Environmental
Governance
Social &

(ESG) Report

2020 / 2021

ASTER
GROUP

Our vision is that
Everyone has a home

Contents

ASTER
GROUP

Introduction

Welcome to our **2020 / 2021 Environmental**, **Social** & **Governance** (ESG) Report.

In a year dominated by COVID-19, the impact of the pandemic has been felt by each and every one of us. From the overnight step change in how we work to the impact of sustained lockdowns, this year has been challenging for all.

Despite these many challenges, we have weathered the storm with resilience and flexibility. It's this approach that drives our commitment to enhancing our strategy and protecting our legacy, through our communities, assets and people in a way that ensures sustainability, in its widest sense is embedded throughout the business.

As a housing association with a strong social purpose, customer voice plays a key role in our ability to deliver the best possible customer service. It's with the input of our customers that we're able to support people to sustain their tenancies, to provide financial and wellbeing support to those who need it and to create communities that thrive, not just now, but into the future.

We will always provide safe, affordable homes to people who need them. To do this in a way that protects the biodiversity of our communities and lowers our carbon footprint remains a crucial focus for us. It's with this focus that we make our long-term decisions, from reducing our corporate estate, to investing in our homes and achieving true diversity of thought, by creating a culture of inclusivity for our people and customers, we will continue to make positive changes.

In this, our second Environmental, Sustainability and Governance Report (ESG) we outline how our activities over the past 12 months have supported our commitment to ensuring we remain a strong, sustainable business long into the future.

More information can be found on our website, **www.aster.co.uk**. For any specific queries, please contact **investor.relations@aster.co.uk**.

Bjorn Howard

Group chief executive

Report Structure

UN Sustainable Development Goals

Making a positive contribution to the communities in which we operate is embedded in our corporate strategy. This is further delivered through the work of the Aster Foundation[1] investing in our communities and their future through a range of initiatives including our Into Work and Financial Wellbeing services, our Digital College, tackling fuel poverty, mental wellness and resilience and volunteering opportunities. This work, coupled with building as many homes as we can through a range of housing options to support our vision that everyone has a home, aligns to several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[2].

1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	

The structure of this report is aligned to the specific themes outlined in The Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing[3]. Within each theme we have reported against individual criteria. Our reporting is also aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[4] and the table below gives the themes and the specific SDGs to which they relate.

ESG	Theme	Description	UN Sustainable Development Goals	
Environmental	Climate change	Impact on climate change and risk mitigants	7 9 13	Affordable and Clean Energy/ Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure/ Climate Action
	Ecology	Protection of the local environment and ecology	15	Life on Land
Social	Affordability and security	Extent to which homes are genuinely affordable	1 10 11	No Poverty/Reduce Inequality/ Sustainable Cities and Communities
	Building safety and quality	Meeting legal responsibilities to protect residents and keep buildings safe	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
	Resident voice	Listening to and empowering residents	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
	Customer support	Initiatives to support individual residents	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
	Placemaking	Homes and places that meet local needs	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
Governance	Structure and governance	Structure and approach to governance	16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
	Board and trustees	Suitability and performance of the board and trustees	16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
	Staff wellbeing	Staff support and wellbeing	8	Decent Work and Economic Growth

Report Structure

UN Sustainable Development Goals (continued)

1 Our vision is that everyone has a home. We are committed to providing homes people can afford in places they want to live. We support our customers to sustain their tenancies, to find employment and to access the emotional, financial and physical support they need. We continue to have a strong focus on supporting the local communities in which we work through the Aster Foundation which invests in a series of initiatives to enable local people to improve their own lives. We continue to have a strong focus on supporting the local communities in which we work through the Aster Foundation which invests in a series of initiatives to enable local people to improve their own lives. This includes our Into Work and Financial Wellbeing services, our Digital College, tackling fuel poverty, mental wellness and resilience offer and volunteering opportunities. We also support Housing First to tackle homelessness and our Independent Living services enable independence for our older customers by providing solutions to address a range of exclusion challenges. Our Social incubator, **inc.** gives social entrepreneurs an opportunity to grow their skills and drive change across our communities while reducing the impact from a host of prevalent social challenges in innovative ways.

The Foundation is set to become a charitable entity this year to amplify our impact further, enabling the better lives of at least 40,000 people by 2030.

7 Through Aster Solar, we provide green electricity to our customers, reducing fuel poverty and generating profits that can be reinvested into charitable activities. Our customers save between £100 and £200 per annum on electricity bills and carbon emissions are reduced by one tonne of carbon per home, per year. We're committed to exploring new opportunities and have plans to develop a solar farm on land we own as part of a community energy project, creating green, sustainable and affordable energy for our customers. We also became a founding member of the Good Homes Alliance (GHA) Pathfinder Network. The main aim of the network is to facilitate housing associations to adopt enhanced sustainability, quality, health and performance standards for new housing developments.

8 The impact of COVID-19 meant that we focused on using technology and virtual collaboration to support our people through furlough, working from home, with children at home and then through further lockdowns. We launched the Thrive mental health app which is endorsed by the NHS and links to our existing Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services. Our Mental Health First Aid network continued to develop, with volunteers staying updated with training and providing support throughout. We also developed a menopause support programme, including Hot Topic sofa sessions, leader awareness sessions and talks from leading authorities in menopause. Our work has been recognised by Menopause Friendly, who have awarded us the 'Menopause Friendly Employer' accreditation. We also published our Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) policy and principles as well as launching our first LGBTQ+ colleague network.

9 We continue to work towards every one of our homes receiving an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of 'C' or above by 2025, and through the existing Warm Homes Fund grant, are improving the EPC ratings of 400 of our older homes to a C or above. Of the new homes we delivered during 2020/2021, 97% have an EPC rating of B and we are committed to continuing to build to this standard, as well as introducing the Environmental Impact Rating (EIR) of B or above as a consideration in the appraisal stage of the planning process. The Group also operates a voids disposal, stock option appraisal and land enhancement programme which generated proceeds of £15.7 million in 2020/2021. The proceeds from the disposal programmes will be reinvested into future sustainable developments.

10 We are committed to creating a fairer and more inclusive culture by creating an environment where diversity in all its forms is welcomed and celebrated. Our diversity principles set out our approach and focus on:

- Knowing our customers and colleagues

- Delivering fairness for all and ensuring everyone has a voice

- Ensuring diversity of thinking.

We are accredited by the Disability Confident Scheme and have recently launched our first LGBTQ+ network with support from LGBTQ+ charity Stonewall.

In 2020 we became the first non-criminal justice organisation in the UK to be awarded Registered Restorative Organisation status by the Restorative Justice Council.

11 We supply a wide range of housing options in response to the housing crisis, working towards our vision of ensuring everyone has a home. We provide safe, well maintained homes supported by long-term investment in communities where people choose to live. We strive to create communities our customers are proud to call home and invest in the future of our communities through the Aster Foundation, the work we choose to do over and above our landlord and development activities.

13 Operating under the ISO 14001 standards, we are continuously looking at ways to reduce our carbon footprint and maximise our use of green and renewable energy. All of our new build homes meet current sustainability targets and we are committed to ensuring that every one of our existing homes meets a minimum EPC rating of C or above by 2025. We are invested in using renewable energy sources like solar to reduce our environmental impact and we are taking an agile approach to office space to create a more sustainable model for the future.

15 We are committed to minimising the impact of housing on the environment where we can. As a founding member of the GHA Pathfinder Network we're working with others in the network to facilitate housing associations to adopt enhanced sustainability, quality, health and performance standards for new housing developments. As with the GHA Vanguard Network, this will be achieved through sharing best practice, creation of new resources and guidance, and conducting original research and demonstration projects.

16 We had our A+ (stable) rating from Standard and Poor's reaffirmed, which recognises our strong fundamentals and experienced management team, together with our robust governance framework as evidenced in the maintenance of our G1 governance and V1 viability ratings by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Environmental

Climate change

This theme seeks to assess how the activities of the housing provider are impacting on climate change, and how they are mitigating the physical risks of climate change. This theme considers current practice, as well as the changes being made to improve performance in the future.
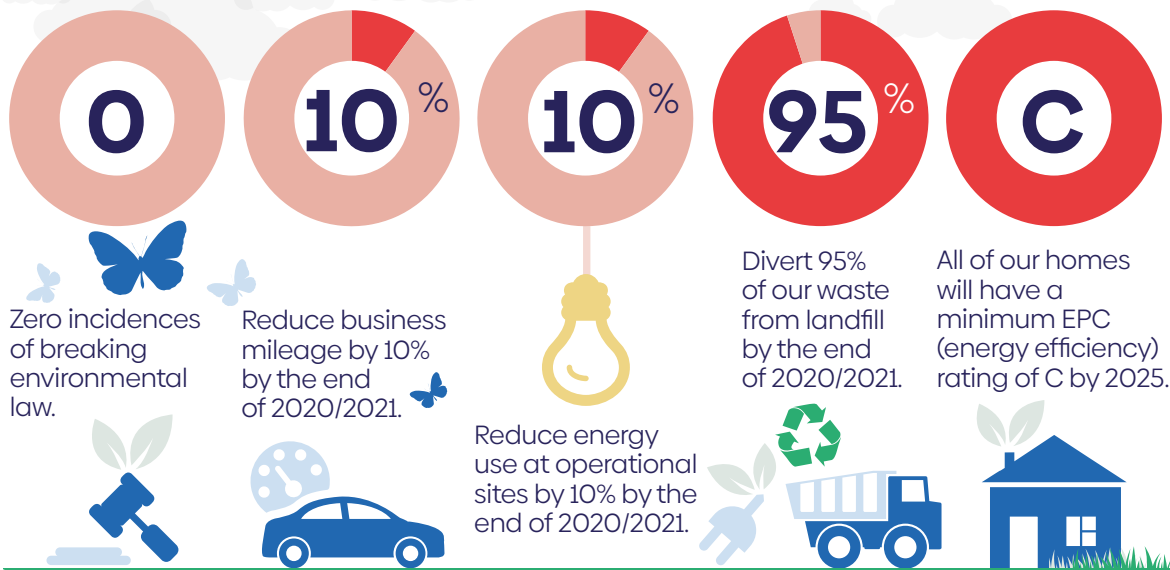
1. Environmental management

In order to provide a framework to manage our environmental risks and maximise opportunities, we operate an environmental management system, which is externally certified to the ISO 14001 standard. As part of this, we are continually seeking ways to minimise our environmental impact.
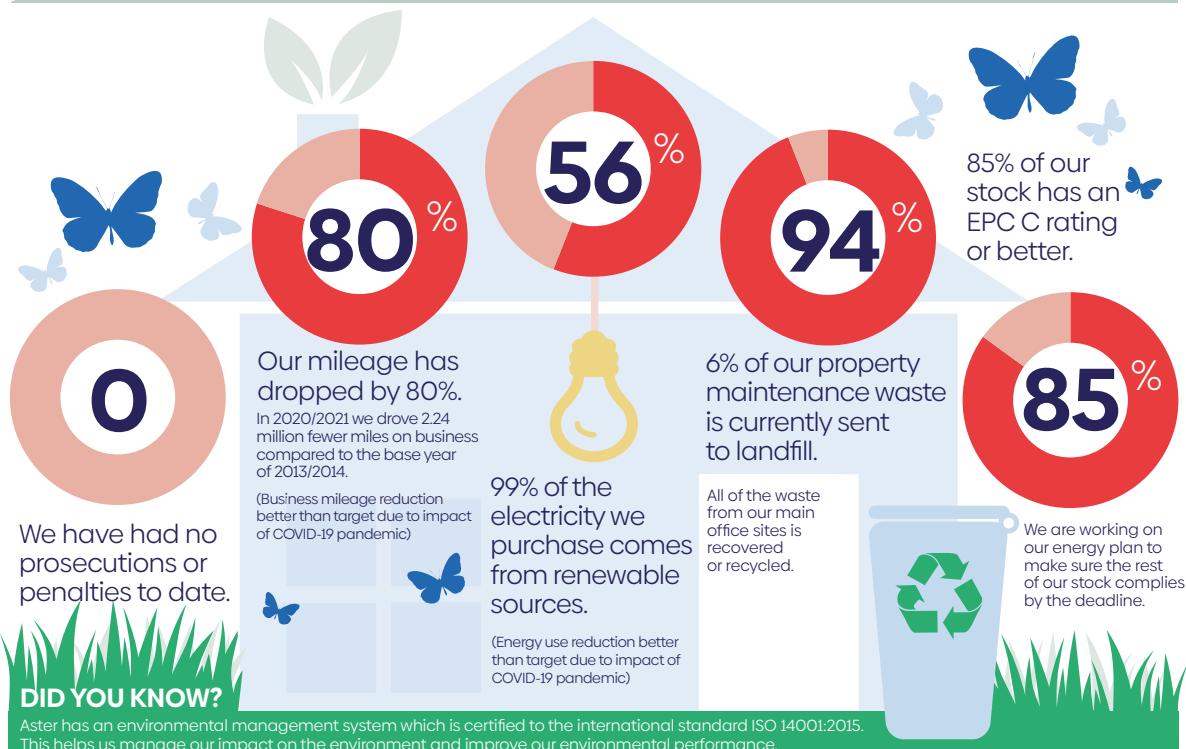
During 2020/2021 we:

- Added 18 new, fuel efficient vehicles to our fleet

- Trialled fully electric and hybrid operational vehicles

- Adopted a 'virtual first' approach to working for non-trades, reducing the need for our people to travel for business purposes

- Ensured office space was used efficiently and building controls were optimised to reflect reduced building occupancy during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Began a programme to install smart electricity meters at key operational locations

- Replaced 23 inefficient communal boilers at four housing schemes with high-efficiency models (minimum 95% efficient) and upgraded the plant controls at these locations

- Continued to roll out our Warm Homes project to reduce fuel poverty in up to 400 of our homes by installing central heating (works scheduled to be completed by December 2021). This is helping to bring these properties up to an EPC C standard or better, supporting our target for all homes to have an EPC rating of C or above by 2025

- Became a founding member of the GHA Pathfinder Network. The main aim of the network is to facilitate housing associations to adopt enhanced sustainability, quality, health and performance standards for new housing developments. As with the GHA Vanguard Network, this will be achieved through sharing best practice, creation of new resources and guidance, and conducting original research and demonstration projects.

ASTER & THE ENVIRONMENT

0

Zero incidences of breaking environmental law.

10%

Reduce business mileage by 10% by the end of 2020/2021.

10%

Reduce energy use at operational sites by 10% by the end of 2020/2021.

95%

Divert 95% of our waste from landfill by the end of 2020/2021.

C

All of our homes will have a minimum EPC (energy efficiency) rating of C by 2025.

TARGETS

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

0

We have had no prosecutions or penalties to date.

80%

Our mileage has dropped by 80%.

In 2020/2021 we drove 2.24 million fewer miles on business compared to the base year of 2013/2014.

(Business mileage reduction better than target due to impact of COVID-19 pandemic)

56%

99% of the electricity we purchase comes from renewable sources.

(Energy use reduction better than target due to impact of COVID-19 pandemic)

94%

6% of our property maintenance waste is currently sent to landfill.

All of the waste from our main office sites is recovered or recycled.

85%

85% of our stock has an EPC C rating or better.

We are working on our energy plan to make sure the rest of our stock complies by the deadline.

DID YOU KNOW?
Aster has an environmental management system which is certified to the international standard ISO 14001:2015. This helps us manage our impact on the environment and improve our environmental performance.

Environmental

Climate change (continued)

2. Streamlined Energy & Carbon Reporting (SECR)

During the coming year we will continue our work to define medium and long-term carbon emissions reduction targets. Also, although not within the scope of SECR reporting, we will continue to develop our Energy Plan, which aims to ensure that all of our housing stock achieves a minimum energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of C by 2025, five years earlier than the government target. 85% of our properties meet this requirement at 31 March 2021.

Our SECR data shows the energy use and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions arising from offices, depots and communal customer sites, the operation of our vehicle fleet, and our people (grey fleet) travelling for business. This year we have also added in the energy use and GHG emissions arising from our people working from home. The information is presented both in absolute terms as total energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions, and as an intensity measure relative to the total number of homes we own and manage.

	2021	2020	% Change
Energy consumption:			
1. Mains gas (MWh)	**14,714**	14,896	(1.2)
2. Transport fuel – company fleet (MWh)	**6,053**	7,327	(17.4)
3. Transport fuel – business travel in employee-owned vehicles (MWh)	**604**	2,859	(78.9)
4. Fuel used in plant and equipment) (MWh)	**714**	927	(23.0)
5. Purchased electricity (MWh)	**6,841**	7,648	(10.6)
6. Electricity provided by landlord at corporate sites	**332**	Included in item 5	-
7. Energy consumed by staff working from home (MWh)	**3,208**	Not assessed	-
8. **Total energy consumption (items 1-7) (MWh)**	**32,466**	33,657	(3.5)
Greenhouse gas emissions - mandatory (SECR) reporting:			
9. Combustion of gas (Scope 1) (tCO2e)	**2,705**	2,739	(1.2)
10. Combustion of fuel for transport (Scope 1 – company fleet) (tCO2e)	**1,457**	1,793	(18.7)
11. Combustion of fuel for transport (Scope 3 – business travel in employee-owned vehicles) (tCO2e)	**150**	686	(78.1)
12. Electricity (Scope 2, location-based) (tCO2e)	**1,595**	1,955	(18.4)
13. **Total gross emissions for which SECR reporting required (items 9-12) (tCO2e)**	**5,907**	7,173	(17.6)

	2021	2020	% Change
Intensity ratio – mandatory emissions reporting:			
14. Total gross emissions (item 11) per property managed (tCO2e / property)	**0.210**	0.265	(20.8)
Methodology:			
15. Greenhouse Gas Reporting Protocol – Corporate Standard			
Other emissions - non-mandatory reporting:			
16. Emissions from fuel used in plant and equipment (Scope 1) (tCO2e)	**140**	159	(11.9)
17. Emissions from purchased electricity (Scope 2, market-based) (tCO2e)	**77**	25	+ 208.0
18. Emissions from electricity consumed in transmission and distribution (Scope 3) (tCO2e)	**144**	166	(13.3)
19. Emissions from staff home working (Scope 3) (tCO2e)	**603**	Not assessed	-
Total gross emissions - mandatory plus non-mandatory reporting:			
20. Total of scopes 1, 2 and 3 emissions (location-based electricity) (tCO2e) (sum of items 13, 16, 18 and 19)	**6,872**	7,498	(8.3)
21. Total of scopes 1, 2 and 3 emissions (market-based electricity) (tCO2e) (sum of items 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18 and 19)	**5,277**	5,568	(5.2)
Intensity ratios – total gross emissions:			
22. Total gross emissions (item 17) per property owned and managed (location-based electricity) (tCO2e / property)	**0.244**	0.277	(11.9)
23. Total gross emissions (item 18) per property owned and managed (market-based electricity) (tCO2e / property)	**0.187**	0.206	(9.2)

Explanatory notes on the data

1. Mains electricity and gas consumption data derive from invoices and have been provided by Aster's energy broker, who purchase energy on the Group's behalf.

2. Fleet fuel consumption has been derived from fuel card data, which covers all purchased fuel.

3. The energy consumption associated with business travel in employee-owned vehicles is not directly measured and has therefore been estimated from the mileage driven, which is captured by the company's expense handling software.

4. The consumption of fuel used in plant and equipment has been obtained from a combination of fuel card data (for petrol and diesel purchased from garage forecourts) and purchase invoices (other fuels).

5. The energy consumed by our people working from home has been calculated using the methodology set out in the ecoact Homeworking Emissions Whitepaper.

6. Emissions have been calculated using the 2020 UK Government Greenhouse Gas Conversion Factors for Company Reporting. The exception to this is the market-based emissions factor for the main corporate (renewable) electricity supply contract, which was provided by the supplier.

7. Where there is a small discrepancy between the totals shown and the sum of the constituent parts, this is the result of the rounding of figures.

Environmental

Climate change (continued)

3. Energy performance of our stock (for available data)

In 2016, we set out our Energy Plan which aims to ensure all our homes have an EPC rating of C or above by 2025, five years earlier than the target set out by Government. As at 31 March 2021, 85% of our existing properties met this requirement, and 97% of the homes we built in 2020/2021 had an EPC of B. The corresponding figures for the environmental impact rating are 71% and 97%.

Energy efficiency rating
Existing homes - at 31 March 2021

Very energy efficient - low or no running cost

(92-100) A	0.4%
(81-91) B	21.6%
(69-80) C	62.8%
(55-68) D	15.1%
(1-54) E-G	0.1%

Not energy efficient - higher running costs

Energy efficiency rating
New homes - 12 months to 31 March 2021

Very energy efficient - low or no running costs

(92-100) A	0%
(81-91) B	97%
(69-80) C	3%
(55-68) D	0%
(1-54) E-G	0%

Not energy efficient - higher running costs

Environmental impact rating
Existing homes - at 31 March 2021

Very energy efficient - low or no running cost

(92-100) A	0.8%
(81-91) B	27.7%
(69-80) C	42.8%
(55-68) D	16.8%
(1-54) E-G	11.9%

Not energy efficient - higher running costs

Environmental impact rating
New homes - at 31 March 2021

Very energy efficient - low or no running cost

|	
(92-100) A	0.7%
(81-91) B	96.4%
(69-80) C	2.9%
(55-68) D	0%
(1-54) E-G	0%

Not energy efficient - higher running costs

During 2020/2021, the average energy performance of our homes improved by 0.4 Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) points, and our average SAP rating at the end of the reporting period was 74.6, which is above the sector average of 69 (as at the 2019 reporting date)[5].

In practical terms this means we have approximately 4,300 homes that we will need to improve or dispose of before 2025. Our void disposal programme and options appraisal processes consider options for poorly performing assets (assessment criteria cover factors such as energy efficiency, age, and maintenance and repair obligations), including disposal where the SAP rating of a property is below 65. We will continue to review what measures can be taken to improve the overall energy efficiency of our stock and a newly established Strategic Asset Management Group will help develop a holistic approach to how we undertake a whole series of stock enhancements. In addition, we continue to explore what external funding and partnership

opportunities might exist to help further expand our energy efficiency programmes. This includes exploring the potential of the national Green Home Grant - Local Authority Delivery Scheme, and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding programmes during the latter part of 2021. The above alongside our scheduled programme of works through major repairs will help to improve the EPC ratings of our stock.

Our Asset Management Strategy also outlines that we will make a positive contribution towards a net carbon reduction, improve the energy efficiency of our stock and limit the impact it has on the environment. We have a small development of highly energy efficient Passivhaus[6] homes near Liskeard in Cornwall. Built in 2012, these 20 properties comprise a range of tenures and property types. We continue to monitor the performance of these homes in order to help give us an example of the long-term benefits of more sustainable builds.
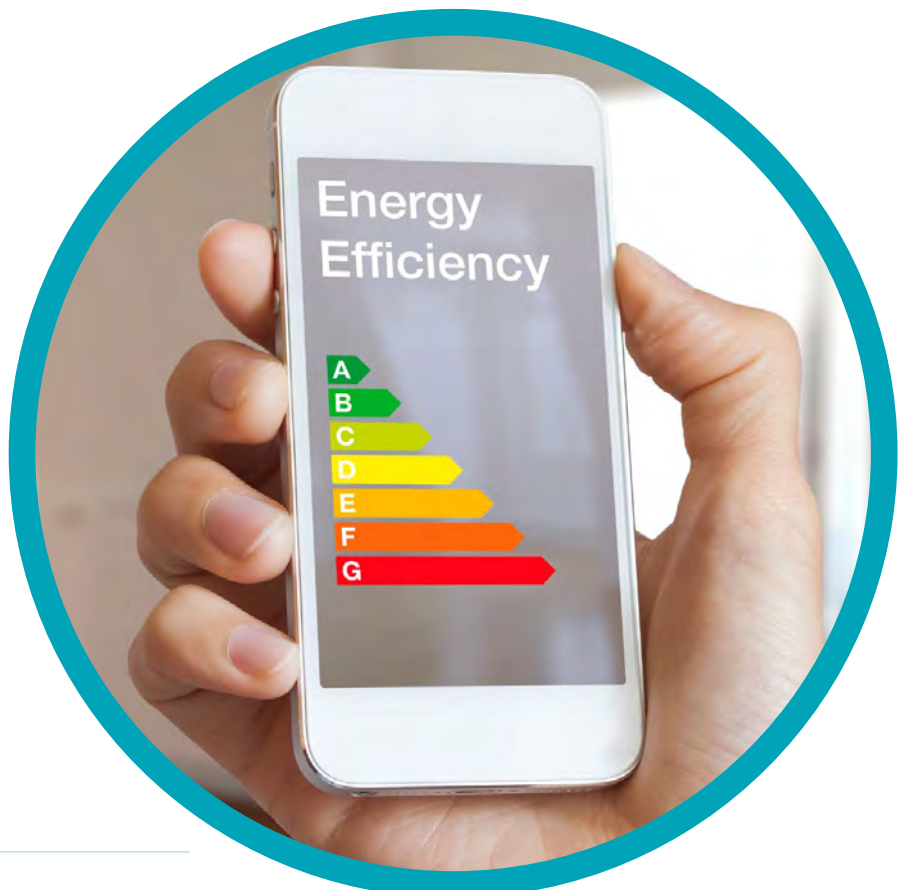
5 **www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk**

6 Passivhaus buildings provide a high level of occupant comfort while using very little energy for heating and cooling. They are built with meticulous attention to detail and rigorous design and construction according to principles developed by the Passivhaus Institute in Germany.

Environmental

Climate change (continued)

4. Aster Solar

Aster Solar Limited is a special purpose vehicle (SPV) for investment in photovoltaic panels on behalf of other Group entities.

Through Aster Solar, our main activity is to provide green electricity to our customers through the installation of photovoltaic panels on existing properties.

The alleviation of fuel poverty amongst our customers is a key objective for Aster Solar, together with the ability to generate profits that can be reinvested into charitable activities. To date we have:

- Installed 745 domestic solar PV systems on some of the least efficient homes in our portfolio

- Helped install a further 263 systems not financed through SPV

- Achieved an EPC of C or better on these homes as a result, in line with our EPC target of C by 2025

- Enabled affected customers to save between £100 and £200 per annum on electricity bills together with reducing carbon emissions by one tonne of carbon per home, per year.

We continue to explore opportunities to increase the quantity of renewable energy generated at our homes. A number of activities are underway, including a pilot project to explore the new Smart Export Guarantee payments for renewable electricity that is fed into the grid, with an initial target of 30 homes commencing during August 2021. The project is designed to test how much energy is produced and exported to the grid by properties with solar photovoltaic (PV) panels fitted. This will help us determine if it is viable to fit solar panels on the new homes we build, by assessing the extent to which the income received for the electricity produced will offset the capital and ongoing maintenance costs. Also, discussions with a number of local authorities continue to take place, with a view to developing joint renewable energy retrofit projects across parts of our communities.

Capacity of renewable energy production:

2,716kW
Total kW

0.10kW
Total kW per home

5. Colleague Transformation Network – Green Champions

The aim of the Green Champions is to promote and educate the business on green or sustainable issues. They are actively involved with projects and green initiatives that benefit our colleagues, customers and estates.

Achievements for 2020/2021:

- Set up a new internal environmental communication channel for colleagues to exchange ideas and collaborate

- A green learning offer created to promote Green learning, links to courses, webinars and information, focussed on making a positive environmental difference both at work and at home

- Developed a green section on our existing employee benefits platform which signposts employees to local green retailers and associated discounts.

Future activity and goals:

- Supporting beach clean and estate tidy ups across our communities

- Developing a Green Pledges section on our volunteering platform Aster VIP, to help inform users of how small changes can make a big difference

- Exploring options for planting trees and rewilding some of our communities.

Certification and compliance

We have held third-party ISO 14001 certification of our Environmental Management System (EMS) since 2010. The purpose of the EMS is to ensure we:

- Identify and manage our environmental risks and opportunities

- Meet our policy commitments

- Remain legally compliant

- Continually improve our environmental performance.

Having third-party certification demonstrates to key stakeholders, including our customers, regulators, investors and employees, that our EMS is successfully achieving these aims and is doing so in line with the requirements of the most widely used environmental management standard worldwide.

The scope of our certification is 'the provision of social housing and associated services, including care and support, property development, property maintenance, property management and administrative services.'

Environmental incidents are monitored and reported to the Group Risk & Compliance Committee, a committee of our Board.
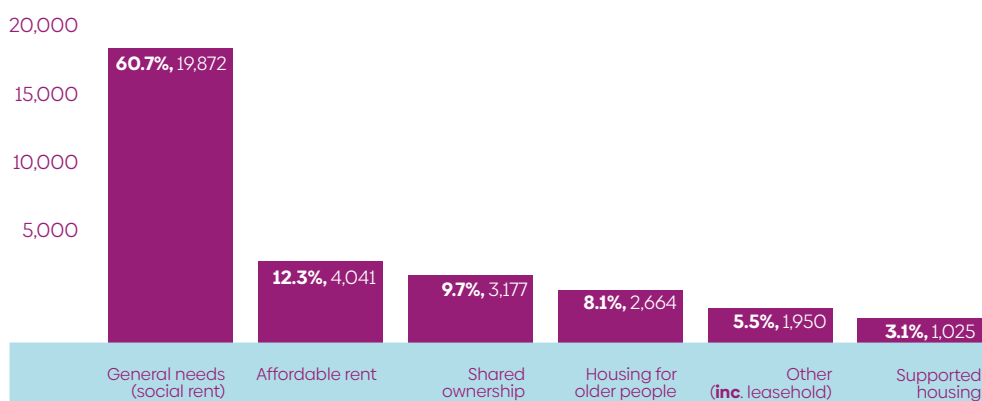
Social

Affordability & security

This theme seeks to assess the extent to which the housing providers provides long-term homes that are genuinely affordable to those on low incomes.

1. Homes and bed spaces owned and/or in management

Most of the homes and bed spaces owned and/or in managementare for social and affordable rent. At 31 March 2021, we had 32,729 homes across 50 local authorities of which 73% were for social and affordable rent.
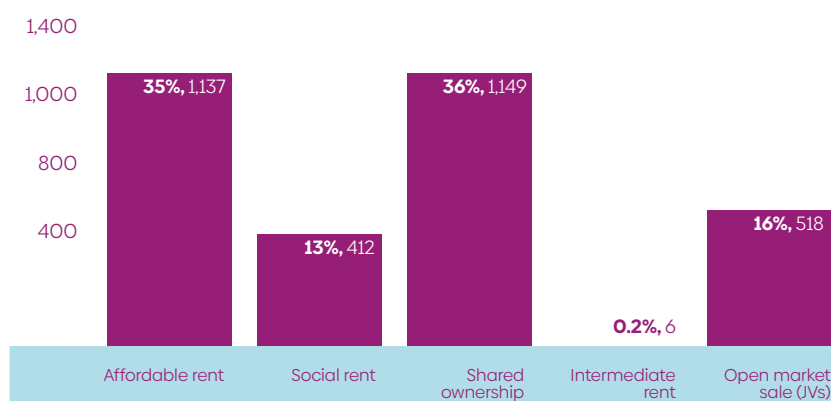

60.7%, 19,872	**12.3%,** 4,041	**9.7%,** 3,177	**8.1%,** 2,664	**5.5%,** 1,950	**3.1%,** 1,025
General needs (social rent)	Affordable rent	Shared ownership	Housing for older people	Other (**inc**. leasehold)	Supported housing

2. Homes under development

The provision of affordable housing is at the centre of what we do. In the financial year 2020/2021, we completed 928 homes of which 817 homes (88%) were affordable housing for either rent or shared ownership. We also built 111 homes for open market sale through risk sharing joint ventures, the profits from which fed into the affordable development programme.

At 31 March 2021, we had 3,222 homes under development of which 84% were affordable for rent or shared ownership, and the remainder were for open market sale through our joint ventures.

Homes under development

31 March 2021

35%, 1,137	**13%,** 412	**36%,** 1,149	**0.2%,** 6	**16%,** 518
Affordable rent	Social rent	Shared ownership	Intermediate rent	Open market sale (JVs)

Social

Affordability & security (continued)

3. Affordability

We offer security of tenure to existing and prospective customers and we let most of our homes either with an assured tenancy or a starter tenancy. We carry out pre-allocation assessments where we look at any risks that might mean the tenancy fails including an affordability check. Working with our local authority partners we cap 85% of our affordable rents at the local housing allowance level.

We aim to be responsive and flexible to the wide range of housing needs ensuring we make the best use of our homes by letting them as quickly as possible. When we benchmark ourselves against other housing associations, we perform in the top quartile. In areas where demand is low or we have homes that are difficult to let, we work with our local authority partners and let these where possible on temporary tenancies to help them meet their obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

We have nominations agreements in place with all Local Authorities in which we operate, which guarantee those on the housing register access to our available homes helping them meet their statutory housing duties. The housing registers use a points or band-based system to identify specific housing need and prioritise applicants.

Building safety & quality

This theme seeks to assess how effective the housing provider is at meeting its legal responsibilities to protect residents and keep buildings safe.

The vision of our Asset Management Strategy is to provide safe, well maintained homes supported by long-term investment in communities where people choose to live. Our beyond compliance approach to health and safety and fire safety, saw us invest £9.8m in these areas in 2020/2021.

1. Fire Safety

At 31 March 2021, our Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) compliance for Aster was at 100% on a target of 100%, based on a total of 557 FRAs carried out within the year (12 carried out by external party). The COVID-19 lockdown restrictions meant we had to postpone all non-essential works including FRAs, but we returned to a normal programme of safety inspections and FRA compliance as soon as we were able. When compared to target, we achieved 100% for the high priority FRAs at 31 March 2021.

2. Gas servicing

The COVID-19 restrictions caused significant disruption in the first half of 2020/2021. Despite this we achieved 99.8% gas servicing compliance at 31 March 2021 against a target of 100%, based on a total of 20,955 gas services.

3. Electrical compliance

Despite the significant disruptions from COVID-19, electrical compliance for Aster as at 31 March 2021 was at 99.2%, based on a total of 5,629 electrical tests.

4. Decent homes standard

As at 31 March 2021, 265 properties were initially identified as requiring planned works, to ensure that they continued to meet the decent homes standard. Due to the delays to programmed works as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns, we were unable to complete the necessary planned works to ensure these properties remained decent, as defined by the standard. Throughout the first quarter of 2021/2022 we worked hard to fully appraise those properties and have been able to discount a significant number as not failing on condition, adjusting for this takes the total number of properties as at 31 March 2021 requiring planned works to 104.

Social

Customer voice

This theme seeks to assess how effective the housing provider is at listening to and empowering customers.

One of our five principles in our strategic framework is Customer Voice, which looks to transform the way in which we engage, listen to and empower our customers. We are currently working with Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), a national organisation dedicated to improving engagement standards, to review our service and develop a programme to evolve and improve. We have recently refreshed our Customer Voice Policy and Framework to reflect our commitment in this area, and to build on our already excellent approach.

We have a number of formal customer groups who we regularly engage with, as well as a substantial number of customers who we consult on policies or service changes. Our Customer and Community Network (CCN) is an integral part of our governance framework consisting of customers, executive and non-executive directors, with the responsibility for scrutinising and challenging our performance, how we deliver services to our customers, and onward recommendation of customer related policies and strategies. The customer voice is further integrated through our Customer Overview Group (COG) and the Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP).

The COG is made up of a group of customers who review and approve customer facing policies and procedures and make recommendations on how services are best delivered for our customers.

Some of the recent work that COG have been involved in includes:

- Operational target setting for customer facing services
- Focussing on customer satisfaction survey data
- Reviewing operational performance
- Energy and Environmental Sustainability Strategy work.

The Customer Scrutiny Panel provides a thorough and customer focussed assessment of our services and processes.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way we engage with customers; it has provided opportunities to be more agile and improve value for money by maximising digital and virtual methods of communication and consultation. In 2020/2021, we received feedback from over 3,750 customers, compared to around 1,250 in 2019/2020, and around 800 in 2018/2019.

Regular customer surveys are undertaken to measure and understand our customer's perception of our organisation, allowing a consistent and comparable approach of customer satisfaction across the business and with other housing associations. Our performance for the year to 31 March 2021 for General Needs (GN) and Housing for Older People (HOP) demonstrates excellent customer satisfaction.

Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR)	Target	2020/2021
Overall customer satisfaction	80%	**82%**
Rent represents value for money	90%	**89%**
Neighbourhood as a place to live	88%	**87%**
Customer effort (how easy or difficult is Aster to deal with)	80%	**82%**
Repairs service	75%	**75%**
Satisfaction with the quality of your home (new build and re-let)	76%	**78%**

Three other surveys were also carried out in 2020/2021 to measure customer feedback on the following areas over the last 12 months:

New customers - 326 new GN and HOP customers were surveyed regarding the process of moving into their home, and how well the property met their needs. They told us:

- Ease of process
  - First let properties: **85**%
  - Re-let properties: **76**%.
- Meeting their needs
  - First let properties: **93**% (fully) and **7**% (partly)
  - Re-let properties: **79**% (fully) and **20%** (partly).

Responsive repairs – we surveyed 1,094 customers who had a repair in the last 30 days.
They revealed:

- Overall satisfaction: **90**%
- Being kept informed: **89**%
- Quality of the repair: **90**%
- Ease of process: **86**%.

Planned maintenance – 609 customers who had planned maintenance in their home told us:

- Overall satisfaction: **79**%
- Ease of process: **83**%.

Registered with the Housing Ombudsman, the Designated Complaints Panel (DCP) is a group of customers that are specially trained in reviewing complaints independently and objectively where a resolution hasn't been reached during the formal complaints process. In 2020/2021 the DCP reviewed just one complaint where recommendations were made to help improve our service delivery and learn from the complaint. Due to COVID-19 the DCP were not able to meet in person with customers or our people to review complaints so instead a new 'online virtual' review process was successfully trialled and has now been adopted permanently.

Following the publication of the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code in July 2020, the DCP together with the other involved customer groups, supported the development of a new complaints policy to ensure compliance with the new complaint code.

We work hard to ensure we deliver a good quality service but sometimes things don't go quite as we expected. In 2020/2021, we recorded 374 formal complaints and 580 fast track complaints. Of these, 16 remained unresolved and were escalated for a review by a regional or operations directors and nine were investigated by the Housing Ombudsman.

- **374** formal complaints received
- **580** fast track complaints
- **16** complaints unresolved and escalated to director review
- **One** complaint reviewed by DCP
- **Nine** complaints were investigated by the Housing Ombudsman and a determination given. There were no determinations of maladministration.

Social

Customer support

This theme seeks to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives that the housing provider runs to support individual customers.

Purpose

To invest in communities, and in their future.

Mission

To enable better lives through our impact programmes and innovative approach to tackling social challenges.

History and vision

The Aster Foundation was created by Aster Group in response to government welfare policy changes in 2016 and increasing inequalities across the UK. Aster Communities was also set up as a way to highlight the additional work carried out by the Group to create social impact in the places which needed it the most. The Foundation operated as a department within Aster for nearly three years and within this time positively impacted thousands of people. Our plans to become a charitable entity in 2021, allows us to amplify our impact further, enabling the better lives of at least 40,000 people by 2030.

The Aster Foundation supports our vision of 'everyone has a home' by creating services which enable people to sustain those homes when life challenges get in the way, while also addressing the root of the challenges through **inc.** our social incubator.

The Aster Foundation operates across the areas of Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Sussex, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, Wiltshire and London, although will work with authentic talent across the UK who wish to create a positive impact across our communities.

1. Into Work Programme

We offer our tenants one-to-one support through our Into Work scheme, where we can help with creating a CV and job applications, interview skills and preparation, job searching, registering with online job sites, finding volunteer opportunities, work placements and apprenticeships, IT skills and access to our Digital College. Even with COVID-19 challenges, our Into Work programme helped 28 customers who had been unemployed for a long period of time or, who faced barriers, back into work. 71% of the those we supported into work have remained, with the majority able to transition from benefits and become financially independent.

'Once again thank you for your continued support and the referrals you have already done for us. We are blown away by your customer care.'

2. Financial Wellbeing Programme

Our Financial Wellbeing service continues to support our customers to have a healthy relationship with money. By helping our customers to access the right support and benefits available, our Financial Wellbeing team provided 2,493 cases of financial wellbeing support which meant our customers were able to access £493,742 in 2020/2021 of support (85% of appeals and 84% of benefit applications were successful).

Our dedicated team is on hand for our customers who need support to help them become financially independent, to pay their rent on time and to sustain their tenancy. Our people are trained to offer welfare and benefit advice and have helped hundreds of customers to maximise their income and to claim the benefits they're entitled to. The team also assists with claims and appeal decisions on appropriate benefits as well as providing support on budgeting and accessing grants, foodbanks, and other vital financial support or services. Employment and digital skills also form part of this service, along with referrals to our Into Work service, debt advice and signposting to other community support groups if we can't help.

During 2020/2021, we had 2,541 referrals by colleagues, local support groups and district councillors into our financial support programme, which resulted in the team helping 816 customers with successful benefit applications and appeals.

The COVID-19 Crisis Fund, introduced by the Energy Saving Trust, was set up to support households in vulnerable situations during the COVID-19 outbreak. The fund was established in recognition of the additional burden the COVID-19 outbreak was having on many households, who struggled to pay their fuel bills due to loss of income or increased fuel use.

The Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT), a charity for the housing sector, was successful in securing a grant from the COVID-19 Crisis Fund to support the tenants of Housing Associations across England, Wales and Scotland. Through this funding, our Financial Wellbeing team were successfully able to access £826 of support in Gas and Electricity meter top ups for 18 different households across a period of 10 weeks. All of these tenants were financially impacted due to COVID-19 and were facing real challenges to heat their homes, keep their electric on and were a risk of being disconnected. .

'I just want to start off by saying thank you for all of your hard work over the last couple of days. The Financial Wellbeing team have really gone above and beyond for us and I really do appreciate it.'

'We are £500 in credit on our rent account and due to the budgeting advice (from the Financial Wellbeing Programme), we have managed to save for the first time in our life. With this we are planning on getting married which we have never had the money to do before.'

Social

Customer support (continued)

3. Mental wellness and resilience

According to Mind, approximately 1 in 4 people experience a mental health problem in the UK each year. Good mental health, wellbeing and resilience are priorities for us in work and across our communities.

In 2020/2021 the Aster Foundation trained 1,421 people in mental wellness and resilience, with 92% of those who attended our courses saying they feel able to support others across our communities. We averaged 2.7 extra people being helped/supported per each attendee so, for last year that would equate to 3,789 people positively impacted by this work.

"That's truly the best course I have ever participated in and I realise now, for the first time in 62 years of life, that I am not the only person to have these types of feelings! I thought it was just me and I wish I could have known about this 40 years ago when I was in my early 20's. The positive thing is that now I have the tools for my tool bag. I'm going to write down three positive things about today this evening! Thank you."

4. Volunteering

Volunteering is our way of investing in communities where they need it the most, supporting local partners and worthwhile causes. It's a fantastic way to make a difference, drive change and help us get closer to the communities we live and work within.

In 2020/2021 we invested 157.5 days of volunteering into our communities. In 2021, we developed this further through creating Aster VIP, our digital platform which connects our colleagues and communities together more than ever before. We are excited for what the future holds and look forward to supporting our community infrastructure to thrive.

'I volunteer as want to make a difference to our communities and support our partners. It makes me feel good that I am giving something back and at the same time boosting my mental wellbeing.'

'I jumped at the chance to volunteer for interviews with Year 11 pupils at an Andover school last year. It was great to have the opportunity to help young people in one of our local communities.'

'I volunteered as I wanted to help residents who were most affected during lockdown. I was able to reassure them that they were not alone, and we were there to support them. Two hours of my week made a massive difference to the people I called.'

'I found volunteering really rewarding, it was a brilliant chance to give back and help my local community. It also gave me invaluable experience too.'

Social

Customer support (continued)

5. inc.

Our social incubator, **inc.** is part of our drive to develop innovative and sustainable ways to drive change. A disruptor in the community investment space, **inc.** was set up to inspire, connect and enable social entrepreneurs to make a difference across our communities.

A unique ten-month programme offers a strong core syllabus covering all areas of business development, growth and ethics:

- An opt in syllabus which can be used to strengthen areas people wish to develop
- Mentoring and coaching to support personal growth
- Access to funding and investment
- Opportunities to gain insight from our customers
- Benefit from expert advice and support from our colleagues and partners
- An entrepreneurial community of peers to collaborate with and provide support.

Our 2020/2021 cohort consisted of ten social entrepreneurs whose enterprises are addressing a wide range of social challenges. The enterprises include:

- **BMoneyWize** – Improving the numeracy and financial skills of young people
- **CD-UK** – Producing affordable, 100% sustainable clothing made, sold and worn to help people rise out of homelessness
- **My Pickle** – An award-winning online platform equipping people to find the right help fast
- **Padlock** – An online platform connecting businesses with cybersecurity expertise, powered by the training of single parents in marketable cyber skills
- **Places for Nature** – Empowering communities in their efforts to improve places for nature in gardens and communal spaces
- **Get into Data** – A social enterprise creating data education opportunities for all
- **Well Good** – An AI-powered tool that will predict and prevent mental ill-health for individuals, not only for groups of people, within organisations
- **Compassionate Cuppa** – A mental health hug in a mug, where individuals are supported their way
- **Well Cool Clothing** – Making practical and dignified nightwear for hospital, hospice or care at home designed to empower and enable
- **Raw Brick Innovations** – Creating construction and building products which are made from non-recyclable waste and single use plastics.

During the 2020/2021 programme, these enterprises have supported 19 people into work, developed the skills of 174 people across our community, improved the mental wellness of 1,871 people, improved the independence of five people in later life and also developed people's confidence around financial literacy and wellbeing.

Cohort:

'I would strongly recommend any social enterprise to consider this programme to accelerate their growth.'

'Being on **inc.** has made a massive difference. I feel very much supported and my confidence is building. Really proud to be in this social space.'

Industry expert feedback on the final pitches of the cohort:

'What a day! It's been immensely rewarding and inspiring to spend the day with these amazing entrepreneurs. The passion that came through, the commitment, the visions and legacies that they are working on...The singing, crying, hugs and laughter. So real and so human. The **inc.** team have done an amazing job nurturing these businesses.'

Session leader feedback:

'The sessions with each entrepreneur were inspiring. I like meeting people with a vision and determination to help people.'

'It was a great opportunity to understand Aster's wider social value and to get a better understanding of the **inc.** cohort.'

Social

Customer support (continued)

6. Other customer support

We understand that being able to live independently is important to a person's quality of life.

We offer a range of accommodation specifically for people aged 55+, and help with home adaptations, repairs and technology to support independence. Our 'Connected Living' team also provide affordable technology that offers reassurance 24/7 and the peace of mind that help is on hand wherever and whenever it is needed. We provide security, confidence and reassurance when people need it the most. We are also working with partners, including The Bell Group to create a sustainable and vibrant activity programme for our older communities to thrive within.

Our Housing First initiative, which aims to tackle homelessness, housed 16 vulnerable people during 2020/2021. Of those people, 83% had successful tenancies with no enforcement actions.

Our 2020/2021 Feeling Part of the Community survey asked approximately 858 General Needs and Housing for Older People customers if they agreed with the following:

	Response
I feel a valued member of my community	70%
I feel safe in my community	89%
I have enough contact with other people in the community	82%
I have someone who listens to my views and acts upon them	70%

We also ensured our customers had extra support on offer to deal with the impact of COVID-19:

- **3,436** customers in our sheltered and extra care schemes were contacted to ensure they had appropriate support, medication and food

- More than **10,000** calls were made to vulnerable customers, which included our Aster Connect service where **99** vulnerable customers experiencing loneliness and isolation received weekly calls through telephone befriending, something we have continued for those in need

- We extended our existing Hardship Fund to help customers A 'COVID-19 Hardship Fund' initiative was developed to offer customers affected financially by COVID-19. This helped approximately 300 customers with food vouchers and 15 customers with mobile phone top ups

- A further **seven** street homeless individuals were housed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Placemaking

This theme seeks to highlight the wider set of activities that housing providers undertake to create well-designed homes and places that meet local needs and provide great places for people to live and enjoy.

Our partnerships with Community Land Trusts (CLTs) help provide homes that are shaped by local people, for local people, putting community needs ahead of profit. 35 homes were built in 2020/2021 to support rural communities in partnership with CLTs. Two schemes are in contract with the first delivering within 2021/2022, with a further five schemes in the pipeline, of which, two are in-contract as of summer 2021.

Alongside our development activity we are investing in our existing homes and communities to sustain them into the future. We are working through an investment programme focussed on neighbourhood enhancements and investment to both meet the changing needs of our communities and our strategic asset management and maintenance objectives.

Our neighbourhood enhancement work is an ongoing programme of works which is delivering improvements such as remodelling and re-purposing of communal areas, improved facilities for waste management and recycling, modernisation of components such as door entry systems, landscaping and groundworks, and other works to improve the built environments in our communities. Each project is identified by local teams in consultation with our customers and focuses on their needs and priorities which in turn results in pride of place.

We take the time to consult widely with our customers on the issues that matter to them, whether on policies that are in place which affect all of our customers, right down to the very local issues affecting their home, estate or wider community.

In our sheltered and extra care schemes we are undertaking a refurbishment programme focussed on communal areas and facilities upgrades and modernisation. We have committed funding to this programme of works in consultation with our customers on the design principles, choices of décor, fabrics and furnishings to create vibrant, comfortable and welcoming spaces to meet the needs of those customers now and into the future.

We have a variety of community assets such as allotments, play areas and green spaces which we manage and maintain, supporting their use by community groups and individuals for their own use or community events.

We work closely with local authority partners to support them in the delivery of their respective housing strategies, and with other statutory agencies to deliver on our commitments to community safety in our estates. In partnership, we make effective interventions on issues of anti-social behaviour, tackling issues such drug related activity, domestic abuse and other issues which affect the safety and sustainability of our communities.

Governance

Structure & governance

This theme seeks to assess the housing provider's overall structure and approach to governance.

Aster is a charitable registered society, registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). We hold the highest possible ratings for governance (G1) and viability (V1), which was reaffirmed by the RSH in December 2020 following an in-depth assessment.

Our governance framework is structured on the UK Corporate Governance Code. This is a set of principles of good corporate governance that we follow in our governance arrangements, including those around board leadership and effectiveness, remuneration, accountability and stakeholder relations.

Board & trustees

Our Overlap Boards (the Board) are responsible for making sure we meet our social purpose, vision and values, and is supported by our Executive Board. The overall role and purpose of the Executive Board is to ensure that there is effective leadership of, and a system of assurance between, the operations of the Aster Group and the Overlap Boards and their sub-committees.

One of the key success factors of our Board, is the balance of skills and experience that our Non-Executives bring. As part of the ongoing skills assessment of our Boards and Committees, we introduced the Board Skills Vision, which aims to quantify the key skills and characteristics we are looking for at Aster. The Board Skills Vision is a holistic set of criteria focusing on everything from fact-based judgements to emotional intelligence, teamwork and values. We recruit on cultural fit and value alignment, just as much as we do on experience.

The Board recognises that effective succession planning is not only a fundamental component of board effectiveness but is also integral to the delivery of Aster's strategic plans. It is essential in ensuring a continuous level of quality in management, in avoiding instability by helping mitigate the risks which may be associated with any unforeseen events, such as the departure of a key individual, and in promoting diversity.

The Board has approved a Board Membership, Recruitment and Succession Policy and the Group Remuneration & Nominations Committee routinely reviews the succession plan for the Overlap Boards and the Committees to facilitate future recruitment in a timely manner. The Committee works to ensure a continuous flow of talent is available through developing existing directors and independent members, and also by identifying suitable external candidates to ensure a refreshing of talent and ideas, and the ongoing maintenance of skills.

When recruiting, by mapping our Board skills we can get a clear idea of what we are looking for in our applicants and what each of them could bring to the collective. From our most recent recruitment in the latter part of 2019, our successful applicants have brought a wealth of experience from different sectors and have been able to add value immediately. As with all of our decisions, the long-term sustainability of the business is central and the skills we have recruited in risk, digital transformation, compliance and a whole new range of experiences will help our Boards and Committees make better decisions as a result.

Board demographic

33%
Female

Gender

67%
Male

56years
Average age

43months
Average tenure
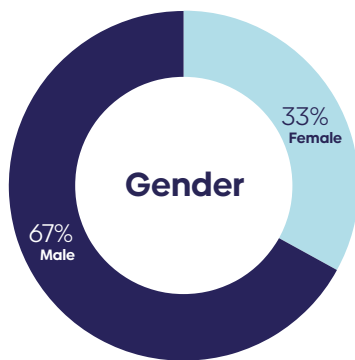
Board characteristics

9years
*Max. term**

*Executives unlimited

67%
% non-executive

11%
*% board turnover***

**in the last two years

Independent Chair and CEO ✓

Non-executive remuneration committee ✓

Conflicts of interest – managed under the Board Code of Conduct ✓

Board representation on Audit Committee with relevant experience ✓

Charitable registered society ✓

Auditors - KPMG

Appointed
Nov 17
4 years audited to date

Governance

Colleague wellbeing

This theme seeks to assess how staff are supported and how their wellbeing is considered.

The work we are doing as part of Programme Experience – our business wide transformation programme, and one of the three enablers of our corporate strategy – which aims to improve our colleague experience, help us to become more effective and efficient, reduce our environmental impact and ultimately improve customer satisfaction with the services we provide. The work we've done in the past year has helped us to continue to deliver our vital services in new ways throughout the pandemic, while still looking for new and better ways of working – helping to ensure we're focussed on our long-term future.

The impact of the pandemic meant that we focused on using technology and virtual collaboration to support our people. We were already well placed to work from home when the instruction came, however we have continued to connect with our colleagues through technology, ensuring that productivity and engagement remained high throughout the period.

We have demonstrated our continued commitment to our colleague wellbeing, rapidly switching our wellbeing programmes and learning offering to online platforms. While the core of our wellbeing programme hasn't changed, as the needs of our people changed, we adapted our approach so that we could support our colleagues through furlough, working from home, with children at home and then through further lockdowns. We launched the Thrive mental health app which is endorsed by the NHS and links to our existing Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services. Our Mental Health First Aid network has continued to develop, with volunteers staying updated with training and providing support throughout.

We have also developed a menopause support programme, including Hot Topic sofa sessions, leader awareness sessions and talks from leading authorities in menopause and women's health was assessed by an expert independent panel to make sure we're doing all we can to support colleagues experiencing the menopause. Our work has been recognised by Menopause Friendly, who have awarded us the 'Menopause Friendly Employer' accreditation.

In our November 2020 colleague survey, 84% of colleagues who responded said that they felt Aster was committed to their wellbeing. 88% reported that they believe Aster is truly committed to the health and safety of colleagues. As we prepare for a new way of working post pandemic, our Rebalance and Reconnect theme will help our colleagues to make the most of a hybrid working model, keeping a focus on their wellbeing.

We have undertaken a full review of role profiles and job evaluation, market benchmarking and an equal pay review. Our new pay framework was implemented in April 2021 and will help us to continue to demonstrate fairness and transparency in the way that pay is set and reviewed in future, aligned to our chosen market position.

In 2020, we published our D&I policy and principles. Launched during National Inclusion Week in September 2020, our aim was to raise the profile of D&I by raising awareness, giving our colleagues the opportunity to educate themselves and to start a narrative in the business which will enable representation, involvement and action. We also launched our LGBTQ+ colleague network, working with the Group to influence policy development, training and a focus on inclusion through benchmarking with partners such as the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei), and consideration of the HouseProud accreditation.

1. Gender Pay Gap

Since April 2017, the Gender Pay Gap report has been an annual compliance requirement of all employers of more than 250 employees. The assessment is based on company data at a single point in time (5 April) each year. The reported gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings of men and women and is expressed as a percentage of male earnings.

Since its introduction, our gender pay gap has been decreasing except for 2020, where the metric was affected by the impact of a specific recruitment campaign in our maintenance operations.

As a result of this campaign, which saw more men than women join Aster within one grouping, there has been a notable impact on one of the reported quartiles, resulting in a small upward shift in the overall pay gap for the business. This is indicative of the sensitivities of the Gender Pay Gap methodology to fluctuations in organisational demographics.

	Percentage
2017	20.3%
2018	17.9%
2019	9.0%
2020	10.2%

Although our Gender Pay Gap compares well to the UK average of 15.5% in 2020, addressing the pay gap never stops and our Diversity & Inclusion action plan helps to embed inclusivity at the heart of the organisation.

To date, key achievements outside of the work on the development of a new pay framework, include:

- MumsNet accredited flexible employer
- Implementation of flexibility principles, including Flexible Leave that recognise colleagues have many demands on their time, enabling work to be done alongside other commitments
- 146 women occupying leadership roles out of 294
- Structured and tailored leadership development offer for aspiring and new leaders
- Committed to providing meaningful learning experiences for young people, and despite the pandemic have continued to invest in apprenticeships
- Embedding Restorative Practice within The Aster Way themes of transparency, freedom and trust, and experiment and adapt.

Our focus for the future now includes:

- Blind (to all protected/non protected characteristics) recruitment and selection processes
- A focus on family leave, rather than just maternity leave, and encouraging either parent/carer to have time off to support their family
- Job pricing process to be embedded and linked to workforce planning, ensuring salaries advertised are evidence based on independent data
- An updated talent and resourcing approach to ensure our default position is to share all vacancies with internal candidates first and are prioritised for development and access to opportunities
- Leadership development offer to provide leaders with the tools to support and build resilience in times of change
- Further extending our approach to flexibility, including our involvement in the national Flex Appeal campaign.

Governance

Colleague wellbeing (continued)

2. CEO to worker pay ratio

We have included the CEO to worker pay ratio based on option B of the BEIS methodology[7].
The methodology uses the Gender Pay Gap (GPG) data to calculate the ratio in three steps.

Step 1 - Rank the remuneration of our employees from lowest to highest based on the pre-existing GPG pay data, and identify those employees at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles of the employee population based on this pre-existing data.

Step 2 - Calculate the three employees' pay and benefits for the year.

Step 3 - Calculate pay ratios for employees at each percentile using the latest CEO Single Total Figure of Remuneration (STFR) and the employee pay and benefits figures identified at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentile points for the relevant financial year.

Our CEO to worker pay ratio compares favourably to FTSE 100 median ratio which was 84:1 in the same period.

10.3:1
25th percentile

8.1:1
Median

6.6:1
75th percentile
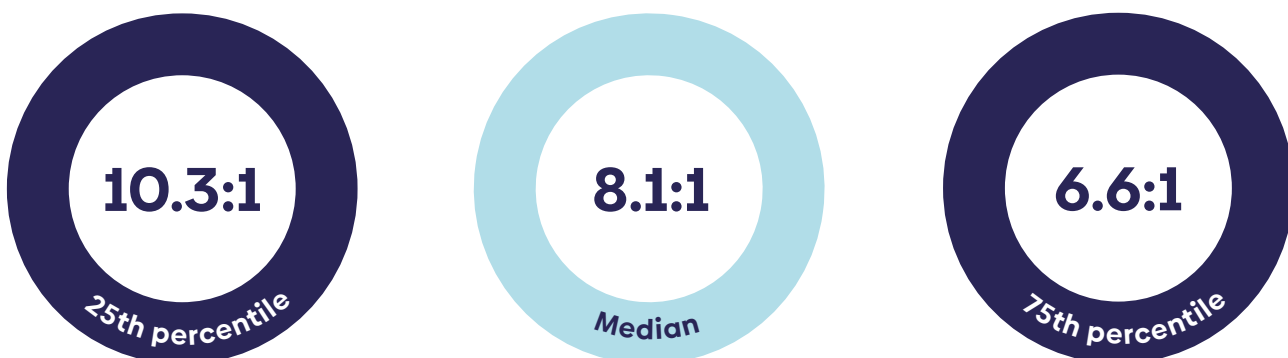
3. Living Wage Employer

We aspire to become a Living Wage accredited employer committed to diversity and inclusion and will be investigating this in more detail following the implementation of our new pay framework in April 2021.

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7 **www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk**

4. Programme Experience

Building on our transformation journey over the past six years, Programme Experience will improve and modernise our customer and colleague experience.

Through four key workstreams, we'll work collaboratively to ensure we can respond to rapidly changing customer and colleague expectations and can continue to succeed long into the future.

Specifically, it brings together four key workstreams:

- The Future of Customer Experience - new Customer Experience strategies designed to create effortless, end-to-end customer journeys

- The Aster Offer – our work to transform our colleague offer and experience

- Project Dynamics – the technology enabler for business transformation, making sure our technology supports positive customer and colleague experiences the technology enabler for business transformation

- Right Spaces Right Places – our work to make sure our spaces offer flexibility and choice to our colleagues and customers, while supporting our commitment to become a more sustainable business that is financially strong.

Governance

Supply chain

This theme seeks to assess if the housing provider procures responsibly.

We ensure that Sustainable Procurement meets the requirements for goods, services, utilities and works not only on a cost–benefit analysis, but with a view to maximizing net benefits for us and the macro environment.

There are three areas of focus:

- Economic (e.g. corporate governance, ethical trading, payment on time)
- Social (e.g. diversity, inclusion, human rights)
- Environmental (biodiversity, carbon footprint, climate change).

To support Sustainable Procurement, we insist on adherence to the following Policies from all of our suppliers on all tenders with an estimated value of £50k and over:

- Aster Group Data Protection and Confidentiality (inc GDPR)
- Aster Group Equality and Diversity
- Aster Group Environmental Sustainability
- Health and Safety Declaration
- Modern Slavery Act Compliance.

Sustainable Procurement continues to be a key consideration when producing any tender and will enable:

- Cost savings - focusing on following a whole life costing methodology when sourcing goods and services
- Enhanced corporate image
- The creation of markets for new products and services, by using technology to develop and market sustainable products.

ASTER
GROUP