

Diversity & inclusion Strategic plan

2023 - 2026

ASTER
GROUP

Putting Diversity and Inclusion at the heart of The Aster Way enables us to empower our colleagues, and our customers and communities to thrive.

Our ambition

Our ambition is to maintain a fair and inclusive offer that attracts a diversity of talent, enabling us to provide an exceptional service to our customers.

Our objectives

1

Better reflect the diversity of our communities throughout our workforce at all levels

2

Deliver a colleague offer that's fair and flexible to respond to differing needs and motivators, enabling us to attract and retain a diverse workforce

3

Embed restorative principles and further develop our customer and colleague voice channels across all aspects of what we do to ensure different perspectives are heard, respected, and considered

4

To embed inclusive leadership, enabling leaders to build and empower high performing diverse teams

5

Create a customer and colleague experience where everyone feels welcome and respected.

Our approach

Diversity and Inclusion is central to The Aster Way and everything we do.

We'll recognise the power of difference, creating a fairer and more inclusive culture by creating an environment where diversity in all its forms is welcomed and celebrated. We'll support each other to be the best we can be by valuing difference, teamwork, and positive challenge.

Our approach will be a data-driven, evidence-based and delivery focused. It will be led by effective and skilled leaders with communication and colleague voice central to its success.

This plan sets out our commitment to inclusion aiming to lead to increased diversity of thought, wider representation, and a better experience and outcomes for our customers and colleagues.



What we will do and our expectations

Data driven and evidence led

- Our interventions will be based on evidence such as the D&I dashboard data detailing representation of colleagues and customers
- Colleague and customer voice data, scores and feedback will be regularly reviewed, acted upon, and will inform decision making
- Colleague data will be analysed at different points during the employee lifecycle and will be used to demonstrate progress
- We will be transparent about our progress and the work we have left to do
- Insight created from workforce planning will inform future plans to increase diversity
- Colleague and customer data must be readily available via systems / dashboards for regular monitoring and review.

Colleague and customer voice

- We will actively listen to our colleagues, customers, and each other
- Our colleague networks groups will all contribute to the successful implementation of this plan
- We will aim to diversify representation within our customer groups
- All colleagues are responsible for contributing to a culture which supports and values diversity and inclusion.

Delivery focused

- Everyone must be engaged and accountable for this ambition
- Inclusion is embedded in The Aster Way, and this is central to building a high performing and inclusive workplace
- Inclusion will be embedded throughout people related activity, policies, and the employee lifecycle
- There will be appetite to develop more Board level diversity
- Strategic decisions will be mindful of cultural impact
- There will be investment in The Aster Offer ensuring there is budget and resource.

Led by effective and skilled leaders

- Leaders will be empowered to drive this plan and will attend inclusive leadership training
- Leaders will understand and be able to communicate the benefits and business case for a diverse and inclusive business
- Leaders will be expected to display a positive commitment to workplace diversity and inclusion and leading by example
- Leaders will be responsible for creating an inclusive environment and sense of belonging as well as actively dealing with unacceptable behaviour.



Our objectives

1

Better reflect the diversity of our communities throughout our workforce at all levels

We understand that our customers and communities are diverse and it's important that we reflect that diversity across our workforce. A range of backgrounds and experiences create diversity of thought leading to improved and more inclusive services for our customers.

We'll develop and modernise our approach to talent attraction to enable us to reach more diverse talent pools. We will strengthen and expand our entry to work, development and succession programmes, to attract and retain our most underrepresented groups.

We'll ensure everyone is able to maximise their potential. We'll review data on internal movement, progression, and aspiration - taking positive action where required to ensure all colleagues are able to develop and progress. We will use role models from a diverse range of backgrounds to increase the visibility of the broad range of experiences and opportunities available.

We'll actively engage internal and external opportunities to increase underrepresented groups in specific parts of our business such as increasing woman in trades and men in care. We will also continue to embed the Board Diversity Programme with an aim of increasing board diversity internally and across the sector.

2

Deliver a colleague offer that's fair and flexible to meet differing needs enabling us to attract and retain a diverse workforce

To deliver our ambition we must provide a colleague offer that enables us to attract and retain a diverse range of talent. We will develop the offer for our diverse workforce based on choice, fairness, and self-serve.

We'll continue to evolve our offer to enhance the colleague experience. We'll create a long-term reward plan that's sector leading along with evolving our award-winning wellbeing programme. Flexibility is central to attracting and retaining diverse talent, and we'll develop and communicate a vision for flexibility that meets a wide range of needs.

The way we work will be wide-ranging, ensuring it enables to be their best. Virtual and physical workspaces will foster collaboration, connection and support colleague wellbeing, driving engagement and enhancing productivity. Reviewing our approach to ways of working and their ability to 'work from anywhere' will enable us attract colleagues from further afield - expediting our attraction to a more diverse workforce.

Using data and insight from Building Performance and workforce planning we'll develop a range of talent programmes to ensure we are able to offer our diverse talent development opportunities and career progression. We'll support talented people regardless of background to develop their skills and build their career through using their strengths and to access qualifications for roles in their chosen career path.

3

Embed restorative principles and further develop our customer and colleague voice channels across all aspects of what we do to ensure different perspectives are heard, respected, and considered.

We're proud to be a Restorative Practice accredited organisation recognise the value of the restorative principles in driving respect, collaboration, and positive adult-to-adult behaviours. Collaboration through a 'culture hub' will bring together subject matter experts to ensure a joined-up approach in creating effective culture-change utilising colleague voice.

We'll bring The Aster Way to life for our colleagues helping them understand what it means for them. We continue to talk to colleagues about inclusion and create safe spaces for conversation to create a shared understanding.

Colleague and customer voice is central to the success of achieving an inclusive workplace and improved services for our customers. We will continue to evolve the way we listen to our colleagues and customers ensuring we are able to hear valuable insight and feedback to inform decision making. We will ensure our tone of voice and communication is accessible for all colleagues and customers.

Our Inclusion Steering Group, consisting of representatives across the business, will provide a strategic link for embedding inclusivity across all areas of the business. This is supported by our colleague networks, ensuring we hear a diverse range of voices and have safe spaces and allies for underrepresented or minority groups.

4

To embed inclusive leadership enabling leaders to build and empower high performing diverse teams

Establishing teams with differing perspectives, experiences, and insight is integral to tackling complex problems, promoting innovation, and delivering stronger decision making, where people feel safe and supported to provide their perspective, and positively recognised for doing so.

Our leaders are expected to be confident in inclusive recruitment, selection, onboarding and have the ability to create the right environment for colleagues to thrive. They must be able to lead, inspire, and motivate a diverse range of colleagues inclusively in a way that meets their needs and enables them to be high performing. Leaders will need to understand the value of diverse viewpoints and perspectives, and how to create psychological safety. We'll embed diversity and inclusion into our leadership development programmes to build on and develop inclusive leadership knowledge, skills, and confidence.

5

Create a customer and colleague experience where everyone feels welcome and respected.

Colleagues who have a positive experience at work are more likely to be engaged and have an increased sense of belonging, leading to better experiences for our customers. We welcome and respect difference and will recruit based on behaviour in line with The Aster Way, as well as skill. Our focus is cultural add not 'fit.' Our values, principles, and The Aster Way behaviours help to underpin a culture of inclusion. There will continue to be zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, and discrimination of any kind from the top of the organisation to the frontline.

Complementing this plan are our Diversity and Inclusion policy, our Diversity and Inclusion Principles and The Aster Way – our values and behaviour framework. We will routinely monitor the effectiveness of our inclusion initiatives by conducting engagement and cultural surveys, taking meaningful action based on the results, as well as using external benchmarking, such as enei's (the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion) TIDE benchmark.

Our focus on inclusion is also underpinned by restorative principles, encouraging challenge and conversation in a safe and respectful way. We will enable a culture of inclusivity by embedding diversity and inclusion learning opportunities in our colleague development programme. This is focused on raising and building awareness, whilst providing colleagues with tools and skills to be appreciative and respectful of diversity in all its forms.



Outcomes of delivery against the plan

Objective 1

Better reflect the diversity of our communities throughout our workforce at all levels.

Comprehensive demographic data from all colleagues and customers and unknowns become minimal.

Colleague ethnicity to reflect that of our communities.

Colleague disability reflects that of our communities.

A range of talent pipeline, reskilling, and entry points into employment that attract a diverse range of talent.

Objective 2

Deliver a colleague offer that is fair and flexible to meet differing needs enabling us to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

Flexible benefits offer available for all colleagues across all subsidiary brands.

Year on year progress towards a reduction in our gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

A range of talent programmes that are accessible for diverse talent (targeted at underrepresented groups where appropriate).

Colleagues can work from anywhere, with the offer of modern and flexible workspaces to suit all needs.

Objective 3

Embed restorative principles and further develop our customer and colleague voice channels across all aspects of what we do to ensure different perspectives are heard, respected and considered.

Inclusion Steering Group help shaping key business decisions.

Colleague networks driven by colleagues and helping inform the Aster Offer and creating safe spaces for colleagues to come together from underrepresented groups.

Diversity in our in our customer and colleague voice groups.

Restorative principles underpinning our customer and colleague communications and interactions.

Objective 4

To embed inclusive leadership enabling leaders to build and empower high performing diverse teams

All leaders completed Inclusive Leadership Training. Training is also embedded leadership development pathway for new leaders.

360 feedback in place for leaders.

Colleague sentiment shows a 90% favourable score on My Leader.

Objective 5

Create a customer and colleague experience where everyone feels welcome and respected.

An aware and culturally sensitive workforce informed by a robust learning offer on all aspects of diversity tailored to learning/audience requirements.

Colleague engagement score remains at 60% or above.

Customer satisfaction score is 80% / meets Tenant Satisfaction Measure standards.

Colleague sentiment shows 90% of colleagues feel people from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed at Aster.

Colleague sentiment shows 90% of colleagues feel they can be their true self at work.