

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

1 Scope

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that Aster Group promotes and enables the safeguarding of children:
 - 1.1.1 To protect children who receive or have contact with Aster Group services. This includes the children of adults who use or visit our services.
 - 1.1.2 To ensure the safety and protection of all children associated with the Group, whether as employees, volunteers, or apprentices.
 - 1.1.3 To provide colleagues and volunteers, as well as children and their families, with the framework they need in order to keep children safe and secure within our services.
- 1.2 A child is defined as a person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- 1.3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Aster Group. It outlines our approach to safeguarding children who are experiencing or are at risk from abuse or neglect.
- 1.4 All colleagues have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and all colleagues should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. Aster Group does not have a responsibility to investigate incidents of alleged abuse unless it includes a member of colleagues, contractor or volunteer acting on behalf of the organisation; however, Aster does have a statutory duty to assist local authorities with child protection matters.
- 1.5 This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from nspcc.org.uk/childprotection.
- 1.6 Safeguarding is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 as:
 - Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
 - Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
 - Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
 - Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
 - Promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care agreement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
 - Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-national-framework>

Aster Group is our overarching company brand and comprises the following companies and charitable entities. Aster Group Limited, Aster Communities, Aster Treasury plc, 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.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Aster has a zero tolerance of abuse. We are committed to safeguarding children and have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, to keep them safe and to operate in a way that protects them.
- 2.2 The Children Act 2004 created Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCPS) and places duties on a range of statutory organisations. As a registered housing provider, Aster is not a statutory partner, however we recognise our duty to:
- Have a Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children
 - Have a Designated Trustee who is responsible for overseeing safeguarding and child protection in our charitable entities in line with Charity Commission guidance
 - Share information with other professionals
 - Have safe recruitment practices and procedures
 - Train employees on safeguarding children
 - Have a clear safeguarding policy and procedure for responding to concerns, including making referrals to local authorities or the police
- 2.3 We recognise that:
- The welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take
 - Working in partnership with children, their families and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of children
 - All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse
 - Some children have additional vulnerabilities resulting from the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
 - Extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse
- 2.4 We will seek to keep children safe by:
- Valuing, listening and respecting them
 - Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children and a Lead Trustee for Safeguarding
 - Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for colleagues and volunteers
 - Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, parents and carers appropriately
 - Recruiting colleagues and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
 - Providing effective management for colleagues and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures
 - Using our procedures to manage any allegations against colleagues and volunteers appropriately
 - Ensuring we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
 - Ensuring we provide a safe physical environment for children, colleagues and volunteers
 - Recording and storing information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
 - Building a safeguarding culture where colleagues and volunteers, children, and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns

2.5 We will raise a child safeguarding concern where a child is suspected to be involved in any of the following categories:

- Physical abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Radicalisation
- We are aware that abuse may also include but is not limited to acts such as online abuse, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, bullying and cyber bullying, child trafficking, grooming and sexual behaviour. The circumstances of each case will be considered as to not limit what constitutes abuse or neglect

2.6 Whilst safeguarding is everyone's responsibility in Aster, the responsibility structure at Aster is as follows:

Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children

- Takes lead responsibility for the operational implementation of the Safeguarding Children policy and child protection, including online safety
- Ensures the organisation's Safeguarding Children policy is publicly available and reviewed every two years or in line with regulatory requirements
- Provides advice, support, and training to colleagues on safeguarding matters
- Ensures colleagues have been trained appropriately, and this is updated in line with legal requirements and best practice guidance
- Liaises with local safeguarding partners and other agencies to ensure effective safeguarding practices
- Ensures that safeguarding records are kept securely and prepares reports as required for the organisation's board, trustees or other committees as required.
- Measures performance in relation to safeguarding to ensure that the policy and any related procedures remain effective
- Works with partnership agencies strategically as appropriate
- Attends the group Safeguarding Panel meetings
- Ensures that colleagues understand the requirement for all cases to be recorded on Assure and where appropriate, referred to social care, and the police. Ensure that the Safeguarding Panel consider cases involving children where applicable in their review process
- Attends appropriate training and demonstrate evidence of continuing professional development to carry out the role

Designated Trustee for Safeguarding (non-exec. Board member)

To ensure appropriate oversight of safeguarding within the charitable side of Enham and to meet the expectations of the Charity Commission (England and Wales) we appoint a Designated Safeguarding Trustee who:

- Takes the lead on safeguarding matters, ensuring Aster adheres to regulatory requirements and best practice
- Ensures that the Safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed in line with best practice and legislation
- Has responsibility for identifying and managing safeguarding risks within the organisation
- Leads the learning lessons following a serious case review.
- Ensures that any safeguarding deficiencies or weaknesses are remedied without delay
- Ensures a Designated Safeguarding Lead is appointed for safeguarding adults and safeguarding children
- Supports the Designated Safeguarding Leads in their role and provides positive challenge

The Safeguarding Panel

- Promotes awareness and understanding of safeguarding within all departments at Aster
- Ensures that colleagues record and report safeguarding cases accurately
- Provides advice and guidance to colleagues, identifying any learning or training needs
- The panel meet at least quarterly and conduct case reviews, providing assurance that policy and procedure are being adhered to
- Will be central to policy and procedure review

Anyone working on behalf of Aster Group

- Is aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and are alert to any concerns for welfare, and signs of abuse or neglect
- Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' with regards to safeguarding
- Treat information with confidentiality but never promising to 'keep a secret'
- Report all cases of suspected abuse or neglect
- Attend all mandatory safeguarding training appropriate to role and setting
- If a colleague has a safeguarding concern that involves another colleague, they are encouraged to seek advice from the People Team. Alternatively, concerns can be reported through the Aster's confidential Speak Up process

- 2.7 Aster Group charities recognise their responsibilities to keep everyone who comes into contact safe from harm: this includes volunteers, colleagues, and beneficiaries. We know how we are doing through assessing and continuously strengthening the five priority areas of safeguarding as highlighted by the Charity Commission. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>
- 2.8 Information will be shared in line with each local authority's safeguarding protocols and Aster's Data Protection, Privacy and Confidentiality policy. Data Protection Agreements and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and promoting their welfare. There will be times when we need to make a referral without the permission of the child or parent, this includes reason to believe that a child is suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, or to prevent or detect a criminal offence. If in any doubt, the designated safeguarding lead for children will advise. This extends to the recruitment of volunteers working with our charities.
- 2.9 We will meet our responsibilities in the safe recruitment and selection of employees. In accordance with the Talent and Acquisition Policy, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

registration and clearance may be required for particular roles. Where appropriate, this check will be repeated at three yearly intervals.

- 2.10 We have a separate process that applies for those who are engaged as an employee, apprentice or volunteer to safeguard them in the workplace.
- 2.11 Any failure to report a safeguarding concern may be regarded as a conduct issue, dependant on circumstances. This will be dealt with under Aster's Resolution Policy, in conjunction with any Local Authority enquiry.
- 2.12 We are committed to inclusivity and accessibility and will endeavour to provide our communication and policies in accessible formats and in other languages when requested or required.

Key Personnel	Name	Email	Tel No
Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children	Sara Bradbury	sara.bradbury@enhamtrust.org.uk	07770 629496
Trustee/Senior lead for safeguarding and child protection		Currently in consultation	

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 Information on this policy and its associated procedures will be given during induction for all colleagues, volunteers and Board Directors and committee members.
- 3.3 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored, and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months by the Operational Scrutiny and Assurance Panel (OSAP).
- 3.4 A Safeguarding Panel with clear terms of reference will meet regularly and take collective responsibility for safeguarding oversight and monitoring throughout Aster. A safeguarding headline report will be produced quarterly after each meeting for the Customer Service Operational Leadership Team (CSOLT) and OSAP.
- 3.5 This policy will be reviewed annually unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 Safeguarding Adults & Children Procedure
- 4.2 Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- 4.3 Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- 4.4 Data Protection, Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- 4.5 Resolution Policy

- 4.6 Domestic Abuse Policy and Guidance.
- 4.7 Speak Up Procedure
- 4.8 Probity & Integrity Policy
- 4.9 Dignity at work procedure
- 4.10 Capacity Procedure
- 4.11 Anti-Modern Slavery and Trafficking Policy
- 4.12 Sharing Information with Other Care Home Providers and Agencies Policy (Care specific)
- 4.13 Duty of Candour Policy
- 4.14 Visiting in and Out of Care Homes Policy.
- 4.15 SAFE Procedure (Safety Advice for Employees)
- 4.16 Volunteer Speak Up Procedure

5 Governance			
Effective From:	24/07/2025	Expires:	24/07/2028
Policy Owner:	Director of Operations (Enham) – Safeguarding Lead for Children		
Policy Author:	Policy Officer		
Approved by:	<i>Operational Scrutiny & Assurance Panel</i>		
Scheme of Delegation Reference:	R074.1	Version Number:	V2.0