City Council. For many, Sunderland Housing Group was no more than a new name for council housing. It should be acknowledged, however, that the fieldwork for this study took place around the time that the Group was re-branding and therefore the perception of Gentoo in this regard may change.

Table 7.2

a. Was your House Renovated?

	No.	%
Yes	703	69.4
No	310	30.6
	1013	100

b. Satisfaction with work done

	No.	%
Very Satisfied	398	56.1
Fairly satisfied	193	27.2
Neither S nor D	46	6.5
Fairly Dissatisfied	42	5.9
Very Dissatisfied	18	2.5
DK	12	1.7
	709	100

c. Tenant Satisfaction with SHG

	No.	%
Very Satisfied	406	40.1
Fairly Satisfied	411	40.6
Neither S nor D	116	11.5
Fairly Dissatisfied	39	3.9
Very Dissatisfied	32	3.2
DK	8	0.8
	1012	100

If not, why not?

Repairs not completed properly/ on time	34	41.2
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Table 7.3**Tenant Satisfaction with
Sunderland City Council**

	No.	%
Very Satisfied	334	38.5
Fairly Satisfied	402	46.4
Neither S nor D	101	11.6
Fairly Dissatisfied	18	2.1
Very Dissatisfied	7	0.8
DK	5	0.6
	867	100

We have already noted that in 2003, one in six residents were dissatisfied with the environment of the immediate locality and one quarter of homes had some sort of major repair problem⁹⁷. This would appear to be no longer the case. Our survey shows that only 4% of respondents were dissatisfied with their housing and, as we shall see in a moment, the same percentage indicated that they were unhappy with their immediate environment. It is normal for owner-occupiers to be more satisfied with their homes than those renting from social landlords. This is reflected in Table 7.4. In addition, it is not surprising that the tenants who had had their homes renovated were more satisfied than those who had not. Seventy four per cent of owner-occupiers were very satisfied, compared with 59% of renovated tenants and 49% of those who had had no renovations carried out. No owner-occupiers were very

Table 7.4**Overall satisfaction with flat/house (Tenants and Owner Occupiers)**

	All		Non-renovated Tenants		Owner-occupiers		Renovated tenants	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Satisfied	633	52.8	497	49.1	136	74.3	417	59.2
Fairly Satisfied	449	37.4	408	40.3	41	22.4	236	33.5
Neither S nor D	70	5.8	66	6.5	4	2.2	27	3.8
Fairly Dissatisfied	25	2.1	23	2.3	2	1.1	11	1.6
Very Dissatisfied	19	1.6	19	1.9	0	0.0	11	1.6
DK	4	0.3	4	0.4	0	0.0	2	0.3
	1200	100	1012		183		704	

Chi-square=
15.2321

4DF

p-
value=0.0042

⁹⁷ Sunderland City Council (2003) *Housing Needs and Migration Report*, SCC.

dissatisfied with their homes so, in order to test satisfaction levels of this group with the tenants who had their homes renovated, we regrouped the data into satisfied, dissatisfied and neither. We found that there was no statistical difference in the satisfaction levels of these two groups. Gentoo tenants who had had their homes renovated had the same general satisfaction levels as owner occupiers.

Table 7.5

Satisfaction with flat/house

	Renovated tenants		Owner Occupiers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Very of Fairly Satisfied	653	93.0	177	96.7
Neither S nor D	27	3.8	4	2.2
Very of Fairly Dissatisfied	22	3.1	2	1.1
	702		183	

Chi-square =3.5842 2DF p-value = 0.1666

However, we should also note that when we asked all residents whether their houses/flats were better, the same or worse than five years ago, there was a tendency for more of the owner-occupiers to say that it was better (Table 7.6). We have to remember that these figures exclude those who did not live in their current homes five years ago and that those who bought were mainly people who had bought under the right-to-buy and who may have had improvements carried out by Gentoo or by the City Council. Ninety six per cent of tenants and 100% of owner-occupiers said that their homes had improved or were the same.

Table 7.6

Flat/house compared to five years ago

	All		Tenants		Owner Occupiers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Better	549	55.6	441	53.1	108	68.4
Same	405	41.0	355	42.8	50	31.6
Worse	34	3.4	34	4.1	0	0.0
	988		830		158	

p-value =0.0003

As indicated above, when we asked tenants about their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with SHG/Gentoo overall, we found that 81% were satisfied and 7% were dissatisfied. Not surprisingly, those with renovated homes were more satisfied than those who had not benefited from improvements. The former were much more likely to be very satisfied and they were much more likely to say that their rent was very good value for money. However, rather than the tenants whose homes had not been renovated being much more likely to say that they were dissatisfied, the other main difference between the two groups was that this group was much more likely to say that they

were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and that their rent was neither good nor poor value for money.

Table 7.7

a. Renovation and satisfaction with SHG

	Renovated		Not renovated		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Satisfied	334	47.6	72	23.8	406	40.1
Fairly Satisfied	267	38.0	145	47.9	411	40.6
Neither S nor D	56	8.0	60	19.8	116	11.5
Fairly Dissatisfied	24	3.4	15	5.0	39	3.9
Very Dissatisfied	21	3.0	11	3.6	32	3.2
	702	100	303	100	8	0.8
				p-value=		
				0.0000	1012	100

b. Renovation and value for money

	Renovated		Not renovated	
	No.	%	No.	%
Very Good	215	30.6	68	22.0
Fairly Good	322	45.8	134	43.4
Neither G nor P	123	17.5	84	27.2
Fairly Poor	34	4.8	18	5.8
Very Poor	9	1.3	5	1.6
	703	100	309	100
				p-
				value=0.0025

When we asked what the problems were with their homes, there were very few issues that appeared to present 'big problems'. When presented with a list of 20 problems that are known to occur in residential properties, there was only one that more than 10% of Gentoo tenants said was a problem. Twelve per cent said that they had a problem with draughts and, related to this, 9.9% said they had problems with their windows. For all other issues, more than 90% of respondents said that they were not a problem.

There tended to be more problems outside the home. However, these were not as great as some of the anecdotal evidence from meetings and focus groups suggested. The fact that any area has serious problems should obviously be a cause for concern, but the main issues were about young people (29% said they were a serious or slight problem) and alcohol-related problems (18%).

Overall, there was a generally high level of satisfaction with the neighbourhoods where they lived. Despite the reputation of some of these areas, 94% of residents were happy with where they lived. Once again, it is worth comparing these results with

those obtained in the Bournville area of Birmingham. There is no statistical difference between the two areas, despite the fact that Bournville is a highly desirable neighbourhood. There were some slight differences across different estates in Sunderland, to which we will return in a moment, but what people liked about their neighbourhoods was 'peace and quiet', followed by its convenient location.

The interviewees were offered a number of words that could be used to describe an area and were invited to say which of them applied to their neighbourhood. The most commonly used words were friendly (54%), pleasant (49%) and quiet (35%). When asked about their satisfaction with various services and other aspects of the area, the highest levels of satisfaction were for services not necessarily provided by Gentoo. Satisfaction rates of more than 90% were achieved for rubbish collection, lighting, health services, landscape maintenance, trees and green areas, ease of getting to local shops, street cleaning and fencing. In contrast, the highest levels of dissatisfaction (10% and above) were for the time it takes to get repairs done, the condition of pavement and roads, the standard of workmanship in repairs, the cleanliness and tidiness of the area and social facilities.

Probing further into the provision of social facilities for young children, teenagers and the elderly, it was facilities for teenagers that were seen to be the most unsatisfactory, with opportunities for the elderly being seen as more adequate. Of those who expressed a view, 77% said that facilities for teenagers were unsatisfactory, with 55% saying they were *very* unsatisfactory. In contrast, 60% said that there were definitely or possibly enough opportunities for the elderly. Views about facilities for younger children were more evenly spread, with 47% saying that facilities were satisfactory and 53% saying they were not.

When we asked if things had changed over the time they had lived in the neighbourhood, two thirds said that they had not. When we subsequently asked those who said there was a change whether thing had got better or worse, there was a wide range of responses but the main things that had got better were the condition of the properties and housing management. The respondents were more likely to say that these features of the area had improved, rather than got worse, along with the general tidiness of the areas, shopping facilities, the amount and the upkeep of green space, the architecture and layout of new buildings, and facilities for the elderly. However, there was a also tendency to say that certain things had got worse rather than better, in particular anti-social behaviour, problems with young people, vandalism, the reputation of the area, crime, litter, neighbours youth facilities, traffic and the sense of community. Overall, there was no consensus about whether the neighbourhood had got better or worse over the previous five years. Around one third said it had got better and another third said it had got worse.

When we asked about what changes Gentoo could make to their neighbourhood, 93% said either nothing or don't know and an even greater level of detachment was observed when we asked what people would *not* like to see changed: 97% said either nothing or don't know. Taken together with current levels of involvement in the community and the lack of enthusiasm for getting more involved in the management of their neighbourhoods, one is inclined to conclude that the residents are generally satisfied with what Gentoo are doing, there are social problems that are seen to be

largely outside the responsibility of a landlord, and they just want Gentoo to get on with delivering their service.

Table 7.8

Overall satisfaction with Area (Tenants and Owner Occupiers)

	No.	%	BVT %
Very Satisfied	739	61.5	69.5
Fairly Satisfied	384	32.0	23.7
Neither S nor D	25	2.1	1.8
Fairly Dissatisfied	32	2.7	3.4
Very Dissatisfied	19	1.6	1.4
DK	2	0.2	0.1
	1201	100	1001

Table 7.9

What they like about the area

	No %	Yes %
Peace and Quiet	55.5	44.5
Convenient location	69.2	30.8
Sense of Community	82.2	17.8
Good local shopping	83.4	16.6
Good mix of households/people	86.5	13.5
Lack of crime	90.5	9.5
Good facilities	91.1	8.9
Green Open Space and parks	94.4	5.6
Good choice of schools	95.0	5.0
Abundance of Greenery	95.1	4.9
None	95.8	4.2
Good Management by SHG	98.0	2.0
Good initiatives for elderly and disabled	99.2	0.8
Absence of fast food and drinking places	99.7	0.3
High Architectural Quality	99.9	0.1
Good initiatives for elderly and disabled	99.2	0.8
Absence of fast food and drinking places	99.7	0.3
High Architectural Quality	99.9	0.1

Table 7.10**Is the following better or worse? (% of 399)**

	Better	Worse	Don't Know	No Change	
Condition of properties	34.7	18.2	35.2	11.9	100
Housing Management	26.1	11.7	45.7	16.5	100
General tidiness of area	25.8	23.8	33.4	17.0	100
Reputation of area	21.0	23.9	38.6	16.5	100
Crime	20.5	28.7	36.0	14.8	100
Litter	20.2	24.8	39.5	15.5	100
Shopping Facilities	19.1	16.4	47.7	16.8	100
Up-keep of green space	18.9	16.3	46.6	18.1	100
Amount of green space	18.0	14.3	48.8	18.9	100
Architecture/layout of new buildings	17.0	5.5	58.2	19.3	100
Upkeep of private gardens	16.9	16.7	48.0	18.4	100
Sense of community	16.6	22.8	42.8	17.8	100
Elderly facilities	14.7	12.8	55.6	17.0	100
Vandalism	14.0	30.4	40.4	15.3	100
Neighbours	13.9	26.7	41.0	18.5	100
Anti-social behaviour	12.2	50.5	27.0	10.3	100
Problems with young people	12.0	48.9	28.5	10.6	100
Traffic	11.3	25.6	47.6	15.5	100
Youth facilities	10.3	25.9	47.1	16.7	100
Other	2.2	1.3	0.0	96.5	100

7.2 Satisfaction in South Hylton Green

South Hylton Green is the one development where Gentoo have been able to get on and deliver neighbourhood renewal to their customers. In this area, the renewal work has been completed. It is therefore worth looking more closely at the impact of this investment in terms of social relations and satisfaction.

In the survey of residents of South Hylton Green carried out by Pathway Homes, 96% of respondents said they were satisfied with their new homes and a similar percentage thought the design of their homes was excellent⁹⁸. There was some concern about storage space and bin space, but the vast majority thought that the size of the rooms was 'just right'. Seventy six per cent thought that the neighbourhood was also designed to an excellent standard and that the landscaping was excellent⁹⁹. The main

⁹⁸ Pathway Homes (n.d.) Customer Questionnaires: South Hylton Green Results.

⁹⁹ However, while 37% of respondents gave the neighbourhood design a score of 10 out of 10, 20% thought the landscaping was of poor quality.

reason for people moving into their new homes were access to transport and the design, size and location of the housing.

In order to discover whether the investment in South Hylton Green had had an impact on satisfaction levels and, if so, in what way, we produced cross-tabulations of the key satisfaction questions for properties and neighbourhoods. When we compared the levels of satisfaction with their properties, the residents of South Hylton Green were much more satisfied than the average across the city. Only two people said they were dissatisfied with their houses and they were much more likely to say that they were very satisfied. They were also much more likely to say that their house was better than five years ago, although one person did say they thought it was worse. Gentoo tenants in the area were also twice as likely as their tenants in Sunderland as a whole to say that their rent was very good value for money.

Table 7.11

Satisfaction With flat/house	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Very Satisfied	36	85.7	633	52.9
Fairly Satisfied	4	9.5	449	37.5
Neither S nor D	0	0.0	70	5.9
Fairly Dissatisfied	0	0.0	25	2.1
Very Dissatisfied	2	4.8	19	1.6
TOTAL	42	100.0	1196	100.0

Table 7.12

Does the rent represent value for money?

	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Very Good	13	59.1	284	28.0
Fairly Good	7	31.8	457	45.1
Neither G nor P	1	4.5	206	20.3
Fairly Poor	1	4.5	52	5.1
Very Poor	0	0.0	14	1.4
TOTAL	22	100.0	1013	100.0

When we asked about problems in their homes, the only issues that were identified as a problem by more than 10% of respondents were keeping the home warm (12%) and parking (14%). Across Sunderland, only 8% complained of difficulty in keeping their homes warm but 12% complained of draughts and 10% of the state of their windows.

The tenants in this completed renewal area were much more likely than tenants across the city to be very satisfied SHG/Gentoo. Sixty five per cent were 'very satisfied', compared with 40% overall.

Table 7.13

Satisfaction With SHG	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Very Satisfied	15	65.2	406	40.4
Fairly Satisfied	5	21.7	411	40.9
Neither S nor D	2	8.7	116	11.6
Fairly Dissatisfied	1	4.3	39	3.9
Very Dissatisfied	0	0.0	32	3.2
TOTAL	23	100.0	1004	100.0

Fifty five per cent of the current residents had moved into their current accommodation in the previous two years and when we asked why they had moved they were much less likely to say it was to be close to family and friends or because it was the only offer give. They were much more likely to say it was due to the type of property (5% against 21% or because of the area (29% against 12%). However, when we asked them about their satisfaction with the area, their responses were no different from those of residents across Sunderland as a whole.

Table 7.14

Satisfaction With Area	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Very Satisfied	28	66.7	739	61.6
Fairly Satisfied	12	28.6	384	32.0
Neither S nor D	1	2.4	25	2.1
Fairly Dissatisfied	1	2.4	32	2.7
Very Dissatisfied	0	0.0	19	1.6
TOTAL	42	100.0	1199	100.0

Nevertheless, when asked what they liked about the area, they were more likely to say high architectural quality (26% against 0.1%), strong sense of community (33% against 18%), a good mix of households and people (21% against 14%), peace and quiet (73% against 45%), lack of crime (38% against 10%) and good choice of schools (12% against 5%). There was no difference with respect to the amount of greenery and open space, good management by SHG, shopping and other facilities, initiatives for the elderly and disabled, and convenient location within Sunderland.

They were only slightly less likely to say that the area had changed over time, but the difference was not significant. That is their housing had changed dramatically, but the same could not be said for the area where they lived. When we presented them with a list of potential problems in neighbourhoods, the only significant difference between South Hylton Green and other areas was in relation to dogs. They were twice as likely to mention dogs as a problem as people in other areas.

There was also no difference in their satisfaction with social facilities, access for service and emergency vehicles, ease of getting to shops or ease of getting to places of worship. They did, however, say they were less satisfied with ease of getting to pubs, the bus service, the rail service, and pedestrian or cycle routes, all of which were statistically significant. They were slightly more likely to say they were happy with the general appearance of the area but there was no difference in their views of street lighting, landscape maintenance, cleanliness and tidiness in the area, street cleaning, the amount of greenery, and the condition of pavements and roads. They were also likely to describe the area in much the same way as other residents in the city, except that they were more likely to say that their area is attractive and quiet, and less likely to say pleasant.¹⁰⁰

With respect to services that are outside the control of Gentoo, they were much more likely to be dissatisfied with rubbish collection, schools and the Health Service. However, from the focus group discussions with people from this area, the issue with the local school appeared to be that it was immediately adjacent to their homes and they had problems with children dropping litter and hanging around at lunch times.

Table 7.15

a. Satisfaction with Rubbish collection	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Satisfied	37	88.1	1162	97.9
Dissatisfied	5	11.9	25	2.1
TOTAL	42	100.0	1187	100.0
Chi-sq=16.3546	1 DF	p=0.0001		

b. Satisfaction with Schools	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Satisfied	31	86.1	940	98.8
Dissatisfied	5	13.9	11	1.2
TOTAL	36	100.0	951	100.0
Chi-sq=35.2589	1 DF	p=0.0000		

c. Satisfaction with Health Service	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Satisfied	36	87.8	1138	98.3
Dissatisfied	5	12.2	20	1.7
TOTAL	41	100.0	1158	100.0
Chi-sq=21.2535	1 DF	p=0.0000		

When we asked about whether there was more or less crime in the area than elsewhere, the residents of South Hylton Green were slightly more likely to say there

¹⁰⁰ All statistically significant at 0.01 level

was less in their area, but the difference was not significant. There was also no difference in their view of what the reputation of their area was like. Neither was there any significant difference in their worries about different types of crime, with the exception of being physically attacked in the area, to which the residents of South Hylton Green were more likely to say they were not at all worried. However, there was no one who was 'very worried' about burglary, being mugged, physical attack in the area, violent physical or sexual attack in their own homes, sexual attack in the area or racial harassment.

There were differences in feelings of security, which may have reflected the age profiles of the South Hylton Green Residents. They were much less likely to say that they felt 'very safe' coming home alone in the day, being alone at home at night and coming to and from their homes after dark. However, the main difference was that they tended to say they felt 'fairly safe' rather than 'very safe'. Very few felt insecure in the streets by day and at home by night. Almost one third felt unsafe on the streets at night.

Table 7.16

a. Safe coming home alone in day	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Very safe	20	51.3	950	82.3
Fairly safe	17	43.6	156	13.5
A bit unsafe	1	2.6	31	2.7
Very unsafe	1	2.6	17	1.5
TOTAL	39	100.0	1154	100.0

Combining 'unsafe' Chi-sq= 28.0802; 2df; p=0.0000

b. Alone at home at night	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Very safe	17	43.6	769	68.2
Fairly safe	18	46.2	256	22.7
A bit unsafe	3	7.7	75	6.7
Very unsafe	1	2.6	27	2.4
TOTAL	39	100.0	1127	100.0

(for combined 'unsafe' : Chi-sq= 12.2691; 2df; p=0.0022)

c. Coming to & from Home alone After dark	S. Hylton Green		Sunderland	
	No	%	No	%
Very safe	6	15.8	346	36.9
Fairly safe	20	52.6	278	29.7
A bit unsafe	5	13.2	163	17.4
Very unsafe	7	18.4	150	16.0
TOTAL	38	100.0	937	100.0

Chi-sq= 11.3319 3DF; p-value = 0.01

Overall, the picture is of a high level of satisfaction with their homes and with Gentoo, a level of satisfaction with the area that is similar to that of tenants and right-to-buyers across the Gentoo management areas, and less satisfaction with council and other services. They tend to be no different from people in other areas with respect to being worried about crime, although they are less likely to say they feel 'very safe' in and around their homes.

Clearly in some regards the situation in South Hylton Green is different from that found in other areas, raising the question as to what variations in response to key questions there may be in other estates across Sunderland. During the survey we had transposed the post codes of respondent's addresses into Output Areas and, using the spatial codings set out in the spreadsheets in the earlier section, we recoded the Output Areas into a number of neighbourhoods that were thought to be significant in the city. This was done in discussion and collaboration with staff of Gentoo. We then carried out a satisfaction analysis for key estates across the city.

7.3 Satisfaction Analysis for Selected Estates

In order to draw conclusions from the survey data regarding customer satisfaction with aspects relating to Gentoo in different neighbourhoods, the survey results were analysed by running a series of crosstabs for 12 estates across Sunderland (see Appendix 3 for a fuller explanation). The results provided a breakdown of responses for residents from the following estates; Grindon, Pennywell, High Ford, Low Ford, Southwick, Town End Farm, Redhouse, Marley Pots, Thorney Close, Farringdon and Ryhope.

There appears to be a significant relationship between estates and how satisfied customers are with Gentoo in general. Customers from Castletown (100.0%) and Low Ford (92.3%) are the most satisfied, compared to those living in High Ford (10.5%) and Farringdon (9.7%) who are the most dissatisfied with Gentoo. However, it should be noted that these dissatisfaction levels are still only around 10%. Following the recent investments Gentoo have made to improve the quality of their existing stock with kitchen, bathroom and double glazing updates, customers were asked how satisfied they are with the work that has been carried out. Customers from three of the estates; Grindon, Castletown and Farringdon are 100.0% satisfied with the recent work that has been carried out on their properties. Customers from Redhouse (25.0%) and Marley Pots (16.7%) are most dissatisfied with the work that has been carried out. Caution needs to be exercised when interpreting some of these figures, due to the small numbers involved, but it is notable that the residents of Castletown are the most satisfied with both the work that has been carried out by Gentoo and with the organisation overall. In contrast, those living in Farringdon are all satisfied with the work that has been done on their properties but are not at all happy with the organisation. This begs further investigation.

When asked whether they were generally satisfied with their particular house/flat at the present time, customers from Grindon, Low Ford and Castletown were the most satisfied (100.0%) with their properties at the time of the survey, while those in

Marley Potts (70.0%), Farringdon (80.6%) and Southwick (78.4%) were amongst the most dissatisfied. This begins to explain why the people of Farringdon are not happy with the organisation, despite being happy with the improvements that have been made. Customers from Grindon (97.7%) and Low Ford (92.3%) were more likely to say they thought their properties represented good value for money, compared with only 67.7% in Farringdon.

The relationship between estates and whether customers are satisfied with their areas as a place to live was shown not to be significant. Despite this, all of the small number of residents in Castletown were satisfied (100.0%) with their area, compared to residents from Marley Potts, 80% of whom were satisfied. There is, however, a relationship between estates and whether customers feel their areas are better, the same or worse than they were five years ago. This question, which only applied to those who had lived in the area for five years or more, showed that customers from Southwick (100.0%) and Town End Farm (85.0%) felt that their areas were better. However, only 50% or less of those living in Low Ford, Redhouse, and Castletown felt that their areas had improved over the previous five years.

When we asked residents of different estates about their views on amenities for teenagers, young children and the elderly, there was a good deal of variation across different estates. We have to remember that the responses to these questions are likely to vary with the age structure of the estates and the ages of the respondents. That said, there is a significant relationship between estates and how satisfactory customers feel their areas are for teenagers, in terms of leisure activities. Satisfaction levels were generally low, with customers from High Ford (36.6%) being the most satisfied. More than three quarters of the respondents in Grindon, Southwick, Castletown, Thorney Close, Farringdon and Ryhope thought the facilities for teenagers were unsatisfactory.

There is also a highly significant relationship between estates and how satisfactory different estates are as places to bring up young children. In Southwick, Redhouse, High Ford, Low Ford, Castletown and Marley Potts, more than half of those who responded to this question thought their areas were unsatisfactory for young children. Southwick (64.7%) and Redhouse (62.5%) came out worst in this regard.

There is also a disparity across the city in terms of whether there are enough opportunities for elderly people to meet socially. Residents from Castletown (100.0%) thought that there were enough opportunities for elderly people to meet socially, but the majority of those from Farringdon (63.2%), Pennywell (62.5%), Low Ford (58.3%) and High Ford (55.6%) indicated that there were not enough facilities for the elderly on these estates.

There is a highly significant relationship between estates and whether the individual areas are perceived as having a good reputation amongst people who live elsewhere. Despite some of their earlier opinions, residents from Farringdon (86.1%), Grindon (81.6%) and Ryhope (80.1%) feel the most strongly about their areas having a good reputation, compared to residents of Castletown (55.6%) and Town End Farm (52.7%) who feel that their areas have a bad reputation amongst people who live elsewhere. In contrast to their views about their areas having good reputations, residents in Ryhope (59.0%) and Grindon (55.1%) feel that there is more crime in

their estates compared to other areas. The majority of responses from residents in High Ford (70.8%), Low Ford (68.8%) and Town End Farm feel that there is less crime in their areas compared to crime in other areas, as do more than 50% in Pennywell, Redhouse, Marley Potts, Castletown and Farringdon.

We have noted previously that there is a low level of interest in becoming involved in the management of neighbourhood services across the city. However, there appears to be a significant relationship between estates and whether customers want to have a bigger say in how their neighbourhood services are managed. In all estates, the majority of customers responded that they did not want more of a say in how their neighbourhood services are managed. Despite some of the problems that have been highlighted, all customers from Pennywell, Redhouse and Castletown answered no to this question. A small proportion of customers from Low Ford (18.8%) felt that they would want more of a say in how their neighbourhood services are managed.

Overall, the analysis shows that the majority of customers from the estates that were selected for this analysis are satisfied with aspects relating to Gentoo and their individual properties. Areas of serious concern that have been highlighted in certain estates are provision of leisure activities for teenagers and whether individual estates are satisfactory as areas to bring up young children. In addition, it is evident that there is also some concern regarding social opportunities for the elderly and crime levels within particular estates.

8. Issues related to refurbishment and renewal

A key issue in evaluating the impact of the large scale investment in Sunderland's housing stock relates to the direct impact of refurbishment and renewal programmes. In this section we consider evidence that explores different dimensions of this impact. Elsewhere we also refer to the economic impact associated with the expenditure on refurbishment and renewal. In this section, however, we are principally concerned with the impact on residents. This involves two elements:

- issues to do with relocation and displacement; and
- satisfaction with housing: the satisfaction levels associated with the aftermath of refurbishment and renewal.

The issue of displacement is an important one. Some of the critiques of renewal programmes argue that there is a considerable cost borne by households that are displaced and that there is a disproportionate impact on key groups in the population who are effectively excluded from housing and neighbourhoods because of regeneration.

The issue of displacement is difficult to address with the data that is available at present. In this section we draw upon a small number of examples of renewal estates to identify the processes and impacts in terms of displacement. We also make use of the social survey data. Neither of these sources of data is wholly satisfactory for the purpose that we have and at the end of the section we reflect upon the need for more effective processes to assess the impact of renewal.

At this stage the overall impression is that there is a positive impact of renewal. Although the renewal process has not been completed and some of the difficulties associated with compulsory purchase has meant that the process has been less satisfactory and has meant long, drawn-out disruption for some residents. There is nevertheless evidence of an improvement in satisfaction among those resident in renewal areas. The extent to which there has been displacement is difficult to measure precisely, however there are many fewer people displaced than suggested by the numbers of properties demolished. A large number of properties were void before renewal occurred and a large proportion of those who have been rehoused because their properties were being demolished have been rehoused locally. It is also evident from the survey data that households living in renewal areas, and some of these will be people who had been rehoused locally following clearance, express high levels of satisfaction with both their dwelling and neighbourhood. In some cases these levels of satisfaction are slightly lower than for other tenants in Sunderland. It is important to recognise that while the claims about massive displacement and disruption of communities are overstated this does not mean that there is no displacement effect.

8.1 The process of refurbishment and renewal

It is important to understand the way in which refurbishment and renewal has been carried out in Sunderland.

Refurbishment

In the case of refurbishment the general intention has been to carry out this work with tenants still living in their properties. In some cases they were temporarily moved out but this was at the tenants request. There has been very little rehousing directly associated with refurbishment. Some people who were temporarily moved out did not move back in. These were in particular people with health problems, older tenants and a small group of others who preferred not to move back. It is reasonable to argue that in all of these cases this reflected the exercise of choice by the tenants involved.

For the purposes of this report we would suggest that there is no displacement effect associated with the refurbishment programme. Where tenants have not returned to their existing dwelling it reflects some element of choice and a preferable outcome for the individuals and households involved. Both for these households and for those who remained in the property that was refurbished there is a direct improvement in the quality of the housing that they are living in. The benefits of refurbishment accrued directly to the households involved. Although disruption and some inconvenience associated with the process has been experienced, this is short term and the evidence from the survey material suggests that the improvement in circumstances is widely recognised. We refer to some specific examples of refurbishment which demonstrate these effects in Appendix 4.

Renewal

In the renewal areas the situation is more complicated and different. Renewal involves demolition and this has largely been at the level of the whole estate or parts of estates rather than individual properties or blocks of properties interspersed among properties that are to remain. There has been no plan to house people back in the new housing that has replaced their old home. This means that households do not anticipate a temporary move followed by a permanent return. The process of clearance has been complicated by disputes with the council that have resulted in some properties (privately owned) remaining within what is otherwise a clearance zone. While this has created delays and may blight the remaining properties and adjacent areas it does not directly affect the eventual pattern of household movement.

In renewal, the process has been more long drawn out and it is clear that there is displacement involved, however it is also important to recognise that renewal areas had high levels of voids before the clearance programme was started. In Southwick 48 properties were void out of 345 and the demolition process tended to start with streets that already had high levels of void, for example Ellis Square had 40 to 45% of properties void. It is important to recognise that the streets that had already had very high levels of void properties were often not ideal places to live in. There were some 24 derelict private houses in Southwick and problems of vandalism and fire and risks to safety are associated with void properties.

The process of renewal involved an agreement by the board to move ahead with the demolition of properties and, for a period before this final agreement, void properties were not being re-let. This is a sensible decision in that it avoided housing people in the knowledge that they would have to be rehoused within a relatively short period.

Again, this effect reduces the number of people who are directly displaced through the renewal process.

The process of demolition otherwise involved consultation with all tenants. Detailed information provided about the phasing of demolition, letters to all residents and discussion with different groups of tenants and owners. Anyone in a property that was to be demolished received an individual home visit and the options for rehousing were explained. Home loss and disturbance payments were also made to ease the rehousing process. There was no option for example in Southwick to move to newly built housing within the area but there was some new building in Carley Hill at the same time. These processes were managed by the appropriate local housing management team. Issues to do with arrears and former tenant debt were also considered.

It is difficult to assess how far the rehousing outcomes were in tune with the preferences of the tenants involved. This data is difficult to interpret without direct reference to individual tenants and being aware of their preferences at the outcome. A high proportion of tenants were rehoused locally. This would seem likely to mean that there is a greater continuation of the existing community and some of the concerns about displacement resulting in the break up of community do not arise in this situation. However, it can also be the case that people are rehoused locally because they have limited choice elsewhere and it is very difficult to assess this from the data that is available to us. There may even have been some elements in the practice of rehousing which would encourage people to accept offers of housing more locally. The team responsible for moving people out of properties and finding solutions had more control over lettings within their own patch and had less ability to command rehousing options in other parts of Sunderland. The most straightforward rehousing was therefore where someone opted to be rehoused locally. This was easier to manage and achieve than if it involved a movement to another part of the district.

Our impression is that there may be some element of restricted choice in the concentration of local rehousing, however bearing in mind the survey data reported below we feel that this is likely to be a small element. This could only be clarified finally through better data at the local level. If there was an interest in understanding this issue in the future, it would require evidence to be collected that demonstrated the first preferences of people and then compared this with the final outcome.

8.2 The survey data

We have analysed the survey data in relation to renewal areas. This involves identifying all of those included in the survey who currently live within renewal areas. This is not a wholly satisfactory way to evaluate the impact of renewal. Some of the people who have been rehoused as a result of renewal are still within these renewal areas but some have moved elsewhere and we are not able to identify a representative cohort of households who have been subject to renewal. What we have, however, is a picture of whether the areas affected by renewal have some different characteristics or levels of satisfaction associated with them than other areas. This is a direct measure of the impact of the renewal process.

It is important however to recognise that at the time of the survey and of this report the renewal process was incomplete in many areas. Within renewal areas there are still areas of derelict land and there are still properties awaiting demolition. Therefore the negative disruptive and incomplete elements associated with renewal are likely to continue to affect the responses of residents.

Appendix 5 presents some detailed survey results for renewal areas. In summary this indicates that:

- respondents in renewal areas are considerably younger than those elsewhere. 30% are aged 40 years or less and 54% are aged 50 or less. This compares with 21% and 34% respectively for the residents included in the survey living outside the renewal areas.
- While the levels of employment of these two groups are roughly the same, (20% in renewal areas and 21% in other areas), levels of unemployment are significantly higher in renewal areas (20%) than in other areas (5%). This pattern is consistent with the age structure. It suggests that the renewal areas house a much younger population that are more likely to be unemployed compared with an older population, many of whom are retired or no longer economically active in the other areas.
- The renewal areas also tend to have households which are larger and this is consistent again with the stage in the family cycle associated with age. 55% of households living in renewal areas are of two persons or less, compared with 71% of persons in other areas.

These data suggest that renewal areas house people at an earlier stage in their household and housing career and it may be that for other households moving on from these areas has been part of their experience of housing within Sunderland. Insofar as the renewal areas comprise the least attractive parts of the housing stock this is unsurprising. It would indicate that they play a role as entry points for the social rented sector, that households move on from, especially if they are in more secure jobs and have been good tenants.

The next set of questions relates to whether people in renewal areas felt that they had more choice in moving to the property that they have. One expectation would be that people in these areas would identify much less choice. In practice there is very little difference.

When asked 'Why did you move into this area?'

- 20% of those in renewal areas and 22% of others stated that it was the only offer given to them.

The factors determining choice otherwise showed some small variation but no dramatic difference.

- In renewal areas 20% chose the property because of its size: this compared with 27% for respondents in other areas.

- In renewal areas 19% chose the property because of the type of property: this compared with 20% for respondents in other areas.
- In renewal areas 18% chose the property because of the area: this compared with 17% for respondents in other areas.
- Those in renewal areas were slightly more likely to have chosen to move to the area in order to be closer to family and friends: 24% compared with 23%.
- Neither group identified proximity to work as important – 0% in renewal areas, 1% in other areas
- Neither group identified proximity to schools as important – 0% in renewal areas, 0.4% in other areas
- those in renewal areas were more likely to say that they chose the area because they had always lived there – 12% compared with 9% of others.

Overall there is no great difference in levels of satisfaction or in the measures of choice or reasons for moving identified by households living in renewal areas than those living elsewhere. Those in renewal areas are less likely to feel lonely or isolated, have more relatives living within the area and are more likely to feel that they're made welcome in the area where they're living. These responses support a view that these areas have robust communities and that the process of renewal has not destroyed this.

Residents in renewal areas are less likely to be members of tenants' associations or of any other organisations in Sunderland or elsewhere. They would appear to be a more locally connected family and kinship based group but the differences are not marked ones and it may be more sensible to regard them as broadly having the same characteristics as other tenants, although being at a slightly earlier stage in their housing and family careers.

Residents in renewal areas are almost as satisfied with the work that has been carried out – 83% satisfied compared with 85% of others but are less satisfied with Sunderland housing groups (66% compared with 84%), less satisfied with Sunderland City Council (73% compared with 88%).

Residents in renewal areas are also less likely to feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money (57% compared with 76%), they are less satisfied with their particular house or flat (77% compared with 93%) and they are less satisfied with the area as a place to live (86% compared with 95%).

In all of these measures residents in renewal areas are slightly less satisfied than others. When asked would they say their flat or house is now better, worse or the same than it was five years ago, 45% thought it was better, 47% thought it was worse and 8% thought it was the same. This may reflect the incomplete nature of the renewal process. When asked whether they think the area is better the same or worse than it was five years ago they were more clear about improvement. Seventy three per cent of respondents in renewal areas regarded the area as better, 22% worse and 5% the same. This compared with 69%, 28% and 4% for other respondents.

In spite of this favourable comparison the overall view of renewal estates is not favourable. When asked a series of questions about the area the responses were generally less favourable in renewal areas than elsewhere:

- How satisfactory do you think this area is for teenagers in terms of leisure activities?

Renewal Area:

Satisfied 15%

Dissatisfied 62%

Others

Satisfied 20%

Dissatisfied 73%

- Overall, how satisfactory do you think this area is as a place to bring up young children?

Renewal Area:

Satisfied 19%

Dissatisfied 55%

Others

Satisfied 52%

Dissatisfied 37%

- Do you think there are enough opportunities for elderly people to meet socially around here?

Renewal Area:

Enough 50%

Not enough 50%

Others

Enough 62%

Not enough 38%

- On the whole, do you think this area has a good reputation amongst people who live elsewhere?

Renewal Area:

Good reputation 52%

Bad reputation 41%

Others

Good reputation 66%

Bad reputation 22%

- Do you think there is generally less, more or about the same crime here than in other areas?

Renewal Area:

More 38%

Less 54%

Others

More 38%

Less 45%

8.3 Conclusions and Questions

Any starting assumption that the level of displacement from refurbishment and renewal equates with the number of properties included then this assumption needs to be modified.

In the case of refurbishment, while there is undoubtedly disruption the ‘displacement’ effect (the numbers of households which did not return to their previous address) is small and sometimes zero. More importantly there is reason to identify this relocation as choice based.

In the case of renewal the position is less clear. Again because of the significant number of void properties at the outset the maximum potential displacement effect is less than the numbers of properties identified for demolition. However the data on voids does not make it easy to identify this figure precisely and void levels in 2002/3 already are dominated by ‘renewal’ rather than ‘management’ voids.

Before assuming that the remaining number represents displacement there are 3 considerations:

- Some tenants will have welcomed the opportunity to move
- Some have returned to the same estate
- Some have moved very locally

In each of these cases there will have been disturbance but it may be inappropriate to label this as displacement. The survey data provides some supporting evidence that suggests that it is a minority who feel that they had no choice when they moved to their present address.

The survey data show that a high proportion of residents in renewal areas felt that the area had improved. There is also a high level of satisfaction with their house or flat although in this respect households in renewal areas were much less likely to say that their flat or house is now better than it was five years ago – perhaps because their

property had not yet benefited from refurbishment. The renewal process does not displace people from the locality or reasonable quality housing but may not enable them to access the best properties.

Beyond these indicators the general picture is one where the renewal areas are still regarded less favourably than other areas. There is still a long way to go before these areas are as highly regarded as others. The administrative data related to rehousing are difficult to analyse or interpret. It seems likely that rehousing from renewal areas generally matches tenant preferences for area – the strong family and other links with the area suggest this. However this pattern is also predictable given the way the allocation process is managed and may also be affected by the excellent tenants scheme and choice based lettings. One possibility is that these processes (tenant attachment to area, management of allocations and excellent tenants scheme) are combining to make the concentration of different groups (by age, economic status and household type) more stark and that tenants are being more systematically sorted between estates. This could result in very different management problems in different areas in the future. The concentration of households with problems in some estates (or in parts of the private sector) may be an unintended consequence of renewal and other processes.

It may be that the different profiles identified for different areas will become less pronounced over time. However, the possibility that they may become more pronounced should be considered. Where estates have different reputations and where properties are in different quality status categories (with newly built properties having the higher status and the lowest associated with older properties in the worst areas) there is a potential that rather than removing the worst estates the process will recreate a clear hierarchy that will affect the housing decisions of households who have some choice. In this way renewal and associated new build could have the effect of improving the condition and quality of stock overall and improving the circumstances of many tenants but the next generation of tenants and managers will be faced with a pattern of unequal rather than uniformly attractive estates and including estates which are difficult to manage and to live in because they are the least attractive and have the worst reputation.

9. Views and Perceptions of Vulnerable Groups

This section of the report examines the impacts of Gentoo's housing improvements and regeneration programmes on disadvantaged communities, in particular young people, families with children, older people (aged over 65 years) and people with disabilities. In addition, a focus group was held with young people from Black and minority ethnic communities who were not Gentoo tenants regarding the barriers and difficulties they and their families experienced in accessing Gentoo housing and the areas where the company's properties are concentrated within Sunderland. The findings presented here drawn from the findings of focus group meetings held with local people from these vulnerable and disadvantaged residents.

When reading this section, however, it has to be remembered that the overall levels of satisfaction with Gentoo, their housing and their neighbourhoods were high. Participants in the focus groups took the opportunity to express their concerns within this context. The meetings gave people a chance to speak about very local and very personal experiences. It should be remembered, therefore, that while these experiences are highly salient for the individuals discussing them, they are not necessarily generalisable for all or even a majority of Gentoo tenants. They may in fact only be relevant for a small number of people. On the other hand, some of the comments reinforce the concerns we found in the survey, while others point to issues that the survey did not pick up but which are worth further consideration. In addition, some of the issues discussed are outside the control of Gentoo but, since they affect Gentoo tenants, they are issues that the organisation might want to take up with the agencies responsible for service delivery.

9.1 Satisfaction with Homes

Key Findings:

In general, older tenants and owner-occupiers (aged over 65 years) were very satisfied with their homes. Older residents living in high-rise (older resident only) accommodation, in particular, were very satisfied with their homes:

“Well we're basically happy because we've got privacy, nobody can get in or out, we have a small garden if we want to sit there, we have a communal sitting area where we all get together. We have a Thursday morning 'natter' club and a fantastic view that I have on the 11th floor that people pay thousands for on the other side of the river”.

The major problems experienced by older tenants with regard to their homes generally related to the maintenance and up-keep of their gardens. The problem particularly affected older tenants that had large gardens attached to their property. The key problems mentioned included mowing the lawn, weeding their garden and collecting leaves in the autumn and winter. These problems were also experienced by owner-occupiers (aged over 65) that took part in the focus group meeting. Comments made by older tenants regarding problems associated with the up-keep of their garden included:

“I love my house, but my husband died last year, and I haven’t got a small lawn, I’ve got a small field, there’s a tree which sheds all the leaves, I’ve asked them to take it out because I can’t manage. Leaves drop off and get into the house and garden. It also stops the light from getting into the kitchen. I’ve had all that to contend with. I’ve had to pay £10 to get the leaves removed, which is all extra.....The garden’s far too big for me. The trees aren’t in my garden, but all the leaves are just coming through the railings”.

“All the leaves come into my garden and nobody comes to clear it up. Last year I had to bag nine massive bags full of leaves. I had to do it myself and arrange for a collection through the council, I use one of my three lorry trips to remove them. Nobody ever comes to clear up. I’ve had to do it systematically over the autumn and winter”.

Some of the older tenants who took part in the focus group meeting said they had taken advantage of the gardening / grass-cutting service that was made available via Gentoo (for an extra charge on top of their normal housing rental fee). However, many of the older owner occupiers stated that they had either attempted to secure the services of a gardener or help on maintaining their garden or had enquired about the possibility of paving over their garden area to reduce the amount of gardening and maintenance work required. However, the costs involved in getting their gardens maintained or paved over was often too costly for the older owner-occupiers.

Sitting alongside this issue about the size of the gardens that older tenants have to maintain are questions about the size of the homes that are associated with these gardens. Access to larger homes is something that younger people with families raised. Most of the tenants with young families stated that their current home was too small and wished to move to a larger property. However, they mainly wished to remain in their current areas, rather than moving elsewhere in the City.

Like the older tenants, most of the disabled tenants who attended the focus group meeting were very satisfied with their home and the quality of the modernisation work that had been done. For the most part, they were pleased with the way in which Gentoo took into account their specific disability needs. One tenant noted that:

“I’m quite pleased with the modernisation of the house. I cannot thank them [Gentoo] enough, they put a fence right round the garden for the guide dog, gave me a shed, outside tap, a pen for the dog. Cannot thank them enough. Put the shower in. I asked them to changed the pull cord in the bathroom from a pull cord to a switch on the outside wall, as because of being visually impaired, I couldn’t tell if the light was on or I was pulling the emergency cord”.

However, some of the disabled tenants that took part in the focus group meeting noted that they had experienced some difficulties with the design of their renovated properties:

“I know a lady who’s in her 70’s and in a wheelchair. She’s got a little kitchen which is ideal if you’re on your own. When they put the kitchen in, she couldn’t reach the taps from her wheelchair. You’re supposed to be able to get under the bench. You can get them where the sink can move up and down, so you can get

under it. In the end, there was a meeting called with the council and they came out and changed it. But the problem is the long trail of having to deal with that many people”.

In this case, the problem was resolved, but it highlights the fact that people with disabilities sometimes have difficulties negotiating corporate structures for reasons of, for example, mobility, sight or hearing impairment.

In the context of the high levels of satisfaction with the refurbishment work that Gentoo carried out, as expressed in the social survey, some of the tenants with young families were critical of the quality of the workmanship of some of the housing modernisation work carried out in the Thorney Close area and the time taken to complete the house improvement work:

“... we’ve got new doors, new kitchens, but they’re paper thin, but they’re still new. One little knock and they break, my little one fell into the living room door and it broke”.

A small number of the older tenants that took part in the focus group meeting, noted that they had experienced problems with the quality of the turf that had been laid down in their garden and the workmanship associated with their new gardens:

“I’ve paid for the turf [in their garden] and it hasn’t grown and still nobodies been round to check it. All the gardens are the same, underneath they [the Gentoo contractors] haven’t put enough top soil. Everybody’s is the same, they just threw the turf down like it was a carpet.

As suggested above, these negative comments have to be seen in the context of the overwhelmingly positive responses to the work of Gentoo. Even those who were complaining about detail tended to be positive overall. Their comments about their neighbourhoods, however, repeated some of the concerns that were picked up in the survey. As in the survey, not all of these concerns were the responsibility of Gentoo.

9.2 Perceptions of Local Neighbourhoods and Areas.

Key Findings:

Older people that took part in the focus group meeting were very positive about the quality of the environment within the immediate vicinity of their homes.

“We like the new build housing in our area, it’s lovely and quiet, but don’t like the old part of Castletown. It’s very quiet, sometimes the silence is almost deafening, but old people like us need that sort of thing. In a way our complaints are minor, but there are things that need putting right”.

However, some of the older tenants and owner-occupiers were very dissatisfied with the quality of environment in the wider area. These problems were largely associated with derelict property / land and a general of neglect across the area, and having large numbers of young people ‘hanging around’ the local shops:

“The area is dreadful; it’s standing still, no developments. It’s been like this for the last five or ten years”.

“There are a lot of run down shops, they’re disgraceful. The delay and the uncertainty around it is a problem”

These perceived problems with the local environment and young people congregating around the local shops with nothing to do had a negative effect on older people’s perception of safety out in the wider neighbourhood after dark:

“You don’t feel safe on the night time, there are a lot of kids hanging around and there’s nothing for them to do. They’ve [the Council, Gentoo and Police] tried to get things off the ground for them [activities for young people to do] but it hasn’t worked. It just makes you feel uneasy”.

“I’m alright here [in my local area] but at night time I don’t like the shops”.

“Don’t feel safe around the shops at night, its bad enough during the day”.

Tenants with disabilities also identified issues associated with illegal car parking, nuisance neighbours, young people hanging around and under-age alcohol drinking as local problems in their respective areas. The problem with young people echoed what we heard from the older tenants and what we picked up in the survey:

“The main problem is the school in Farrington secondary school. The kids on the night time come from areas all over and hang around, fighting, shouting. Happy with the area, it’s nice and clean. Apart from the weekends, especially when the kids are breaking up from school. People go into the off licences and buy the kids drink, the police pulled two up a fortnight ago who were about 12 or 13 years old. They had a carrier bag full of cans of beer”.

On the other hand:

“Yes I’m happy it’s quite a good area [the Ford Estate], kids play football against the fence, which makes me a bit worried about the plants. Sometimes it’s alright, it’s not every day”

In a number of estates in the city, illegal car parking and problems accessing their homes or finding car park spaces near their homes was identified as a major problem for most of the people with disabilities. The provision of additional disabled car parking places near to high-rise blocks and the marking of disabled only parking bays near to the homes of Gentoo tenants who have a disability was identified as priority by those that took part in the people with disabilities focus group meeting:

“It’s a nice square where we live in the centre of Pennywell. We’ve got a few bad neighbours, I paid a few hundred pounds to get my drive done and I can never get my car in or out of the drive because neighbours park in front of it. When you ask them to move them, you just get a load of abuse”.

“School Road is bad; it’s a very narrow street. People actually park on the pavement which is illegal, but you’ve got to because cars just really can’t get through, it’s horrendous to get lorries or any delivery vehicles through. It’s really bad”.

“The thing is, when you’re coming through as well, you have the big Pennywell School at the top so we get delivery wagons and people parking on each side”.

“The thing is with the ‘Towers’ at Lakeside, there’s not enough parking spaces anyway, for residents, even though I’m disabled, I cannot usually get near the tower block to get parked. I’ve asked the housing people if they’d mark me out a proper disabled bay/private parking, I’ve even said I’d pay for it myself, if they would allow it. They can’t do it because there are not enough parking spaces. Sometimes I’ve come home from shopping and I’ve had to go to the towers across the street and park there. I’ve been onto the housing people [Gentoo] for years but they say they can’t do anything”.

Of course, dealing with illegal parking and the allocation of disabled parking spaces is not a matter for Gentoo directly, but this is one of those issues that Gentoo could perhaps do more to help with through partnership working.

The issues associated with young people hanging around the local shops and under-age drinking in public areas were also highlighted by mothers with young children. Mainly for these reasons, tenants with families were generally unhappy with living in the Millfield, Ford and Thorney Close areas.

“Shops – kids drinking outside, they ask you to go in and buy alcohol. Shops are ok, but the people around them are the problem, its worse at weekends and evenings. Both girls and boys from age 5-20, all hanging around the shops”.

“...feel intimidated, they’re [young people around the local shops] always drinking and taking drugs. Police don’t seem to deal with the problems. The police seem to just befriend them”

In addition, one tenant with a young family noted a number of problems associated with living in the Millfield area:

“Rubbish outside the shops. Council are a disgrace. Missing road signs and road markings. Traffic, St Mark’s road, the speed of cars, 30 mph but people go 90-100 mph. Other neighbours don’t look after their houses; I’ve got mice because of the local shops rubbish and neighbours. Neighbours make me feel uncomfortable; they just throw the litter out the front door onto the street. One neighbour bought a trolley home and left it outside the house; kids played in it and damaged cars in the process”.

Once again, most of these issues are not the direct responsibility of Gentoo, but the impact on the quality of life of their tenants is considerable.

For the elderly, the disabled and families with young children, the demons of the piece are ‘young people’ who are seen to be drinking, fighting, taking drugs, throwing

litter about, damaging cars and generally disrupting the peace. Many young people, however, are on the front line of all of this activity, but on the same side of the line as older residents. Whilst the young people's focus group noted that they liked the areas that they lived in, they experienced problems going out into their area due the activities of gangs of other young people – which negatively affected their ability to spend time out in the area and their personal safety. With regard to the Ashbrook area, for example, young people were largely negative about their perceptions of the quality of life in the area. Some of the focus group participants noted their concerns about the safety of themselves and other young people in the area:

“You get worried and start to feel like you can't go out, because there are gangs, and if you're by yourself”.

“... lads put one of my mates in hospital yesterday. They stamped on his head for him making a small comment. People get physically beaten up”.

Young people interviewed identified the following neighbourhoods as problematic areas with a poor quality life: Ashbrook, Thorney Close, and Downhill. When referring to Thorney Close, young people noted that there were two parts to the area: “The Top” (which was deemed to be a quiet and a relatively attractive area) and “the Bottom” which was deemed to be a highly problematic area. “The Top” was the part of the Thorney Close area that had seen the development of new private sector housing. The young people when referring to “The Bottom” were very concerned about their personal safety in the area and the link between problematic groups / gangs of young people and under-age drinking:

“Well yes because there are always loads of problems with kids and that”.

“It's when you get one person in a group who's drunk and they just try and start on anyone they see. Especially when the school's finished, it's even worse. The schools finish tomorrow and it's going to be proper hectic”.

“It's because they've got nothing else to do during summer”.

Young people also noted that there was little for them to do locally within the Thorney Close area. Relatively few of the young people from the Thorney Close area stated that they used the local youth centre and that the local youth club was only used by younger children. As a result the area around the local shops became the focus of local young people with nothing to do:

“You get hassle from them [young people aged under 18] asking you to buy them beer and that”.

“Yes, and if someone asks you to buy them beer and you say no, that's when you get more hassle. If you say that you won't go into the shop for fags and stuff, they start swearing at you and giving you loads of abuse”.

There was consensus about this experience in the focus group but young people were very negative in their comments regarding their experiences of living in the Thorney

Close area in particular. Two respondents imparted particularly negative experiences of life in the area, one of whom had chosen to become homeless rather than remain living in Thorney Close as a Gentoo tenant:

“When you’re young, all the young kids expect that they can come into your flat and have parties there. When you say no, they just get drunk and toss bricks through the windows. When you tell the council and asked to be moved, they say no because they say you have to wait till you stop getting your windows put through. You can’t really go out to them and say, ‘excuse me, can you stop putting my windows through because I want to move’. I think there needs to be more people about, maybe on a patrol. Not necessarily police.”

“My son’s four [years of age] and I had a wheelie bin put through my front window whilst he was sitting on the chair. That happened three weeks ago and I’ve been homeless ever since. I’ve had to get a support worker to help me, and they’re really good, but like I say, the trouble is trying to find somewhere to sleep each night ... I had to leave because my windows were getting put out, I also got burgled twice, once when I wasn’t there and once when I was in bed and I woke up, so they ran off. The council wouldn’t move us, so I thought that’s it. I moved out, but left all my stuff there and I was staying at my parents and my windows were still getting put out and all my furniture was getting stolen, so the police put an alarm in so I couldn’t actually get into the property myself as well, so I would have to call the police if I wanted to get in, and the council would have to come out with them to let me in. That went on for about two months. I was still paying full rent for it and they wouldn’t move us, so I just gave the flat up, went private and then ended up going back to the council and now I’m living in Springwell”.

Similarly, a young person living in the Downhill area noted:

“It [Downhill] is a bad place, it’s really bad. It’s not just young kids messing about, its adults fighting. My mate, he’s just come out of hospital after having plates put into his jaw because about four nineteen year olds jumped on his head”.

“I’ve had my bathroom window smashed. That was because two kids were outside trying to steal a van that had already been stolen. They were throwing stones at its window and one went through my window”.

The picture of these young people, caught between 14 year olds demanding cigarettes and alcohol and 19 year old ‘adults’ jumping on their heads, may not be generalisable across the city and it may not even be representative of the areas identified. It does suggest, however, that wherever these problems exist, young people are bearing the brunt of it. And none of the areas discussed above are seen as the worst parts of the city. Tenants that took part in the focus groups identified the following locations as the areas that they would least want to move to in the City: Pennywell, Southwick, Hendon, High Ford Estate, and Ford Estate. In particular, across all of the key groups that took part in the focus group meetings identified Pennywell, Southwick and Hendon as the least undesirable locations to live in within the City. These views were largely due to negative perceptions of the people that live in these areas, perceptions

of high crime levels and images of neglect and decline. These are the most stigmatised parts of Sunderland and they correspond with high levels of deprivation.

“It’s [Pennywell] worse than Castletown – the people that live there, it’s derelict, houses have been boarded up, children go and set fire to the empty houses, there’s lots of vandalism”.

“It’s [Hendon] rough, because of the drugs and people. You wouldn’t dare go out and leave your house. You would just be in your house 24/7. I think it all depends in Hendon on where you live as well because there are some bits in Hendon that are nice, but the houses are private. But there are some bits like at the bottom of the square which are really rough, but it all depends on where you live and who you know”.

“Drugs and drink, all people breaking windows and stuff. Hendon’s really rough, all the people that live down there think they’re invincible”.

“It’s really rough down there [Hendon]; I think the police try to keep away from it as well”.

“It’s not Hendon itself; it’s the people living there. They could be burglars, smack heads, they could be anything. They all seem to be in Hendon. I know you do still have them dotted all over the place, but you tend to find most of them in Hendon”.

“You tend to find a lot of houses you get offered in Hendon. Normal people who just want to keep themselves to themselves will just say no straight away, but druggies who already live in squalors and don’t care, they all go there”.

“I wouldn’t live in Hendon because every time you go out, you’d be likely to get stabbed or murdered. You wouldn’t dare leave your house in case you got broken into. I lived in Pennywell from when I was born, and we just had both left right and centre while we lived there. Broken into, one night we were watching Sky and someone stole the Sky dish off the side of the house. I was in bed one night and someone lifted the front window out and broke in and stole everything from out of the house”.

“There isn’t a problem as such with the area itself, but mainly the people that have dragged the [Pennywell] area down. My mom and dad, when they got their house in Pennywell, they had to fight for it because it was a luxury back then, but over the years, it’s just gotten worse and worse, because of the families that were moving into the area”.

In spite of these problems, many of the tenants that took part in the focus group were generally positive about Gentoo’s and the Police’s response to nuisance behaviour reports from local residents:

“We’ve contacted Gentoo and got put in touch with the nuisance department. I have talked to at least two culprits and the parents in question. I basically got to the point where they think that their sons are complete angels, and basically this

child can do no wrong. We sent letters, I got promised CCTV installed within the house to monitor the situation. This has never happened. I had a whinge to the neighbours next door, and he knows quite a few of the families involved, and I don't know what he said, but it's worked, so I'm not asking too much. They're still around, but they're not hassling me. And generally the attitude of the group has changed. I've made numerous calls to 101 which is the new nuisance helpline; we've had the police out several times. I know some of the police by their first names. So on that front it's been really frustrating".

"We do get the odd youths hanging around, but I've noticed just lately there's been a nuisance van driving around, because we had a lot of problems with people on motorbikes going up the back alleys. Over the last couple of months we are getting a van that's starting to weave its way round the estate because obviously there's a problem with where they're all congregating, because there's nothing in our village for them. ...But since the van's been going round, things seemed to have calmed down a bit to what it was, it's a lot quieter".

For these residents, things have been getting better, but the issues with young people continue to dominate the lives of residents in certain areas. As we suggested earlier, there are opportunities for Gentoo to work more closely with the voluntary and community sectors to try to deal with these issues. There are other matters in certain areas, however, that are outside Gentoo's responsibility but which are creating considerable frustration for Gentoo tenants. These matters call for a different type of partnership with other organisations.

Some residents, for example, were particularly critical of the quality of the street cleaning service provided by Sunderland City Council, and the lack of any effective response by the Council to concerns raised by local residents. One resident felt that there was a contradiction between Gentoo's requirement that they look after their homes as tenants but Gentoo and the Council do not take care of the wider area over which tenants have no control. Indeed, one focus group participant stated that the poor state of the area meant that they would not publicly admit to living in the Southwick area:

"But one big thing that I have noticed, and I've been on to Sunderland cleansing department, is I don't think they know where Southwick is. I have been up there umpteen times, I have had the man sitting there to the point where he's gone, please god let her go home. Kwik Save has closed down, the market is still open, I'm going to take pictures and have them published. You can go down there and you can actually sweep up and fill a tip. This is disgusting, because at the bottom of the road runs the river and the rats are there. Nobody's taking any notice of me, I have tried with SHG [Gentoo] office, and I've been up to the civic centre. They always say they'll get somebody down. When are they going to get somebody down? It's absolutely disgusting, and I think to myself, if somebody asks me where I live, I lie and tell them I live at Seaburn. I'm not going to tell them. SHG [Gentoo] want you to keep your houses nice. So does the civic centre, but they're not doing anything about keeping the outside nice, and we live on the outside, just as much as we live on the inside, lets be honest about this, we spend a lot of time on the outside, and if we've got to walk up the road and kick tomatoes,

potatoes and plastic bags and food containers that come from the take-aways, that's disgusting. Southwick is off the map!"

"I'm lead to believe, I think I'm right in saying, the garden is part of the tenancy. Your garden should be kept in order. The point is you can try as hard as you want to keep your garden decent, you can look round the corner and there are weeds, it's overgrown, people don't care".

On a similar issue another tenant referred to the poor response from Gentoo staff to the problem of litter in the Southwick area:

"They don't seem to listen to a single person; you need a lot of people to complain".

"My biggest criticism of the housing group [Gentoo] and I've had numerous discussion with various neighbours, is that if you want to get anything done, you have to be bolshy. You have to be able to fight the system and if you don't have that strength or you don't understand the system, or you trust them to do it first time, then it doesn't get done, or to be blunt, you're screwed!"

Neither of these issues is directly the statutory responsibility of Gentoo. Nevertheless, because of their importance for their tenants, these are issues that the organisation would want to address through the Council, possibly through support for community-based organisations. It was also suggested that there should be a specific external advocacy organisation that could trouble-shoot problems where there has been a lack of response from Gentoo on tenant concerns. Such an organisation was thought to be needed in areas where there was no active residents or tenants association operating, a point that was particularly emphasised by tenants with disabilities. However, community-based organisations that understood the respective responsibilities of Gentoo and the Council might be more appropriate for building social infrastructure.

9.3 Community Facilities & Activities

Key findings:

- Older residents were very satisfied with the social / community facilities located nearby their homes. In particular, the owner-occupier residents of the of the new build bungalow housing in the Castletown area, were very satisfied with the local community facility built and funded by Gentoo:

*"We like this centre [*****], there's a certain amount of us who use it, we've been on a couple of trips and enjoy coming in here. So when the dark nights start, we'll probably have more on. We're all here; we're a good little community".*

"We've got a full week, coffee morn, afternoon club, over 60 clubs and a British Legion club, bingo, trips out everywhere based around this buildings and others".

Similarly, older tenants living in adult high-rise blocks exhibited high levels of satisfaction with the community facilities and activities available to them within the block:

“We’re alright, we make our own activities. There’s nothing available outside [the tower block] for us to do. We have the natter club, exercise class, bingo. We’ve got lots of activities inside, but nothing outside”.

It was argued that there had been a decline in the range of community facilities and activities project for young children and young parents (in particular a crèche) available at the Thorney Close Sure Start:

“... There used to be loads of groups for the younger kids, there used to be quite a lot to do every day, now there’s just one a week. They’ve shut Home from Home down because they wanted a luxury staff room, so now we miss the space where we used to go with our kids where a lot of parent went because they were depressed or on their own, you had somewhere to go, somewhere you could feel relaxed, where they kids could play. It meant you weren’t just stuck in the house. You were able to make friends. They’ve got no money for courses or anything, but they’ve got money for a leather three piece suite in their staff room. We also used to have the ACA shop, affordable children’s essentials, which was cheaper than the actual shops, its still open but there’s not much stock in there now”.

This is a question about the use of Sure Start resources, which once again is not the responsibility of Gentoo. Nevertheless, as a source of frustration for young families that reflects back on Gentoo, it raises further questions about the approach that Gentoo might take to the development of community-based infrastructure in areas such as Thorney Close.

9.4 Community Interaction and Relations

Key findings:

- Older residents that took part in the focus group meetings were very positive about the extent of community interaction and relationships in their immediate areas. This was particularly the case with residents that lived in the mature residents’ high-rise blocks:

“On the floor we live on, we all get on very well. We know all people by sight, if someone’s missing; we always start to look for them to find out where they are. We all help each other. If we know somebody needs help, we’ll be there”.

- Disabled tenants also felt that community links and relationships were important aspects of their quality of life in the area that they lived in:

“I’m a single mom with a toddler and I live in a square with a lot of families. I’ve got a good relation with neighbours who on occasion have been invaluable, when you need those five minutes, you can’t just leave a four year old alone”.

“I’ve got the best neighbours in the world. I moved here five years ago and I didn’t know anybody. The next door neighbour came in, helped me to put my furniture right, put my curtains up. She comes in once a fortnight and washes my windows for me, she doesn’t ask for anything. When I go away to visit my daughter or into hospital, she has the keys, and she looks after the place, and they are absolutely super. I’ve got no problems whatsoever”.

9.5 Satisfaction with Gentoo and Key Agency Services

Whilst the tenants were generally happy with the quality of the service delivered by Gentoo, a number of negative comments were made with regard to some aspects of Gentoo’s service delivery. Older tenants, for example, raised a number of concerns regarding design faults associated with the refurbishment of their flats, in particular the failure to include disability friendly improvement works. Also it was noted that there had been some basic design problems associated with the development of the new bungalows:

“They [the Gentoo building contractors] moved the pull cords - used to be above your bed, but they’ve taken them away and put them behind the door, so they’re difficult to get to if you’re in bed. So, there are one or two design faults, No learning from past design mistakes. Yes, and they put [electrical power points] in the middle of the walls too instead of at the end. This is the first block of flats they’d renovated, but they never learnt from the mistakes because they’ve done all of the other flats exactly the same. You go into Dock Street or Church Street and they’re exactly the same as ours when you go into the individual flats. It looks like they’ve been done by cowboys on a budget. In the kitchens, there’s a radiator behind the door, so if you want to pull the washing machine out to clean, you have to get a plumber out to get the radiator taken off, then put back on again afterwards”.

“There is one thing that I’ve found with the bungalows. When they installed the kitchens, they put the cabinets on the walls and when people open the doors, the can only reach the bottom shelf. The wall cupboards in the bungalows are too high, elderly people can’t stretch and reach up, they shrink and their spine crumbles down and they just can’t reach. The kitchen design needs looking at. Quite a lot of people had to get rid of their cookers because there are cookers there already, you can’t bring your own, especially if it’s bigger than the usual standard size”.

- Only one of the disabled tenants that took part in the focus group meeting was very dissatisfied with the quality of the repairs service provided by Gentoo and in particular, the lack of consideration of the needs of her young toddler whilst major repair work was being undertaken on her home. This tenant was particularly aggrieved that she had not been offered alternative temporary accommodation (given her disabled status and the fact that she had a four year old child in the home) whilst the repair had been undertaken:

“I’ve found SHG [Gentoo] extremely frustrating to deal with. Promises were not kept, it demanded phone calls every day, letters etc. There was also one repair

issue which I thought was handled quite badly. My house started to fall down, basically. The previous tenant had removed a supporting wall and it was not me. There was a problem, even though an inspector came out with a pen through where my wall should have joined my bedroom ceiling. I then had steel rafters in my front room with a four year old for a good month and a half, possibly two months. When I made a comment on the safety of this with a toddler running about where you cannot always say 'can you please walk at a snails pace'. Their solution was to put the foam you get round boilers, round the steel rafters. I then went on holiday and had arranged access to the house because I did not want to be there when the work was carried out, because the upshot was that it had actually sunk so badly that they were going to have to put in a support beam through the outside of the house and ram it in up to the kitchen to put the pillars in to support the actual beam”.

However, the problem was resolved whilst she was away on holiday through the work of a particular housing officer who had sorted out the bureaucracy associated with scheduling the repair work. In this case, therefore, the problem was ultimately resolved, but it points to a broader issue about what happens with young children when renovation or repairs are being carried out. Tenants with young families were generally critical of the repairs service delivered by Gentoo and the lack of consideration given by the company to the position of families with young children when ‘emergency repairs’ are required:

“When they [Gentoo] came to mine I had a nine week old baby, so you can imagine the mess. It was just horrendous, you’ve got electricians coming in, and they don’t tell you when they’re coming. The water was off all day, there was a gas leak in the house and they were trying to say it was my fault because it was my cooker and that it wasn’t them. It was just a nightmare”.

“The repairs could be sorted out a lot quicker though, because my boiler has been going off several times and every time you phone they say it’s not an emergency. No hot water or heat in the winter, they just give you a five day ticket. But to me heating and hot water is an emergency when you’ve got small children”.

“We’ve got a gas pipe in ours [home] coming from the front door into the passageway, the gas pipe is hanging down, and they won’t even come and move that. Our daughter’s at the age when she’s climbing all over everything now, but what if she pulls it off?”

A key point made by some of the tenants with disabilities was that Gentoo should have enough information on the disabilities affecting its customers, and therefore should be able to customise its services (such as the provision of newsletters, home visits, repairs services to meet the individual needs of its customers). It was felt that Gentoo needs to pay greater attention to the specific needs of its tenants and not adopt a standard approach to everyone:

“That’s the problem, there’s no two disabled people the same, even if they have the same disability. I had Polio as a child, if you had a load of Polio people together, we would all have similar physical disabilities, but we would all be different. Part of the problem is people’s attitude towards disability; they

[Gentoo] don't seem to take it into consideration that there are no two disabled people the same. You cannot say that that is a standard size, it's just not on; you can't get away with it".

A related issue for tenants with disabilities was a lack of a customised 'handyman' service from Gentoo with regard to helping them maintain their property:

"I live in Ashbrooke, they're all Victorian houses made into flats; my problem is decorating because I've got 15-foot ceilings. Now I can't climb up that far, so if I want to decorate or want curtains changed, I've got to get somebody in who's willing to climb up a ladder to do it. You just can't do it ... Well we did ask if they could be a handyman service for our area because of the high ceilings etc. We were told it could possibly be on the cards, but that was three years ago. But, if you're a week late with your rent, they're on the phone to you and you get a letter..."

"I have to be honest; I clean the inside of the windows as best as I can, but can't reach the outside, so I leave them. Thank goodness for the wet weather. If I was to have an accident, there would be nobody to look after my daughter [aged 4 years]".

This is related to the barriers experienced by disabled people when trying to achieve Excellent Customer Status if there is no flexibility in local interpretations of what is required and a significant proportion of the people with disabilities that took part in the focus group meetings stated that they would be willing to pay for a Gentoo 'handyman' service that would assist them with maintaining their property and doing small home improvement jobs:

"There is a [handyman] support service starting out, but as that lady pointed out, it's for people aged over 60, but I've told them that there are plenty of tenants who are under 60, who need the support, and can we extend it. I still haven't had an answer and that was four weeks ago".

However, the call for a handyman service went beyond the elderly and the disabled. In addition, young people stated that they would also benefit from the availability of a 'handyman' service through Gentoo. However, there appears to be some confusion over the nature and extent of the current service:

"When your young, not many people know how to do DIY, it's fortunate that I do. You get what's called a handyman. Say you needed help rewiring a light, you're told to get the handyman out to do it for you. You phone them, and they claim to know nothing about it. I've actually got the leaflets at home with the details of the service, but you phone up and they don't know what you're talking about".

"Gentoo send out these leaflets about the handyman service, I think it works a bit like the cleansing service, but it's four times a year instead of two. But when I phoned up, they didn't know anything about it. If you're young and you've got no family or friends, you could end up blowing yourself up if you don't know what you're doing. I think they just do false advertising sometimes".

“My garden’s like a football pitch and the grass is really high. I think that when you’re young, there should be something like a handyman service, something along those lines to support you”.

If you look out of your kitchen window all you can see is rows and rows of weeds. If you don’t do anything about it, it affects your Excellent Customer Status; so you can’t win ... There should be help available for young, vulnerable people. I’ve got a friend who’s been moved in a couple of doors from me. She’s got braces on her legs; they’ve moved her in to an upstairs flat. She’s in a wheelchair, she can’t walk unaided, and they’ve put her into an upstairs flat and they told her she had to do her garden herself ...”

In this last case, the person referred to was young and disabled but there did appear to be a demand for this type of service from young people in general. However, it was also clear that not all of those who wanted the service were willing to pay for it.

Young people noted that they faced difficulties in accessing the types of homes in the areas that they wanted from Gentoo, due to problems with the operation of the choice-based lettings system. In particular, focus group participants noted that there were particular problems faced by young people with children in accessing suitable housing. The main issue is the size of accommodation that is available:

“We already had a flat off SHG but then our daughter was born and we had to wait sixteen months before we could move into a two bedroom house”.

The flats that we live in are boxes; they’re not very big in any way. You can’t even get a wardrobe into the bedroom; you’ve got to convert the cupboard into the wardrobe.

“There’s just not room [in the Gentoo flats] for useful things like tumble dryers, there’s no storage. It’s quite small. Then you get young couples being offered a three bedroom house when they’ve got no kids. Because it’s that choice based lettings now so if someone’s been waiting for say five years. They get offered places, but sometimes say no, but it shouldn’t work like that. Especially if you’ve had a child”.

Young people also raised a number of concerns regarding the quality and amount of support that they receive from Gentoo once they are allocated a property. However, the role of Gentoo’s Housing Support Officers was highly valued by the young people that took part in the focus group meetings. The perception that young people have of these workers, however, is that they are supporting them against the system:

“If it wasn’t for our support worker, we would be still in the flat. Our support worker fought and fought and managed to get us a house”.

“Mine [Gentoo Support Worker] was really good, when I was living in the hostel, the day I was supposed to sign the papers for my flat, my godfather died, so I was over at their house and she actually came over to my godmother’s house to pick me up from there and then dropped me off again. She did everything for me, she

sorted my rent out, sorted my gas and electricity out, she did everything. She managed to get me the new flat where I am now. Once I'd been there for about a month or so, she was happy with the way I was so she decided to close me off, but said to me that she was still there if I needed her".

"I've got a [Gentoo] support worker who's fantastic and is finding out as much as she can for me, whereas Gentoo never seem to be able to tell me anything. My support workers is trying to get me slotted in somewhere, but what they're now saying is that it could take two years to get the modernisations done, even though they told us it would be done at the end of the year. I moved in March and was told that it would be modernised by the end of the year, but the appliances in my kitchen are all on one side, so if I'm cooking something, I can't open the freezer door. The bathroom, I'm trying to do my best with, but there's a funny smell which is coming from the walls, but that smell won't go until all the walls have been re-plastered. I can't even get about in the kitchen because I've got all my appliances down one end of the kitchen. I can't move in there and I'm stressing out about it and they're still telling me they cannot do anything about it".

"When I first moved in, obviously I'd never lived on my own before, I didn't have a clue what to do. When I picked my flat keys up, she [a Gentoo Support Worker] came to the flat with me and got my gas meter sorted out, my electricity sorted out, helped me tidy all of my kitchen, she even offered to help me paint, but luckily I had enough hands. I've got a new support worker now who is finding out about all the modernisations, because if I just phones up one of the housing managers and asked them, they'd say they didn't know anything about it, because they don't like the aggravation of it all".

"The support workers are just excellent. ... I've been homeless now for about three weeks, I have got something sorted, but they've done everything for me. They've helped me with my child, getting them to and from school. They do everything".

"They [Gentoo Support Workers] sometimes work after hours as well. Everyone's got a file and they do like a risk assessment, because I went on the sick in December with depression, so I'm classes as high risk. So, I'm getting phone calls and call outs just to make sure I was ok, to help you with housing benefit, council tax, they do everything. I thought it was hard to get my first flat, this is now my third flat, I was working with the support workers at the time, and I had a flat within four days. But of course it wasn't the choice based lettings then, and it was in the area I wanted"

One of the young people noted that they had experienced major problems with getting improvement work to their property in a speedy and timely manner and even their Gentoo Support Worker was unable to the issue resolved:

"My [Gentoo] support worker is trying to find things out for me, but even she's struggling. SHG just keep on saying that I'm at the end of the list because the person who was in the property before me, wouldn't let them in to do the modernisations, so I'm the one that's suffering for it because I've moved in.

However, the young people were concerned about the pressures the support workers were under:

“Every support worker has got loads of people to look after”.

“My support worker has got round about fifty people to look after. They’ve just bought in a new support worker, but my support worker has to shadow her on her new ten cases, to say ‘look, this is what we do’. She’s honestly run ragged, I mean she’s excellent, but you can tell she’s so worn out. And she works after hours as well”.

Some of young people that took part in the focus groups were living in Gentoo-managed hostels. Whilst some of the young people valued the support provided by the hostel in helping them to move onto independent living, a significant proportion of the hostel tenants were very critical of the strict management style and points system used (which allows a maximum of three breaches of hostel rules) that could lead to the eviction of the young people:

“The thing is with them [the hostel management] is they keep you on a short leash. For example, if you have your own flat, you could have people over; you could drink and smoke in your house... But you’re not allowed to smoke in the house, you’re not allowed friends in, or friends on the premises, you’re not allowed pets, just loads of stuff like that”

“There’s loads of stuff, there’s a curfew. Sunday till Thursday there’s a curfew till twelve o’clock, but on a Friday and Saturday, its one o’clock, if you come in after that, you’ll get a breech for that. You can sleep out three nights a week, but if you sleep out four, you can get a breech. If you mess about and have a laugh, they breech you for that. ... It’s more like a kids home to be honest with you. ... Its’ not even learning us anything”.

“We are getting treated like kids...You do get evicted for really stupid things. I’ve lived in a B and B, and if you do three things wrong, really stupid things, you get kicked out”.

Finally, we have noted the low level of tenant participation we found in the social survey and we have suggested that there is scope for improving the community-based infrastructure for Gentoo tenants. We have also noted that Gentoo provide a range of opportunities for community involvement and that demand for further involvement in the management of Gentoo’s homes is low at present. In some areas, some of the residents in the focus groups were happy with the extent of public engagement and this was particularly true in the development of the Hahnemann Court scheme by Gentoo:

“I think they’ve [Gentoo] thought a lot about things like disabled parking, it’s all got to be covered. They’ve involved us in the plans and developments. We’re on the steering committee, on the north panel at Cornhill”.

This appears to be a model of good practice that could be extended to other areas.

9.6 Excellent Customer Status

All of the older tenants stated that they had attained Excellent Customer status and had no problems in meeting the criteria for maintaining this status. For these tenants gaining Excellent Customer status was largely an effortless process which did not have any great impact on their lives or lifestyle, as none of the older tenants had any desire to move elsewhere within their local area nor anywhere else in the City. Rather, in the view of the older tenants, Excellent Customer status was merely an official acknowledgement of their responsible patterns of behaviour and living. In the main the older tenants regarded Excellent Customer status as a means of bringing up to standard the lifestyles and patterns of behaviour of other people and groups:

“It [Excellent Customer status] doesn’t mean anything to us. If you’re an excellent customer, you get a share card and you can use it in certain shops and it enables you to get discounts.

“Those of us with the status do it without trying, we’re normal decent people. They’ve [Gentoo] introduced it to make other people raise their standards”.

“It [Excellent Customer status] gets everyone involved in keeping up the standard of the whole area, but doesn’t make that much of a difference as it’s a way of life for us”..

“It [Excellent Customer status] has worked, and it is a good thing, because if they [other tenants] want to move, they’ve got to have excellent status and in that respect it is a good thing. Especially if you want to move into a new build like the new build at Pennywell. Anybody can apply for a choice based letting, but if you’re not an excellent customer, you’ve got no chance”.

“It [Excellent Customer status] gives you more pride in your house really. If you’ve got an excellent status and you want to keep it, you’ve got to abide by the rules; you get an inspection every six months in order to check that the standards are being maintained. If you’ve got it, you also know all your neighbours will have it too. You have pride in where you live”.

None of the older tenants that took part in the focus group stated that they knew any residents that did not have Excellent Customer status. Indeed, it was implied that being an older tenant without the status within the mature resident high-rise block would be seen by some tenants as a stigma, as Excellent Customer status was required before anyone was allocated a property within their tower block:

“We’ve all got it [Excellent Customer status]; we don’t know anybody who hasn’t got it because nobody tends to talk about it [not having Excellent Customer status]”.

People with disabilities, however, were much more critical of the policy of Excellent Customer status. Indeed, one of the people that took part in the focus group which targeted people with disabilities stated that:

“It’s not worth the paper it’s written on. It only works if you’re on the housing waiting list; you just get one a bit quicker. That’s the only way I’ve seen it work”.

A number of disabled tenants stated that having Excellent Customer status made little positive difference to their ability to access housing of their choice:

“I went to look at houses available, and there was a prefab, I thought that would be better because my wife is disabled. I went to see a man about it, he asked what sort of property I was after, and asked if I had excellent customer tenancy, I said yes. He told me it wouldn’t be a problem and just to apply. He said having it will be enough to secure the property. When I went back and applied, they told me I was one of the first 50 applications”.

Many of the disabled tenants that took part in the focus group meeting identified the problems they faced in attaining Excellent Customer status – these mainly focused on difficulties associated with maintaining their home in good order and meeting the strict criteria associated with the scheme:

“You’ve got to have good house keeping, interior and exterior. No rent arrears, no complaints about you. You get a letter to say you have the status and a little booklet with discount coupons in”.

“There are some really weird rules with this. It was advised to me to try to get the excellent tenancy status. Somebody came out, I didn’t hear anything for a while, so I called them up. They informed me that I didn’t get it because I didn’t have carpet laid throughout the house. I just thought it was ridiculous. I don’t want carpet in my bathroom for health and safety reasons”.

“If you have any personal circumstances that might make it difficult to maintain. In my case, working full time, having a small child, and doing various other things. I will be the first to say that nobody gets ill in my house, but it’s not always spick and span. When my child’s friends are round there are four children in the house. I’ve just held my hands up and said that there’s no point in going for it because the hope of getting the house in a perfect state and keeping it like this for 24 hours in those circumstances is unlikely”.

“I think there’s a big difference in being untidy and being dirty. You know, windows are never washed, skirting boards are never wiped down, the place is generally not kept in good order, but you can have clothes lying about, toys lying about, that does not stop you from getting a status. It’s the way you live; you can’t expect to walk into someone’s house and for it to look like a hospital room”.

In addition, a number of disabled tenants noted that there was a lack of flexibility in the application of the Excellent Customer status criteria by Gentoo staff, which potentially meant that the policy would fail to consider the special circumstances faced by people with disabilities:

“The problem is, they [Gentoo] have a list of [Excellent Customer} criteria that you have to meet, and they come along with their little tick boxes and they don’t move either side of what’s on their form”.

Similarly, tenants with young families noted their concerns about Excellent Customer status and particularly the intrusive nature of the home inspections, the financial checks made on tenants associated with the scheme, and the penalties faced by tenants if they miss any housing rent payments over a one year period:

“You’ve got to apply to the council [Gentoo] and they’ve got to go through your bank account for the last year, but if you’ve got any failed direct debits or what have you in the last year, you don’t get it. Your house has got to be immaculate, inside, outside, a bit like a show house.... you’ve got to pay your rent every week, on time. Even if you pay two weeks rent the following week, even though you’re not in arrears, you’ve got to go another year for it to come round again”.

“I agree with them [Gentoo] having a look round your house and asking if you’re paying your bills alright, but I don’t agree with them checking through your bank account, that’s wrong”.

A young single mother currently living in private rented accommodation who had broken up with her husband and was living with her parents at the time of the inspection complained about the intrusion into her parents’ affairs:

“When I was living with my mom and dad when I split up with my husband and I went to the council to apply, they [Gentoo] told me that you get a house a lot quicker if you’ve got excellent customer status. I asked what that entails, and they were actually going to come out to my mom and dad’s bought house and look around their house to see if I was entitled to get it or not. I said there’s no chance because it’s our private house and we’re not having them snooping around our house. My mom and dad eventually agreed to do it, but I couldn’t get a house anyway because my last house had been repossessed because of my ex partner, and now I’ll probably never get a council house because of that”.

Flexibility was also an issue for the mother of a young child who had been in hospital. She had paid her rent the previous day, but it had not gone through the system. Another, struggling with a young child, was refused because not all the boxes were ticked.

“My little girl was in hospital and I paid my rent on the Sunday because she had been really ill and I didn’t want to bring her out of the house. They [Gentoo] knocked on my door on the Monday morning, got me out of bed to collect the rent because they said I hadn’t paid the rent. I told them I had that I’d paid it yesterday. I explained that my daughter had been in hospital and I even showed them my rent receipt. They said that it didn’t show up on their computers, I told them to check properly next time. But if my daughter’s ill, I didn’t want to drag her out because she had been in hospital.... They don’t make allowances or give you much of a chance”.

“I didn’t get mine [Excellent Customer status] because my cooker wasn’t clean. They came in, my whole house was spotless, my baby was eight months old and had been up all night, and I hadn’t cleaned the cooker or kitchen floor. The inspector said I had failed, I asked what on and he said your cooker and floor are

dirty. Normally I would've done it but because the baby had been up I just didn't have time to do it on that day."

For young people, the concept of Excellent Customer Status was not particularly important. Only one of the young people that took part in the focus group meetings had Excellent Customer status at the time when the event took place. However one of the participants had previously attained the status but had lost it due to financial problems:

"I lost mine [Excellent Customer status] from when I went on the sick and my benefits didn't come through for a month or so, so my rent went into arrears, so I lost mine because of that, I'm near enough about to get it back".

The one person who did have the status appreciated the value of having it, in terms of accessing the type of property she might want in her preferred area:

"It all depends on how long you'd been there. Let's say me and my boyfriend wanted to start a family, if you've got Excellent Tenancy status, you've got more chance in getting the house that you want in the area you want It's best to always have it because you never know what's going to happen. You never know if some druggies are going to move in the house down the road, we've had a lot of that lately, so you never know, you might just want to leave one month. If that happens, you're going to want the excellent customer status. To be honest I'm not really that bothered because I'm going to be moving soon anyway, I'm moving off the council [going into private housing]. I think it's good to always have it just in case".

Views about Excellent Customer Status were therefore mixed. For older people, it was natural to have it. For the youngest tenants it was practically irrelevant. For the disabled and for young families, there were issues about flexibility that confirmed what we had been told in the interviews with tenants representatives – that there was an in-built bias against the disabled, the unemployed and other vulnerable groups.

9.7 Views of Young Black and Minority Ethnic People

A special focus group was held with young people from Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities who were not Gentoo tenants, regarding the barriers and difficulties they and their families experienced in accessing Gentoo housing and the areas where the company's properties are concentrated within Sunderland. Most of the young people from BME backgrounds were of Bangladeshi origin and lived in the Hendon and Thornhill areas.

All of the BME young people stated that their housing choices and the areas that they were able to live in were affected by personal safety concerns. In many ways, their experience was similar to that of young white people but, in particular, they had a number concerns about being subjected to racist abuse and attack outside of 'their area' – a small enclave within Hendon - particularly from young white males who were referred to as 'Chavs'. However, they, their friends and family members generally felt safer in the Hendon area, but problems were also experienced around local schools in the Millfield and Thornhill areas:

“All my mates are around [the Hendon area] and it’s a massive Asian community, we don’t get into trouble. Outside of Hendon, there’s loads of racism, when people see you outside they’ll turn round and say black this and this. The other day I was driving and had stopped at the traffic lights and this Chav came up and smashed my window ... He just threw a brick at my window, it cracked and dented my door panel. That happened a couple of weeks ago, I didn’t even see who it was, I just saw white socks and Rockport’s with a Burberry cap on, I just recognised him as a Chav, who else could it be?”

“Parts of Sunderland are alright, I wouldn’t say it’s as bad, but in Hendon, in other parts, apart from the area I live in there’s racism and all sorts. You get a lot of abuse and all sorts. They [mainly young white males] throw stones and bricks at you for no reason”

“Fights happen if you go outside of the local community. You leave the area and problems can arise. Its usually fights with other young white people. Not all the time, but most of the time”.

“Normally the fights happen in Thornhill School near us and it spills out onto the street and the local streets around us. And it continues on from that after school”.

A major difference between the young white and the young Asian experience was that young Asians have taken on the role of defending their elders from racist abuse. They do this, not as victims but as defenders of their communities.

“Family members experience verbal and physical abuse too. At this point, I won’t let my dad travel anywhere else or go anywhere else on his own [outside of the Hendon area]. The only place he’d walk is to the mosque, town centre or school. We’re fortunate because the schools quite near plus the town’s not far either. In terms of town, you might get abuse but you wouldn’t get as much because there are a lot of people, so you wouldn’t really get physical abuse, so I don’t mind him going to town. Other than that I wouldn’t feel safe letting my parents go anywhere other than town and the mosque, even if it was just to the park, unless he was with me. I don’t feel safe letting, my dad go. If my dad went to the park [Mulberry Park and Barnes Park], I’d be 99% sure he’d get some sort of abuse”.

“Millfield, the school is a problem. Barnes and Eden Vale are also problems. Often the elderly [Asian] people walking past the groups of drinking Chavs get verbal abuse or attacked. There’s always about 20/30 Chavs sitting down drinking, and when the Muslim elderly people are walking home from the Mosque, they walk that way and they get stones thrown at them and stuff like that. If there’s ever a gang of them they mostly physically attack. We either have to run or fight back, but the elderly people can’t do that”.

It was noted that the movement of young Asian women within the Hendon area (and across Sunderland as a whole) was particularly curtailed by fears of racist abuse and attack:

“Women don’t feel safe outside because they wear their head scarves. Even the women get abuse. If they’re walking down the streets, they’d get battered to death, it’s not safe”.

They [young Asian women] wouldn’t even walk around by themselves, even in the areas that are safe. They just wouldn’t walk about much. With the boys, even in places that don’t feel safe like the parks, we’d probably still go there, but they’d go in a group. Sisters go out less than us.

Pallion, Pennywell and the Ford estate (except the Ashbrooke area) were identified as ‘no-go’ areas for BME residents to visit or live in. One of the focus group participants stated:

“For myself, I don’t know about the rest of the lads but I wouldn’t dare to go to other areas unless I was in my car”.

“I wouldn’t go there by myself [Pallion, Pennywell & the Ford Estate] because I’d get beaten up. Some parts of Thornhill are safe areas, but Pennywell and Ford Estate; I wouldn’t go there by myself”.

[Visiting Pallion]: *“You’ll probably get stabbed; you’re taking your life into your own hands. There is a petrol station in Pallion and the other day on a Saturday in broad day light, there was a stabbing. During the day, people weren’t even drunk yet!”*

The BME young people stated that they felt that their housing choices were significantly limited by personal safety concerns. They were only able to identify three areas where they would consider moving to outside of Hendon. These areas were Thornhill, Ashbrook and High Barnes.

None of the BME young people stated that their housing choices had been affected by Gentoo’s massive investment in new housing and modernisation work in the Ford, East End and Pennywell areas. They were not convinced that the investment would change the culture of these areas. In this sense, they were reflecting the minority view of some of the Gentoo staff and resident representatives about the difficulties of bringing about cultural change in spite of evident improvements brought about by the removal of the worst of the anti-social residents:

“because the atmosphere wouldn’t change, there would still be the same people and you’d get the same message when you go there, same environment”.

“If there was more police or education of the local people; that would help. They need to spend more on the people, educating them. Everyone’s from different backgrounds, that doesn’t mean they’re different from you, it doesn’t mean they’re bad. If you don’t educate the people, it doesn’t matter about millions they spend on housing. It’s not about the houses or buildings, its all about the people. In Hendon there were some new houses built, but the trouble’s still there even though the houses still look nice”.

“You know that their spending loads of money on doing up the houses, there’s no point because the houses will just get damaged and burnt because there are always arson attacks in the East End and Pennywell, there’s stabbings, burned down houses, so I don’t think there’s any point”.

The BME young people stated that whilst they wanted to mix and interact more with people from other parts of Sunderland this was limited by the dangers associated with moving outside of their immediate area. Within their own neighbourhood they expressed the same concerns that we heard in other parts of the city about facilities for the young. They noted the lack of facilities for young people in their area and had to spend their own resources in undertaking activities such as football, pool etc. Indeed, the local Asian youth club (Young Asian Voices) was forced to move from venue to venue to provide activities for them. The absence of a local dedicated centre for Asian young people was identified as a major problem.

10. Summary and Conclusions

10.1 Background

This is the first stage of a longitudinal study that seeks to analyse the wider social and economic impact of large-scale housing investment in Sunderland and to develop a methodology that can be used by government agencies and other organisations involved in improving well-being and quality of life in deprived communities. It has its roots in another piece of research carried out for Optima Community Association in Birmingham, funded by the Housing Corporation's Innovation and Good Practice Programme, which found that there was no methodology for measuring the broader impacts of large-scale housing investment. The Optima study proposed an outline of a methodology that the Sunderland study sought to implement and test.

Through the investigation of the relationships between secondary data available from a variety of government agencies and primary data gathered by surveys, interviews and focus groups, we were looking to create a model baseline analysis for measuring the impact of Gentoo Group's £600 million investment in Sunderland's social housing, following the transfer of more than 36,000 housing units from Sunderland City Council in 2001. From the beginning we were clear that we were not looking for causal relationships between variables at this time but, using both quantitative and qualitative information in a methodology that was both empirical/scientific and interpretative, we intended to refine and test the viability of the Optima model. In addition, the social and economic impact of Gentoo's work is not just a matter of their investment in the physical housing stock, but depends on their collaboration with other agencies that have primary responsibility for services such as education, health, crime reduction and employment.

There is a consensus across government departments that there is a need for evidence-based policy. There is also agreement that there is a need for multi-agency working to tackle problems in deprived communities. There is however, little evidence of the impact of multi-agency working on deprived communities beyond case studies of good practice, which are mainly anecdotal. In multi-agency working, evidence has to be shared and this is happening between front-line professionals within the constraints imposed by the need for client confidentiality. For resource allocation purposes, however, this information sharing needs to be formalised. If we are concerned with creating sustainable communities, it needs to be formalised at the level of the community or the neighbourhood. Depending on local issues, different combinations of agency collaboration are needed in different neighbourhoods. A key question, therefore, was whether the model could be adapted to provide evidence that would allow the agencies responsible for housing, education, health, crime reduction and employment to collaborate more effectively at a neighbourhood level.

There are two sets of overall conclusions in this report. The first points to national and regional issues for government and the second is concerned more specifically with what has happened with Gentoo and housing in Sunderland over the past seven years. The national and regional issues are mainly concerned with evidence-based policy for the creation of sustainable communities.

10.2. The Policy Context

The most recent policy statement of the Department for Communities and Local Government indicates that the key components of the new policy are likely to be that every place is different, that there will be local priorities and that local communities will be involved in shaping their own futures. Local councils will provide strategic and political leadership to key local partners and they will have a specific responsibility to engage with and empower local communities. No one will be disadvantaged by where they live, communities will have power to influence the things that matter to them most and citizens will be able to shape the services that are most important for them. Social housing is at the heart of this vision and, in response to the Housing and Regeneration Bill, one of the main aims of the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will be to support the creation, regeneration and development of communities. Working with local authorities within strong regional frameworks, the HCA will not only support the empowerment agenda but will also seek to develop more effective forms of investment in communities and create more thriving communities through an integrated approach to investment.

Since 1999, the Government has also been committed to evidence-based policy. A key assumption of this project is that this commitment applies not only to national policy but also at the regional, local and neighbourhood levels. Local policy should be informed by evidence at an appropriate scale. However, if the delivery of sustainable communities is to be based on local partnerships, evidence needs to be gathered that will serve inter-agency collaboration, particularly in the fields of housing, health, employment, education, crime and social welfare. The complex interaction of these variables is reasonably well understood at a national level, but there is little systematic knowledge of how they relate to each other and interact to affect the lives of people in specific neighbourhoods. Some of the evidence exists in different government departments and in different local and regional agencies, but there is no common, agreed method for collating, storing and analysing it. This is particularly important for evidence that is relevant for neighbourhood regeneration or any other policy that seeks to challenge the so-called 'post-code lottery' in spatial units below the level of the local authority.

The relationship between social science indicators is complex, but this relationship is obscured by different custom and practice in different government agencies. Creating sustainable communities through evidence-based policy requires clear national and regional policies for gathering and analysing information at a neighbourhood level. Inter-agency consistency in knowledge gathering and dissemination is a prerequisite for empowering communities. It is clear that CLG's Neighbourhood Statistics, as they are presently constituted, are not fit for this purpose. The Census information can be reconstituted at the level of neighbourhoods, but it is out of date. Other information cannot be aggregated to neighbourhood boundaries, as understood by either local managers or residents. The question is whether at a regional or local level the situation is any better.

Sunderland lags behind the Region, which in turn lags behind the rest of the country, in terms of social and economic indicators relating to economic activity, employment, education, qualifications, health, earning capacity and the value of houses. In this context, regional policy stresses the need to support people in deprived communities

to take up employment opportunities by promoting job opportunities in these areas, improving basic and key skills, encouraging businesses to engage and providing support services such as childcare. To achieve inclusive economic growth, people's aspirations will be raised and social capital will be developed. The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) recognises that a robust evidence base is required to underpin its Action Plan and, in response to the Government's empowerment agenda, One NorthEast promises to concentrate on the most deprived communities.

There is, however, no indication of what constitutes a community in this context, no coherent framework for gathering social and economic data from the range of agencies that will be involved in delivering sustainable communities, and what community-based evidence might be appropriate to tackle the priority target groups of incapacity benefit claimants, those with disabilities, offenders and ex-offenders, lone parents, women returners, carers, older people, younger people and BME groups. The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) sets out a number of social objectives for delivering sustainable communities, but in setting out the content of the Annual Monitoring Report, there is no mention of these social objectives, nor of the impact of policy on the spatial distribution of investment. For both the RES and the RSS, the concept of 'community' appears to be confounded with 'local authority' and responsibility is passed down. The need for multi-agency collaboration in achieving sustainable communities is recognised, but the question of evidence that would support this and the consequences for monitoring outcomes at the neighbourhood level are assumed to be un-problematical. The concept of community is vague, the question of shared evidence to support inter-agency working at a neighbourhood level is ignored, the role of social housing in meeting social objectives is marginalised, and the spatial redistribution of services to meet an acknowledged changing population structure is not considered, except in the context of new housing developments.

In the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS), the problem of evidence is recognised but the responsibility for gathering and analysing information is passed on to others. The RHS recognises that the creation of sustainable communities call for a holistic approach that integrates housing strategies with community and neighbourhood renewal strategies; and that community and neighbourhood-based strategies should be a key activity for local authorities. Meeting specific community and social needs is seen as being particularly challenging to deliver, because of the number of issues and the number of agencies involved. The lack of robust evidence is acknowledged and the North East Housing Board sees its role as supporting sub-regional housing strategy teams in their role of bringing together the expertise that is needed to address the Supporting People programme and ensuring that housing investments are better aligned with health and social service provision. Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups is a priority, which means the work of different agencies needs to be coordinated and integrated. In summary, the RHS recognises the problem but the responsibility for dealing with it is passed on to the local authorities in the region. The question is whether a local authority that has no responsibility for the delivery of housing can address this responsibility.

Sunderland City Council's Housing Strategy (SHS) promises to ensure that housing needs and aspirations are identified and that resources are spent on meeting local objectives, for housing is seen as the cornerstone of any sustainable community and integral to ensuring the highest quality of life for residents. Addressing housing issues

is part of creating sustainable communities, which means working in partnership to achieve shared outcomes around health, social care, education, community safety and the local economy. The SHS sets out ten priorities, including dealing with vulnerable people, working in partnership and addressing the respect agenda. Partnership working is the key to delivering the strategy, and a number of partnerships are identified. However, according to the strategy, it is these partnerships that have a responsibility to ensure that the priorities are delivered, monitored and evaluated, rather than the council. Since stock transfer in 2001, in fact, responsibility for achieving the Council's vision has largely fallen to Gentoo. This is a responsibility that Gentoo has embraced, for it has not only invested in social housing but it has also committed resources and staff to activities that address social and economic issues in the city. It is unrealistic, however, to expect Gentoo, or any of the non-statutory partnerships in which it is involved, to be responsible for gathering the evidence for monitoring and evaluating inter-agency collaboration in the delivery of sustainable communities. Gentoo has a role to play, but the problem of evidence affects all the potential partners.

10.3 The Problem of Evidence

There is no overall framework for gathering the data that is required for community-based policy and there are certain conditions that hamper the successful gathering of evidence that can be used for its implementation and evaluation. These conditions relate to gathering, storing, accessing and collating the information.

- The staff who have responsibility for gathering the information do not do so with any rigour. They cannot see the point of gathering it because it does not directly affect their day-to-day job. Much of what is gathered is not used. This is sometimes because what is gathered is so partial and incomplete that it is unusable; and sometimes because it is not needed for any clear organisational purpose.
- It is often held by people who have no interest in or understanding of how it might be used. Policymakers often do not know who has what data and, consequently, it is extremely difficult to track it down.
- When it can be tracked down, it can be difficult to gain access to it for other reasons. These include genuine reasons relating to data protection and privacy but this is often used as an excuse for the bureaucratic preservation of knowledge and power or the hiding of information to avoid political embarrassment. It can also be difficult for commercial reasons, where government encourages its agencies to charge for information that should be freely in the public domain for the purposes of non-commercial research and policy analysis.
- When information can be accessed from different agencies, it is difficult to collate it. Different organisations use different spatial units of analysis and these units change over time. The Census moved from the use of Enumeration Districts to Output Areas in 2001, Sunderland's wards were reconfigured in 2004 and some organisations have not yet responded to these changes. Others

have information based on postcodes and most have management areas that are not based on any rational use of the changing national geographies.

- Some of the information that is available is technically good, but out of date. Others have information that does not address the spatial unit of interest, especially in relation to communities and neighbourhoods. This is particularly true of data that is presented in Lower Super Output Areas, such as in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

Where collaboration requires that useful information can be shared by a variety of delivery agencies in deprived neighbourhoods, these issues are particularly problematical. Partial and out-of-date information, based on different geographies, is obscured by organisational culture and is extremely difficult to collate, even when it is made available.

There are pockets of poverty in affluent local authorities all across the country and within affluent wards in many authorities there are pockets of deprivation that are hidden from sight. Because of the way that information is gathered and organised, resources do not focus on these hidden areas. The situation with the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) has improved since 2000, when analyses were carried out at the ward level, but there are still difficulties with the use of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in 2004.

In 2004, Sunderland was ranked the 22nd worst local authority in England for deprivation, placing it in the bottom 7%. Four of the city's LSOAs were in the bottom 1%. Of these, two were in Southwick, the worst ward in Sunderland in 2000, but the other two LSOAs were in wards that did not appear in the bottom 20% of the most deprived wards in the country. Of the worst 10 LSOAs in Sunderland in 2004, only five were located within the four most deprived wards. The ward is clearly a highly unreliable spatial unit for identifying where action on deprivation is most needed.

Within the study area, there were 11 LSOAs that fall within the 3% most deprived in England. Three of these straddle ward boundaries. More importantly, however, most of the LSOAs cover more than one neighbourhood and of the 11 most deprived, two involve four Gentoo Management areas and a further four cover three management areas. That is, the LSOAs are too crude for neighbourhood analysis purposes and, consequently, inadequate for the management of areas of deprivation.

The evidence that is available at the LSOA level is better than was available previously, for it gets us closer to where inter-agency activity is needed. However, within the overall IMD score there is another issue that also needs to be considered. The overall scores are made up of constituent elements that do not score evenly in each area. The worst overall area in Sunderland, for example, does not come out worst in any of the constituent elements, such as education, health, employment, crime, etc. The spread of indicators makes this an area for multi-agency collaboration, but it raises a question about what the priorities might be for different agencies.

The third most deprived LSOA in Sunderland is clearly within Gentoo's East End management area. However, the East End management area has three LSOAs within it, sharing two of them with Central Hendon and South Hendon. In the LSOA it

shares with South Hendon, only its results for the employment indicator appear in the bottom 10 in the city. If this experience is repeated across the city for different agencies, with different management geographies, the possibility of collaboration based on rational resource allocation becomes extremely difficult. This is compounded by the fact that the lower one goes down the ranking, the need for inter-agency working becomes less clear and the need for specialised help appears to be more relevant.

These management issues could be at least partially overcome if the basic building block for neighbourhood analysis was uniformly the Census Output Area. Even these sometimes cross management areas but this can be accommodated easily. However, to effectively deal with inequalities in housing, health, income, employment, education and crime, we need to have greater detail at the local level than is currently available from most of the key agencies. Different types of illnesses require different collaborative responses, as do different types of crime and levels of education and training. If, as the Government intends, policy becomes more concerned with prevention in the future, this means that the integration of the work of service providers in the community will become more important. For effective collaboration, professionals from different agencies will need to share information and managers should take this information into account when making strategic resource allocations. As far as we can determine, this is not currently possible. A major issue for the future, for example, will be older people living longer in the community, with slowly deteriorating health. Addressing an issue such as this implies not only an alignment of resource allocation policies at a strategic level but also an implementation plan at the local or neighbourhood level. Decisions about these issues require more than statistical information, but reliable secondary data at the right geographical level is fundamental for informing any debate about resource allocation.

When we looked more closely at three estates where deprivation was amongst the highest in Sunderland, there was considerable variation in the number of elderly in each estate and there were even wider differences within estates than between them. A key issue is the extent to which partnership working across organisations need to focus on particular locations, but not on others, For decisions to be made about this and for targeted inter-professional long-term strategic responses to be effective, spatially defined information need to be available at the lowest management levels within the organisations concerned. The geographies of these management areas will be different for different agencies but if the basic spatial building blocks are the same (OAs for example) coherent pictures of communities and neighbourhoods can be shared.

10.4 Overcoming the problem

In order to begin to overcome these informational blockages, we have developed a model that allows us to link the information for Gentoo's management areas to OAs, LSOAs and post-coded external data. The technical detail can be found in the main report and in the spreadsheets attached to it.

Using these spreadsheets, it is possible to produce social and economic profiles for neighbourhoods and housing management areas. We have tested the model using Census data, thanks to the collaboration of the Tyne and Wear Research and

Information Office (TWRI), and it is possible to produce neighbourhood profiles for social and household structure, employment and unemployment, crime and aspects of health. Similar profiles can be produced for Gentoo management areas and, following the next census in 2011, longitudinal studies of social and economic change can be carried out. These can be analysed in the context of the investment that has taken place in each area, in terms of both finance and human resources.

In addition, we contracted TWRI to provide a more updated analysis of reported crime figures for each of the Gentoo Management Areas, as a demonstration of how the model could be used if reliable Output Area information were to become available from the agencies concerned with the delivery of sustainable communities in Sunderland. TWRI produced maps of the different types of crime in different housing management areas. Setting aside the well-known difficulties with reported crime figures, the information provides guidance as to the types of collaboration with the police that different local housing offices might pursue.

Other researchers have had the same problem as us when trying to access health and education data and TWRI themselves have had difficulty in accessing this information. Within the City Council, education data that does exist and that could be useful for neighbourhood analysis is not even shared between departments. When this information does become available, the model can be used to guide the types of collaborations that will help link community-based solutions to inter-professional issues. It also provides the basis for upgrading Gentoo's Neighbourhood Assessment Matrix.

10.5 Gentoo's Contribution to the Sustainable Communities Agenda

One year after stock transfer, in March 2002, almost 60% of social housing in Sunderland failed to meet the Government's decent homes standard. By March 2004, this had been reduced to 4% and the target set for Gentoo for 2010, that all their homes should meet this standard, has already been achieved. Before stock transfer, the quality of housing and the quality of the environment were the main push factors for people leaving the city for other parts of the region. In response to these challenges, Gentoo has invested in social housing and has committed resources and staff to activities that address the social and economic issues in the City.

The organisation has made considerable progress in investing £600 million in the refurbishment and renewal of flats and houses; completed a mixed-tenure renewal area at South Hylton Green; completed the development of new private sector apartments in the centre of Sunderland; introduced choice-based lettings; tackled anti-social behaviour in its housing management areas; developed activities with partners in support of community safety, employment and education; developed specialist housing projects for single homeless people, young parents and people with physical and learning difficulties; helped reduce fuel poverty through energy-efficient design of new and refurbished housing; and worked with health and social care providers to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled households. This has taken place in the context of management and cultural change within the organisation, which has also entered into a new set of relationships with partner organisations in Sunderland and across the region. It has become involved in numerous community initiatives and staff

have been encouraged to contribute to social development in the city through voluntary activities.

The most important of Gentoo's activities is the £600 million that is being invested in the City's social housing stock, which is clearly improving the quality of life of tenants and other residents in the most deprived areas of Sunderland. However, delivering sustainable communities requires a commitment to other community-based activities in partnership with a variety of organisations and Gentoo have been involved in a wide range of such initiatives.

The improvements to the stock, the commitment to the community and the changes in the organisation since stock transfer, are reflected in the positive responses to Gentoo in the interviews we conducted with their stakeholders, in the focus groups with residents and in the household survey. With one or two qualifications, staff were enthused, tenants were satisfied and, with the exception of the City Council and some sections of the voluntary sector, external stakeholders were impressed with the change that Gentoo was bringing to Sunderland.

Gentoo staff said they had more resources to do the job than before and that they felt that, after many years of frustration, they now felt they had a real opportunity to 'make a difference'. They had more freedom to make decisions, rather than refer everything to higher levels of the corporate structure, and therefore could make a positive impact on tenants' lives. This had led to a new working culture and a change in the relationship with tenants. They also pointed to a culture change in the community itself, as people responded to the change in the way housing was delivered. Management was much better, there was more information about what was happening in the organisation, more collaborative working and a decline of departmentalism.

Some staff, who were positive about the changes overall, were nevertheless less optimistic about culture change in both the organisation and the community. Some professionals in the organisation had still to recognise that the users of housing and infrastructure also knew something about design and, within the community, there were still strong peer pressures on young people not to make a positive contribution to the environment in which they lived. There were also some fears about new levels of accountability that came with the ability to make decisions, growing levels of paperwork and the introduction of new technology, but all of these concerns were expressed by staff who were nevertheless positive about the new direction of the organisation.

The resident representatives we interviewed were also hugely positive overall. From their perspective, the whole of Sunderland had vastly improved, they were kept well-informed, there was a high level of consultation, and they spoke of improvements in homes, in places and in the people who were their neighbours. There was a very high level of satisfaction with the modernisation of their homes and they were impressed by the range of choices they had. They felt they had real influence over the design of their kitchens in particular and they were treated sensitively when the work was being done. The elderly and disabled were taken care of, particularly if they had to move out of their high rise flats when they were being modernised. They spoke of how the process had improved over time, as Gentoo became more experienced in dealing with

the work, and of the professionalism of the workforce. For some, the environmental improvements had improved community spirit. The responses of the resident representatives were not uniformly positive, but they were overwhelmingly so

A very important aspect of their new circumstances was that anti-social tenants had been dealt with there was now a good mix of people. 'Boy racers' had been designed out and stigmatised areas were now liveable. Views on the use of Excellent Customer Status were mainly positive. It was seen as being responsible for getting rid of anti-social tenants and an excellent tool for 'rewarding decency and good neighbours', particularly by the elderly. It secured the quality of the living environment. However, it was also seen as being biased in favour of those in employment and against the disabled, the unemployed, the elderly and the poor. There was thought to be a highly uneven way of dealing with complaints, with procedures depending on the interpretation of the staff of local offices. There was an argument for the better training of staff to ensure consistency and equality. It was also pointed out, and accepted by Gentoo, that there was no policy for dealing with malicious complaints, which itself is an example of anti-social behaviour that can be divisive in a community.

The issue of a displacement effect was raised during these interviews, relating to what had happened to the people who had been moved out and where they were now. There was some anecdotal evidence about this but the overwhelming feeling was relief that they had moved.

There was also concern about the pace of renewal. The rate of reconstruction was not fast enough, areas of dereliction were not being dealt with and not enough properties were being rebuilt. It turned out that this was related to the relationship between Gentoo and the City Council.

10.6 External Stakeholders

The people we interviewed were from formal sector organisations across the city and the region, including Sunderland City Council, and the voluntary sector. Some organisations in the voluntary sector felt that Gentoo should not be getting involved in what they saw as non housing matters and that they did not have the expertise to deliver better social outcomes to deprived families. Gentoo, on the other hand, were quite clear that this was part of the sustainable communities agenda and they saw it as their duty to improve their tenants' quality of life to a level where people did not need voluntary sector support. They work with partners in the voluntary sector to achieve this aim, essentially working themselves out of a job at the same time.

The formal sector organisations across the city and region were extremely positive about Gentoo – the organisation, what it was trying to achieve and how it was going about it. They spoke of its impact on the city, its role in regeneration and the growing contribution they were making to retaining and attracting people to Sunderland. Its commitment to the city and region was seen as important for the future. They were complimentary about Gentoo's efficient delivery of quality homes and their contribution to the environment. They were also positive about the organisation's commitment to sustainable communities, its support for education and training and its efforts to engage with hard-to-reach young people and bring them into the

employment market. The impression was that Gentoo was seen as a model housing provider for the region. The only exception to this was Sunderland City Council.

The relationship between Gentoo and the City Council is best described as one of ambivalence. Gentoo and the Council are partners in the Sunderland Partnership and in a number of related activities. The Council also spoke positively about the regenerative impact of Gentoo's activities in city centre, where they have refurbished old buildings, creating flats for young professionals and encouraging private sector investment in leisure activities. Nevertheless, there was clearly a history of conflict deriving from stock transfer. The conflict was explained in terms of clashes of personalities and the jealousies that arose when staff in what is now Gentoo were no longer subject to the same financial constraints that Council staff had to endure. Relations appeared to be slowly improving and there was a willingness to work together in the future. However, there are certain systemic contradictions in the large-scale stock transfer process that make it difficult for willing professionals to pursue a common purpose.

As distinct from what happened when council housing was transferred to Housing Action Trusts (HATs) in the 1990s, when HATs were given statutory planning powers, Gentoo did not inherit planning powers with the stock when housing was transferred in Sunderland in 2001. Whereas HATs had powers of compulsory purchase, Gentoo does not. Gentoo appears to have underestimated the difficulties this would mean for site assembly and, in their eagerness to push ahead, they did not initially consult the Council about their proposals for redevelopment. Whilst they did consult the Council about the principle of renewal, in their eagerness to push ahead, they did not consult in detail about the delivery. On the other hand, within the Council, what remained of the housing section was marginalised, its role was not clear and, mainly because of departmentalism, there was very little discussion of housing issues. With the transfer of the stock, housing was off the Council's agenda. There was no clear agreement about the roles of the two organisations, other than a vague and false distinction between strategy and delivery.

Most of the properties have now been acquired by Gentoo, but problems persist because of this initial lack of clarity about the respective roles of Gentoo and the Council. However, this is compounded by the fact that, while planners have a statutory responsibility for all residents in the city, Gentoo's primary responsibility is to its own tenants. This is a fundamental contradiction which has implications for the creation of sustainable communities. While Gentoo has taken on board the aims and objectives of the sustainable communities agenda by accepting a wider social responsibility than that of the traditional role of a landlord, the demolition of stigmatised properties which may be physically sound but socially unacceptable will inevitably bring them into conflict with planners whose primary concern is to maintain the city's housing stock levels.

In 2005, it was agreed that each of Gentoo's renewal proposals had to fit with the Council's strategic priorities and that Neighbourhood Renewal Assessments (NRAs) would be carried out. Some properties that were initially earmarked for demolition were reassigned for rehabilitation, but there are still major delays with validating NRAs that are having an impact on the quality of life of residents. Within the Council, housing and planning staff are now working together and relations between both

organisations are gradually improving. However, the systemic problems behind the above difficulties are not peculiar to Sunderland. It is important that they are recognised more widely and managed, prior to any large-scale transfer taking place.

10.7 Community Cohesion

There are very low levels of all types of social capital in Sunderland. Compared with other areas, there are stronger family ties but weaker connections between neighbours and a lower propensity to join civic organisations. Bonding social capital is based primarily on the family and there is little evidence of bridging social capital. There is also little evidence of or interest in linking social capital. When asked if they wanted more influence over the management of their homes, a very high proportion said they did not know. Having more influence on housing management is not something they aspire to. The Government's housing and sustainable communities agenda places great emphasis on empowering citizens and giving them more say over how their homes are managed but it would appear that in Sunderland there is very little demand for this. Gentoo takes tenant participation and consultation seriously and there are many opportunities for tenants to get involved. If tenants are satisfied with the service they are getting, they may have reached the limits of participation.

There is a good deal of historical literature that claims that housing renewal activities have destroyed community cohesion. During our interviews with staff and residents it was also suggested the social disruption caused by redevelopment had a negative impact on community relations. In South Hylton Green, the one area that has been redeveloped, there was a higher level of trust and interaction between neighbours than was the case over the whole study area. It was much higher than in neighbouring Pennywell, where bonding social capital was much more dependent on the family and where interaction between neighbours was even lower than elsewhere. There may be other factors at play here, such as age of respondents and household structure, which are worth investigating further but, on the face of it, redevelopment appears to have enhanced community relations rather than destroyed them.

10.8 Satisfaction with Homes and the Environment

The household survey found very high levels of satisfaction with homes and the environment. Ninety per cent of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with their homes. There was no difference between tenants whose homes had been renovated and owner occupiers who had bought under the right-to-buy since Gentoo took over the stock. Only 6% of tenants thought their rent was poor value for money and even amongst those who had not benefited from renovation, only 7% thought it was poor value. There were also low levels of reported problems with the homes. There were high levels of satisfaction with improvements that had been carried out and with Gentoo as a housing manager. As indicated above, there was very little interest in more participation in the management of housing and the environment.

Ninety four per cent expressed satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live, with 'peace and quiet' being the most important reason for this. However, two thirds said there had been no change in their neighbourhoods over the previous five years. Of those who did say there had been a change, the main reason for improvement was the condition of properties and the main reasons for deterioration

were increasing anti-social behaviour, problems with young people, vandalism, crime, bad neighbours and lack of youth facilities.

In South Hylton Green, the one development where Gentoo have been able to deliver neighbourhood renewal to their customers, 96% of respondents said they were satisfied with their homes and a similar percentage thought the design of their homes was excellent. They were much more likely to say that their home was better than it was five years ago, twice as likely to say that their home was very good value for money and much more likely to be very satisfied with Gentoo. In terms of satisfaction with the area, however, their responses were no different from those of residents across Sunderland as a whole. Nor was there any statistical difference in satisfaction with access to different social facilities and services, perceptions of crime and worries about crime, although they were less likely to say they felt 'very safe' in and around their homes.

When we looked at the situation in a number of other key estates in Sunderland, differences in satisfaction with their areas as places to live were not significant. There were, however, differences in satisfaction with Gentoo in general, with their homes and with amenities for teenagers, young people and the elderly. In six out of twelve estates, more than three quarters of residents thought that facilities for teenagers were unsatisfactory and in four estates the facilities for the elderly were thought to be inadequate. Despite highlighting a number of problems, there was a low level of interest in participation and no one in Pennywell, Redhouse or Castletown wanted a bigger say in how their neighbourhood services were managed.

10.9 Vulnerable Groups

Most of the survey findings were reflected in the focus groups with vulnerable residents but in these meetings the participants had more opportunity to pursue particular interests that they thought could have been dealt with better. The over-65s were very positive about their homes and mainly positive about their environments. They were concerned about young people hanging around with nothing to do and this was connected to fears about security, particularly at night. Despite an overall positive attitude towards their homes, they pointed to design faults that they felt Gentoo should have picked up and learned from, rather than repeating them in successive developments. They also thought that there was scope for more handyman and gardening support, which they were willing to pay a reasonable price for.

People with disabilities were also very positive about their experience of Gentoo, referring to the refurbishment as 'brilliant' and praising the way some housing officers looked after them. However, they also pointed to design issues and, in some cases, disabled facilities being removed and not replaced. As in the case of the elderly, they highlighted the need for more support in home improvements. Again, they expressed concern about young people hanging around and under-age alcohol drinking where they lived. They also pointed out that they needed support in negotiating their way through the Gentoo and Council bureaucracies but a major concern was a lack of disabled parking spaces. They specifically highlighted the need for more inter-agency collaboration and they stressed how dependent they were on some of their neighbours.

For young people, the key issue was the impact of choice-based lettings, which they said was preventing them from getting decent accommodation. Some of them who lived in or had previously lived in Gentoo-run hostels were positive about this support, particularly about the role of their support workers. While facilities for young people were obviously an issue for them, in that there were not enough things for young people to do, they were clear that they were beyond the age of youth clubs and other commonly perceived solutions to this problem. In contrast to the fear they inspired in older people, these young people felt they were in the front line of the violence in the city, not as perpetrators, but as victims. Targeted by under-age drinkers to buy alcohol for them, they complained about the abuse they got from younger gangs when they refused to buy it. They also complained about the police, not as a threat to themselves but because they did nothing about dealing with younger teenage gangs. Alcohol, violence and gangs were a large part of their existence, but as a threat to their well-being.

Young families also had issues about gaining access to accommodation, in this case mainly to the right size of property in neighbourhoods where they did not feel threatened by difficult neighbours. They also complained about children drinking and taking drugs and about the threats they received when they refused to buy them what they wanted. They were critical of the way Sure Start was managed and concerned about the quality of schools where they lived. However, once again the issue of facilities for young people was an important matter. In this case, their main concern was that the facilities that they mentioned were set up for mixed genders between the ages of 11 and 19, prompting the question 'why would I send my 11 year old daughter to a club where there were 19 year old men'.

Sunderland is around 97% white. In Hendon, close to the city centre, there is an enclave of Bangladeshi families living in private accommodation, overwhelmingly as home owners. Like the young white people, the focus group of young people in this area also complained about lack of facilities, and security was a major concern. The experiences of the young white and young Asian people were very similar, but the Asian concerns were compounded by racism, especially in those parts of central Sunderland surrounding their neighbourhood (the East End and other parts of Hendon) and in areas such as Pallion, Pennywell and Ford. They were convinced that renovating these areas would not change them. They had white friends, whom they distinguished from the 'chavs' who abused them and their families. However, these young Asians did not present themselves as victims. On the contrary, they were defenders of their community and their elders in that community, from the same people who threatened the young white people.

In the focus groups, Excellent Customer Status was something that almost everyone had a view on, except the BME residents for whom it did not apply. As we found in the case of the interviews with residents representatives, there were different views about its value. For the elderly, it was a reflection of their way of life. They had no difficulty in meeting the criteria for achieving and maintaining the status and they saw it as an official acknowledgment of their responsible patterns of behaviour. They said they would not admit to not having it and they saw it as a useful tool for improving other people's behaviour. People with disabilities were much more critical of it. They thought it did not take account of the difficulties that disabled residents might have in keeping their homes and gardens to meet the strict criteria of the scheme and they

were concerned that there was a lack of flexibility in its application. They felt that some officers did not consider the special circumstances faced by people with disabilities.

Families with young children were also critical of the lack of flexibility, citing examples of no account being taken of the impact of children being sick or in hospital. They were also particularly concerned about the intrusive nature of the home inspections and the financial checks that were made, sometimes of their parents' affairs. For young people, it was mainly irrelevant. Only one person had it and another had lost it because she was sick and the payment of her benefits changed. The rest were either not interested or had not heard of it.

10.10 Refurbishment, Renewal and Displacement

There has been very little rehousing associated with refurbishment. Some people who were temporarily rehoused did not move back in when the refurbishment was completed, but this reflected the exercise of choice on the part of these tenants. They chose to stay in their temporary accommodation.

With respect to renewal, there has been no plan to house people in the new housing that has replaced their old home. These households do not anticipate a temporary move followed by a permanent return. It is difficult to judge the displacement effect from the renewal process, partly because the renewal areas were unpopular and had a high level of voids before the clearing programme started and partly because the information on destinations has not been kept uniformly across the different housing areas. The demolition process tends to start with streets that already have high levels of voids, that is, in the least popular areas where properties were not being re-let.

Where statistical evidence exists, it points to a high proportion of tenants being rehoused locally. This implies a level of continuity for the existing community. However, we also know from our interviews that anti-social tenants were not rehoused locally. This happened to a small number of families, some times extended families, but where they went to is not picked up in the statistics. There is some anecdotal evidence about this, but it could only be clarified through gathering better data.

The survey data showed that the respondents in the renewal areas were considerably younger than those elsewhere, households were larger and levels of unemployment were significantly higher. These areas house people at an early stage of their housing careers and, comprising the least attractive parts of the housing stock, they have played a role as entry points for the social rented sector. Households move on from them at an early opportunity, especially if they are in more secure jobs and have been good tenants.

The reasons for moving in to the properties, however, were no different for those given by people in non-renewal areas. They are like other tenants in most respects, except that they are at a slightly earlier stage of their housing and family careers. Where refurbishment has been carried out, they are as satisfied with the work as tenants elsewhere. In general, however, they are less satisfied with their landlords and with the city council, less likely to view their rents as good value for money, less

satisfied with their particular house or flat and less satisfied with the area as a place to live. On the other hand, they are more likely to think that the area is better than it was five years ago. We can only speculate that this is related to the removal of relatively small number of anti-social neighbours through the process of demolition. Otherwise, there appears to have been disturbance, but little displacement.

The renewal areas are still regarded less favourably than other areas. This will be partly as a result of the delays experienced with the renewal process, but it will also reflect the stigmatisation of these areas, which may have lingering effects even after renewal is complete. There is a possibility that tenant attachment to area, the management of allocations and the excellent customer scheme are combining to make the concentration of different groups in different areas more marked, as tenants are being more systematically being sorted between estates. There is also anecdotal evidence that some are also being excluded from social housing and displaced into the private rented sector. This concentration of households with problems in some areas may be the unintended consequence of renewal and other processes, but it could result in different management problems in different areas in the future. Where estates have different reputations and where properties are of different quality, it is possible that the process will create a clear hierarchy that will affect the choices that tenants make. If this happens, the quality of stock overall will be improved and the quality of life for the vast majority of tenants will be better, but the next generation of tenants and managers will be faced with unequally attractive housing areas, including some that will be difficult to manage and live in.

If we generalise this away from Sunderland and consider the relationship between an improving social rented stock and the lower end of the private rented market, the Department for Communities and Local Government ought to reflect on what this might mean for different programmes within its remit. It is possible that a small number of anti-social families may be displaced from RSL stock into areas of private renting, living next to owner-occupiers, such as in NDC areas which are also attracting large amounts of Government funding. This will be celebrated by RSL tenants, but it may undermine the effectiveness of NDC funding, will have a negative effect on the residents of these areas, and will change the geography of the delivery of other services such as police, health, education and social services. There is no statistical evidence that this is happening in Sunderland but there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that this displacement effect needs to be monitored more closely.