

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

1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy outlines the responsibilities of Aster Group, and our customers in our approach to dealing with infestations and pests within Aster Group homes and communal areas.
- 1.2 The policy aims to protect the health and wellbeing of customers and colleagues, prevent infestations, and to facilitate efficient and effective eradication methods.
- 1.3 Definitions for the purpose of this policy:

Infestation refers to the presence of a large number of pests or organisms in a particular area, typically in a way that is harmful or intrusive. Infestations are typically bedbugs, fleas, and cockroaches.

Pests can include insects, rodents, pigeons, moths, or any other insect that pose a threat to human health, property, or the environment (this list is not exhaustive).
- 1.4 Pest control means treating pests and may include blocking their entry to properties in line with the requirement of the Human Habitation Act.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Our responsibilities are to treat and eradicate infestations and pests:
 - In communal parts of our properties, such as lobbies, hallways, staircases, and bin stores.
 - In the structure of blocks of flats, such as drains, roof spaces, and car parks.
 - When the fault is with the fabric, design, or disrepair of a general needs home.
- 2.2 Customers are responsible for infestations or pests that are within their homes unless the above applies. This is in line with their tenancy agreement.
- 2.3 All customers should report an infestation or pests as soon as they become aware of this. This can be done by contacting the contact centre or informing a scheme colleague.
- 2.4 When infestations or pests are reported to us, we will assess the risk by asking the customer relevant questions to ascertain the support needed.
- 2.5 We will investigate all reports of infestations and pests within our care homes, Homes for Older People (HFOP), Independent Living Schemes, Extra Care Schemes, and communal areas in general needs flats.
- 2.6 If a customer is concerned there are rodents or pests in their home, the contact centre will ask a number of triage questions before deciding on an agreed course of action.
- 2.7 We may send a trade representative to inspect the home for any defects after the initial triage questions. Where pests fall under our responsibility, we will carry out repairs and contract a pest controller to eradicate any pests in line with our Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

- 2.8 If an infestation is caused by a neighbouring property, or the point of entry is unclear, we will investigate and manage the situation up until we have identified / and or managed the infestation or pests to a satisfactory resolution.
- 2.9 If the responsibility for the infestation or pest does not fall with us, we will work with customers to provide advice on dealing with the infestation or pests. We will signpost the customer to their local authority, or relevant pest control organisation.
- 2.10 When assessing pest and infestations, we will take into account the risks to people, environment, and property. There may be circumstances where we support customers with infestations or pests in homes when it falls outside of our responsibility. These cases will be determined by the assessing officer.
- 2.11 We will seek professional advice where appropriate. For example, for endangered or protected species, such as bats or bees, we may enlist a specialist who can control without eradication.
- 2.12 We will carefully consider the impact on the immediate community when considering what interventions may be necessary to eradicate any infestation or pests.
- 2.13 We will take reasonable steps to ensure empty homes are free from infestations and pests in line with our Lettable Standard. This will include a visual inspection of the property, including the structure, loft, and garden. Preventative or remedial works will be conducted on a case-by-case basis determined by the outcome of the inspection.
- 2.14 We advise customers in prevention of infestations or pests. We recommend regular vacuuming, washing bedding at high temperatures, keeping homes clean and uncluttered to reduce the risk.
- 2.15 We may engage a professional pest control service to treat and eradicate infestations. Any treatments will be conducted in accordance with best practices or contractual terms, ensuring the safety of customers and minimising disruption. This intervention will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.16 It is important for the success of the infestation or pest management programme that customers co-operate with us, and any pest control professionals during inspection, treatment and follow up processes. This includes allowing access into their home, following instructions provided and disposing of infested items as necessary.
- 2.17 If a customer does not allow us access to their property, we will follow our Access Procedure.
- 2.18 We are not responsible for home furnishings, including floor coverings, which are damaged by, or need to be disposed of, because of pests or infestation. We recommend that customers take out a home contents insurance policy with appropriate cover.
- 2.19 We will inform colleagues, organisations, and contractors where appropriate, in particular those who may have to enter any building with an infestation, as part of their duties.
- 2.20 Customer confidentiality will be maintained regarding individual cases of infestation. Customers privacy will be respected, and personal information will only be shared with relevant personnel directly involved in the eradication process.

- 2.21 At the point where we have 5 cases or 10% of flats in a block with pests or infestations, we will engage with the local authority Environmental Health team.
- 2.22 Where infestation treatment is ongoing, it may be necessary to close communal areas and facilities. We will let customers know if this is the case.
- 2.23 It may be necessary to move customers whilst treatment is in process, we will let customers know if this is the case and support them in line with our Decant Policy.
- 2.24 In cases where infestations are caused by customer negligence, advice from us and pest control professionals has not been followed, or for customers knowingly allowing their home to become infested on multiple occasions, we reserve the right to recharge for treatments in line with our Recharge Policy. Before we do this, we will always try to engage and work with the customer to manage the problem.
- 2.25 We may apply a service charge for the eradication of infestations to customers who live in general needs communal flats, HFOP, Independent Living and Extra Care.

3 Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 Policy overview sessions will be delivered to relevant teams following implementation of this policy to ensure the content and responsibilities are understood.
- 3.2 We will regularly monitor customer feedback, including complaint learnings, and the performance of pest control contracts.
- 3.3 We will review incident and financial reports
- 3.4 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored, and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months by the *Operational Scrutiny & Assurance Panel*
- 3.5 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review,

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 Pets Policy
- 4.2 Decant Procedure
- 4.3 Access Procedure (not yet published)
- 4.4 Recharge Policy
- 4.5 Service Charge Policy
- 4.6 Neighbourhood Management Policy
- 4.7 Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- 4.8 Lettable Standard

5 Governance

Effective From:	11/04/2024	Expires:	10/04/2027
Policy Owner:	Regional Operations Director		
Policy Author:	Policy, Training and Assurance Manager		

Approved by:	<i>Customer Overview Group</i>		
Delegation Matrix Reference:	R055.15	Version Number:	V1.01

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.