

Customer Voice Policy

Aster Group is the overarching brand name of Aster Group Ltd and all of its subsidiaries.

1 Scope

- 1.1 Customer Voice is Aster Group's approach to engaging with customers to ensure their experiences shape the services we provide and influence the decisions we make regarding our homes and communities. We really understand the value that listening to our customers has, which is why our Customer Voice offer has continued to evolve to make sure it remains accessible, adds value for both customers and colleagues and above all, places the customer at the heart of what we do.
- 1.2 Aster is a registered Restorative Organisation; this means we meet the standards of the Restorative Justice Council for applying restorative practice throughout our organisation. We will use these restorative principles to build positive relationships with our customers and within our communities.
- 1.3 When we refer to customer voice in this policy, we mean activities where we invite feedback from customers during a specific piece of work to improve our services.
- 1.4 We recognise that colleagues will often receive customer feedback that is not because of customer voice activity. Where this occurs, colleagues are encouraged to ensure this feedback is acknowledged and any issues reported are addressed within Aster's service standards.
- 1.5 This policy supports our strategic objectives and the aims of the [Customer Voice Commitments](#). Our vision is for customer focused, easily accessible, good, and safe services shaped with the help of our customers.
- 1.6 This policy sets out Aster's commitment to ensuring the customers' voice is heard and plays an influential role within our organisation. Our Customer Voice offer will be accessible, providing all customers with opportunities to have their say. We will get back to customers that have participated in our work and demonstrate how what we have been told has influenced decisions.
- 1.7 The implementation of this policy will ensure that we meet, and go beyond, the required standards of the Regulator of Social Housing and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), where there is a strong emphasis on ensuring customers are heard.
- 1.8 This policy relates to all Aster customers, including their family members and advocates where applicable.
- 1.9 All Aster Group colleagues are responsible for the implementation of this policy and to ensure customer feedback is gained where there are consultation opportunities during any works, projects, or proposed service changes. The Customer Voice Team will coordinate customer consultation and will support involved customer group activities across all entities.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 We will ensure our customers have open, accessible ways to provide us with feedback and insight, that they are listened to and provided with a response to show how their feedback has helped shape our services across Aster Group and its entities.
- 2.2 We will only consult with our customers when there is a genuine opportunity for feedback to influence decisions, and our colleagues will be open and transparent when providing information which will enable effective consultation with a clear goal.
- 2.3 We will strive towards a model of co-production, where we will provide accessible opportunities for our customers to be involved and help develop and design our services with us. We define co-production as the development and improvement of services with customers involved throughout the process.
- 2.4 We will strive to increase the numbers and diversity of our involved customers so that feedback and insight is increasingly representative of all our customers. We will do this by giving all customers opportunities to shape our services, and we will use customer information to improve representation and involvement for all. We recognise that as our customer base becomes more diverse, our service must evolve, and we will ensure that there are accessible channels for all customers to engage with us.
- 2.5 We will use customer insight, intelligence, and engagement to improve the customer experience, for the benefit of our customers and our colleagues delivering the service.
- 2.6 The Customer Voice Team will support and coordinate the Customer Voice process for any project where this is required. We recognise involvement by the Customer Voice Team may not always be required or appropriate, but involvement opportunities will be considered for any planned projects or changes to services.
- 2.7 We will support and work closely with customers to address any skill or confidence gaps, or any barrier to involvement, always building on their individual strengths. This could mean signposting to other support agencies or advocates.
- 2.8 We will engage with as broad a range of our customers as we are able to, using their preferred methods where possible and working with them on the issues that matter to them most. We will allow customers adequate time to engage and respond to us.
- 2.9 We will optimise opportunities to consult with customers digitally using accessible, modern channels where we can, and we aim to develop those channels to increase the opportunity for involvement.
- 2.10 We will expect customers to act in good faith, in a helpful and constructive way, and with an understanding we may not always be able to put into use everything they propose. We will also be open and honest with the reasons why feedback either has, or hasn't been used.
- 2.11 We will support and develop our formal customer groups and ensure that all colleagues within the Aster Group are aware of, understand, and benefit from their work.
- 2.12 Our customer groups are part of our formal governance structure and have focused terms of reference stating their role, remit, membership and how they function.
- 2.13 We will have in place a robust recruitment process to customer groups and are committed to making sure these are representative of our customers and all entities under the Aster Group.

- 2.14 We will develop subject specific customer consultation groups that will regularly be invited to provide us with feedback where changes to services are proposed. We will publicise our Customer Voice activities on the Aster website and via the customer e-shot, making sure we demonstrate the impacts of completed feedback activity.
- 2.15 We will ensure that any queries or complaints that are raised to the Customer Voice Team during our activities are directed to the appropriate team or colleague to address.
- 2.16 We will ensure customers are reimbursed for all reasonable expenses they incur during any Customer Voice activities. This should be discussed with the Customer Voice Team and agreed before the activity takes place.
- 2.17 We are committed to inclusivity and accessibility and will endeavour to provide our communication and policies in accessible formats when requested or required.

3 Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.
- 3.2 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored in accordance with the delegation matrix and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months by the *Operational Scrutiny & Assurance Panel*
- 3.3 We will develop and report on a set of performance indicators which will provide an overview of the effectiveness of our activities. These are currently as follows-
- Number of services changed, implemented, or withdrawn
 - Response rates to policy consultation
 - Response rates to workstream consultations
 - Neighbourhood enhancement satisfaction
- 3.4 Number of responses to Customer Voice activities.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 Customer Expenses Procedure
- 4.2 Diversity & inclusion Policy
- 4.3 Customer Voice Commitments
- 4.4 Resident Engagement Strategy

5 Governance

Effective From:	11/01/2024	Expires:	11/01/2027
Policy Owner:	Assistant Director – Business Support		
Policy Author:	Policy Offer		
Approved by:	<i>Customer Overview Group</i>		
Delegation Matrix Reference:	R076	Version Number:	2.01

Aster Group is our overarching company brand and comprises the following companies and charitable entities. Aster Group Limited, Aster Communities, Synergy Housing Limited, East Boro Housing Trust Limited, Central and Cecil Housing Trust, Enham Trust, 55 London, Aster Foundation, Aster Living, Aster 3 Limited, Aster Homes Limited, Aster LD Limited, Aster Property Limited, Aster Solar Limited, Silbury Housing Holdings Limited, Silbury Housing Limited, Central & Cecil Innovations Limited, and Central & Cecil Construction Services Limited.