

## 1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy covers Aster Group properties and sets out how we let our homes in a fair, transparent, and efficient way and our commitment to providing good quality affordable homes to people in housing need.
- 1.2 The policy applies to general needs, housing for older people, extra care and supported accommodation, 55L properties, intermediate, social, and affordable rent homes. This policy does not cover market rent properties, temporary accommodation, shared ownership, leasehold, care homes, or garages.
- 1.3 Applications for housing will be assessed by local authorities and partners agencies.
- 1.4 This policy sets out the core principles of how we:
  - Allocate our homes
  - Interact with local authorities in meeting local social housing demand
  - Engage with direct applicants, and
  - Support existing customers to meet their changing housing needs including affordability.

## 2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 We will aim to make the best use of all our properties and will let our homes as quickly as possible to promote settled communities and to avoid loss of rent, vandalism, or squatting.
- 2.2 We will consider the needs of existing and potential customers and we'll try to offer a range of appropriate housing products to meet their requirements.
- 2.3 To make best use of the housing we own, there is clear guidance around the size of home we will offer for each type of household.
- 2.4 We will work closely with local authorities and, where possible, support them to meet their strategic housing aspirations.
- 2.5 We will let the majority of our homes to people nominated by local authorities and other statutory agencies through choice-based lettings schemes. We reserve the right to refuse a nomination that doesn't meet our lettings criteria and we reserve the right to allocate directly to applicants and/or customers in line with our agreements with our local authority partners.
- 2.6 In some instances, we operate a direct waiting list for properties. This applies to some of the properties owned by Central and Cecil, East Boro Housing Trust and Enham Trust.
- 2.7 We will provide all applicants with advice and guidance on accessing housing, including signposting to support with the application and bidding process, when requested.
- 2.8 Every effort is made to ensure that the homes allocated reflect applicants' needs, and that tenancies are sustainable in the long-term.

- 2.9 When letting our homes, we will work closely with applicants and partner agencies to identify any vulnerability or support needs and ensure support packages from appropriate agencies are in place.
- 2.10 We recognise that there are occasions when a customer will need to move urgently and will assist with management transfers. This is not intended to give existing customers an unfair advantage over other applicants, but to acknowledge that there are occasions when Aster Group will need to act outside of any established prioritisation scheme.
- 2.11 We will encourage, support and prioritise our existing customers to move to smaller homes if their current ones are larger than they need or can afford.
- 2.12 We will encourage and support home swaps (mutual exchanges) and provide free subscription for all existing customers to a national home swap service.
- 2.13 We will work with local authorities and other stakeholders to develop a Local Lettings Plan with the aim of improving access to housing and creating sustainable neighbourhoods.
- 2.14 We will make sure every property is let in a safe, clean condition which reaches our defined lettable standard.
- 2.15 We will let our homes in accordance with any Town and Country Planning Acts in place and ensure the criteria are clearly advertised.
- 2.16 We will only let a property to an Aster Group employee, their relatives, Non-Executive Directors, or their relatives in accordance with Aster's Probity Guidance.
- 2.17 We will offer the following types of tenancy, depending on the criteria and circumstance of the prospective tenant/property:
- Assured Tenancies
  - Starter Tenancies
  - Assured Shorthold Tenancies
  - Fixed Term Tenancies
  - Licences - for circumstances where issuing a Starter Tenancy is not appropriate.
- 2.18 Applicants may wish to appeal a decision relating to their application or rejection. Any such appeal must be made in writing within 2 days of the refusal or cancellation.
- 2.19 We will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against any person on grounds of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, age, or any other matter that may cause a person to be treated with injustice.
- 2.20 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 In reviewing this policy, we consulted with involved customers who have expressed an interest in giving us their views on customer service policies, as well as colleagues who are involved in the lettings and management of our homes.
- 3.2 Policy overview sessions will be delivered to relevant teams following implementation of this policy to ensure the content and responsibilities are understood.
- 3.3 A follow up session with Lettings teams will be carried out 6 months following implementation to ensure the policy is fully understood and that we are compliant.
- 3.4 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored, and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months by the *Customer Experience Panel*.
- 3.5 Operational and Key Performance Indicators will be utilised to monitor its implementation including – re-let times, refusals, and rejections, % of first offers taken, void rent loss, new customers, new customer lettings, CORE reports.
- 3.6 We will use customer feedback and lessons learnt from complaints and will ensure monitoring of the lettings service standards/promise.
- 3.7 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.

#### 4 Related Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- ❖ Tenancy Policy
- ❖ Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- ❖ Safeguarding Children Policy
- ❖ Compensation Policy
- ❖ Probity Guidance
- ❖ Local Lettings Plans and Sensitive Lets Procedure
- ❖ Lettings Procedure
- ❖ Empty Homes Policy
- ❖ Lettable Standard

#### 5 Governance

<b>Effective From:</b>	05/09/2022	<b>Expires:</b>	05/09/2025
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Regional Operations Director		
<b>Policy Author:</b>	Policy and Assurance Officer		
<b>Approved by:</b>	<i>Customer Overview Group</i>		
<b>Delegation Matrix Reference:</b>	R063	<b>Version Number:</b>	3.1