

Appendix A(i) – Service Specification

Lot 2 – Monitoring & Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) Services

1. Introduction

Aster Group requires the provision of a comprehensive 24/7/365 Monitoring and Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) Service covering dispersed alarms, grouped scheme systems, digital Technology Enabled Care (TEC) devices and associated emergency response routing.

The Supplier shall provide all labour, systems, technology, management, supervision and resources necessary to deliver a safe, resilient, customer-centred monitoring service that meets Aster's operational, regulatory, safeguarding, digital and customer experience standards.

2. Scope of Services

The Supplier shall operate a TEC Monitoring and Alarm Handling Service covering, as applicable:

- Dispersed / community alarms (digital and residual analogue).
- Hard-wired grouped schemes (sheltered, supported, extra care) where linked to monitoring.
- Telecare and telehealth devices and sensors.
- Smoke detection and fire panels linked to monitoring.
- Door entry and access control signals were linked to monitoring.
- GPS / roaming pendant devices.
- Out-of-hours urgent housing calls (where instructed by Aster).
- Automated event-triggered alerts (e.g. falls, inactivity, environmental alerts).

The service includes receiving, triaging, recording, coordinating and escalating all alarms and calls in accordance with this Specification.

At the time of tender, Aster expects approximately 4,129 monitored connections and historic annual call volumes of circa 275,000 events (all call types). These volumes may change during the Contract Term.

3. Service Hours

- The Monitoring Centre must operate 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year, without interruption.
- The Supplier shall maintain sufficient staffing and capacity to handle all peak periods, seasonal variation, emergency events and planned Aster campaigns (for example, digital migration testing).

4. Call Handling Requirements

- Answer all alarms and customer calls courteously, clearly and in a manner appropriate to customer need.
- Meet or exceed the KPI response times set out in Appendix A(ii) – KPI & SLA Schedule.
- Undertake rapid triage and prioritisation of calls and alarms.
- Provide reassurance, guidance and ongoing communication during emergencies.
- Notify and coordinate appropriate responders, including Aster staff, emergency services, nominated contacts and mobile responders where applicable.
- Escalate welfare concerns identified through call patterns, behaviour changes or other risk indicators.
- Manage nuisance, repeat or false alarms in a way that protects vulnerable customers while ensuring efficient use of resources.
- Manage silent calls, abandoned calls and calls requiring translation or other communication support in line with agreed procedures.

All calls and alarm events must be logged and retained so that records and recordings are retrievable by Aster when required.

5. Customer Experience and Brand Standards

- Deliver services aligned to Aster's Brand Standards (e.g. Simple, Understanding, Personal, Positive, Organised, Responsive, Trustworthy).
- Recognise vulnerability, promote safety and minimise stress for customers during every interaction.
- Respect privacy, dignity and personal preferences.
- Adopt trauma-informed practice where appropriate.
- Ensure communications are clear and jargon-free.

6. Vulnerable and Diverse Users

- Ensure the service is accessible to users who may require:
 - Non-English language support.
 - Support for hearing, visual or speech impairments.
 - Cognitive support or simplified communication.
 - Mental health support or adapted communication approaches.
- Maintain documented procedures covering these user groups.
- Ensure staff receive training in equality, diversity and inclusion, disability awareness and mental health awareness.

7. Data Handling, Records and Reporting

- Maintain comprehensive and accurate customer records including personal details, contact information, responder details and risk information as agreed with Aster.
- Ensure all data processed on Aster's behalf remains the property of Aster.
- Comply with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, Aster's Data Processing Agreement and relevant TEC standards (including BS8521-2 for digital alarm protocol).
- Provide standard monthly reports covering KPIs, call categories and volumes, complaints, incidents, faults, and digital migration activity.
- Provide ad-hoc reports reasonably requested by Aster within agreed timeframes.
- Provide timely access to call recordings and logs for Aster on request.

7.1 Near Real-Time Customer Record Updates

The Supplier must ensure that all new monitoring customers, changes to customer details, or activation of new/replacement equipment are entered into the monitoring system in near real-time to avoid any period where a customer is unmonitored. As a minimum, the Supplier must:

- Add or update customer records before leaving site, wherever the system allows.
- Where back-office input is required, complete the update within 1 hour of job completion.
- Ensure no customer becomes active or dependent on monitoring equipment without the corresponding monitoring profile being live.
- Maintain audit trails demonstrating the timeliness and accuracy of all updates.

8. Technology, Systems & Interoperability

- Use a Monitoring Centre platform that supports analogue and digital alarm protocols and complies with BS8521-2 where applicable.
- Ensure compatibility with major TEC vendor protocols used by Aster.
- Employ secure, resilient and appropriately maintained infrastructure.
- Provide sufficient capacity for current and anticipated call volumes.
- Support inbound and outbound test calls to validate connectivity and system performance.
- Enable integration with Aster's systems (e.g. housing, CRM, repairs) where required and agreed.

9. Digital Switchover & Future-Readiness

- Provide a digital switchover plan aligned with telecommunications network changes.
- Support onboarding of digital TEC equipment, IP devices and roaming solutions.
- Mitigate analogue risks (e.g. line interference, call clipping) and support migration to digital pathways.
- Ensure telecommunications and cyber security requirements are met.
- Comply with applicable standards including BS8521-2 and PD CLC/TS 50134-9:2018 (or subsequent relevant standards).

10. Fault Management

- Identify and record faults with equipment, telecommunications lines or platform components which impact service.
- Immediately inform Aster of service-impacting faults and proposed mitigation.
- Assist Aster in putting in place alternative arrangements for customers if required.
- Support root-cause analysis of incidents when requested by Aster.

11. Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery

- Maintain and regularly test business continuity and disaster recovery (BCP/DR) arrangements.
- Provide a secondary monitoring location or equivalent arrangement with sufficient resilience to maintain services in the event of a primary site failure.
- Notify Aster whenever BCP or DR arrangements are invoked and provide incident reports.

12. Staff Competency & Training

- Ensure staff are trained in safeguarding, disability awareness, the Mental Capacity Act, basic first aid, lone working, equality and diversity, TEC equipment familiarity and data protection.
- Maintain training records and provide copies to Aster on request.

13. Integration with Mobile Response (If in Scope)

- Where instructed by Aster, provide or coordinate mobile response services, including:
 - Attendance within agreed timescales.
 - On-site support until incident resolution or handover.
 - Continuous communication with the Monitoring Centre.
 - Completion of visit reports following attendance.
- Personal care, practical care and medication administration are excluded unless expressly contracted by Aster.

14. Key Performance Indicators

The KPIs for the Monitoring & ARC Service are set out in Appendix A(ii) – KPI & SLA Schedule (Lot 2).

15. Mobilisation and Exit Management

- Within an agreed period following Contract Award, onboard connections, transfer data securely, complete system and integration testing, deliver staff training and provide mobilisation documentation.
- On exit, provide data extracts in an agreed format, correct any identified data quality issues, provide handover documentation and support technical migration to an incoming provider.