

Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy

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 and young people:
 - 1.1.1 To protect children and young people who receive Aster Group services. This includes the children of adults who use or visit our services
 - 1.1.2 To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the framework they need in order to keep children and young people 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 staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and all staff 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 staff or volunteer acting on behalf of the organisation, however, 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](https://www.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 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.

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.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Aster has a zero tolerance of abuse. We are committed to safeguarding children and young people and have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to operate in a way that protects them.
- 2.2 The Children Act 2004 created Local Safeguarding Children Boards 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 Children and Young People Safeguarding Lead
 - Have a designated trustee who is responsible for overseeing safeguarding and child protection in our charitable entities inline with Charity Commission guidance
 - Share information with other professionals
 - Have safe recruitment practices and procedures
 - Train employees on safeguarding children and young people
 - 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, young people, their families and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare
 - 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 are additionally vulnerable because of 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 and young people safe by:
- Valuing, listening and respecting them
 - Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children and Young People and a Lead Trustee for Safeguarding
 - Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers
 - Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents and carers appropriately
 - Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
 - Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures
 - Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
 - Ensuring we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
 - Ensuring we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers

- Recording and storing information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
- Building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people, 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
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Domestic Abuse
- Involved in modern slavery
- 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 Children and Young People Safeguarding Lead

- Ensures that the safeguarding children policies and procedures are reviewed every two years or earlier if prompted by change in legislation or good practice.
- Ensure cases are referred to social care, and the police where appropriate.
- Attend appropriate training and demonstrate evidence of continuing professional development to carry out the role.
- Attends the group Safeguarding Panel meetings.
- Leads the learning lessons following a serious case review in relation to children.
- Informs the Group Health and Safety Board in the event of a serious safeguarding children's incident or pending serious case review.
- Works with the Group Safeguarding lead to present an annual report to the Group Health and Safety Board on Aster Group's management of safeguarding throughout the year.
- Measures performance in relation to safeguarding children.
- Works with partnership agencies strategically as appropriate.

Designated Trustee for Safeguarding

- Ensures effective safeguarding policies and procedures are in place
- A Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children and Young People is appointed
- Supports the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children and Young People in their role and provides positive challenge
- Staff have been trained appropriately and this is updated in line with guidance
- Any safeguarding deficiencies or weaknesses are remedied without delay

The Safeguarding Panel

- Promote awareness and understanding of safeguarding within all departments at Aster.
- Ensure that colleagues record and report safeguarding cases accurately.

- Provide advice and guidance to colleagues, identifying any learning or training needs.
- Attend and contribute to Safeguarding Panel meetings quarterly, conducting case reviews, and providing assurance that policy and procedure are being adhered to.
- Will be central to policy and procedure review.

All employees and volunteers

- Are 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.

- 2.7 As a charity we recognise our responsibilities to keep everyone who comes into contact with our charity safe from harm: this includes volunteers, staff, 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.
- 2.8 Information will be shared in line with each local authority's safeguarding protocols and Aster's Data Protection, Privacy and Confidentiality policy. DPA and UK 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 children and young people's safeguarding lead will advise.
- 2.9 We will meet our responsibilities in the safe recruitment and selection of employees. In accordance with the Recruitment and Selection 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 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.
- 2.11 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.

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 employees, 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.

- 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 Leadership Team and the Group Health and Safety Panel.
- 3.5 This policy will be reviewed every 2 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 Safeguarding Procedure
 4.2 Safeguarding Children Procedure
 4.3 Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 4.4 Data Protection, Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
 4.5 Resolution Policy
 4.6 Honesty Policy
 4.7 Domestic Abuse Policy and Guidance.
 4.8 Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 4.9 ASB Policy, Procedure and Appendices
 4.10 Working Together for Children Guidance 2023
 4.11 Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees
 4.12 Children’s Act 2004
 4.13 Equality Act 2010
 4.14 Modern Slavery Act 2015
 4.15 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: National Referral Mechanism

5 Contact Details

Key Personnel	Name	Email	Tel No
Designated Children and Young People’s Safeguarding Lead	Sara Bradbury	sara.bradbury@enhamtrust.org.uk	07702 719422
Trustee/Senior lead for safeguarding and child protection			

6 Governance

Effective From:	14/06/2024	Expires:	31/08/2025
Policy Owner:	Sara Bradbury, Director of Operations (Enham) – Childrens Safeguarding Lead		
Policy Author:	Jo-ann Williams – Policy, Training and Assurance Manager		
Approved by:	<i>Operational Scrutiny & Assurance Panel</i>		
Delegation Matrix Reference:	R074.1	Version Number:	V1.01

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