

1 Scope

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that Aster Group promotes and enables the safeguarding of children, defined as people under the age of eighteen, who live in, or visit, our homes and communities
- 1.2 This policy applies to all Aster Group employees and volunteers. It outlines our approach to safeguarding children who are experiencing or are at risk from abuse or neglect.
- 1.3 Local authorities have statutory responsibility for safeguarding children. Aster will co-operate with local authorities' safeguarding teams together with other statutory and voluntary agencies.
- 1.4 Safeguarding is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 as:
 - ❖ Preventing children from maltreatment.
 - ❖ Preventing impairment of child's health and development.
 - ❖ Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
 - ❖ Enabling children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Aster has a zero tolerance of abuse. We are committed to safeguarding children, so that they have the right to live safely, free from abuse and neglect.
- 2.2 The Children Act 2014 created Local Safeguarding Children Boards and places duties on a range of statutory organisations. As a registered housing provider, Aster is not a statutory partner, however we recognise our duty to:
 - ❖ Have a Designated Safeguarding Lead
 - ❖ Share information with other professionals
 - ❖ Have safe recruitment practices and procedures
 - ❖ Train employees on safeguarding children
 - ❖ Have a clear safeguarding policy and procedure for responding to concerns, including making referrals to local authorities or the police.
- 2.4 We will raise a child safeguarding concern where a child is suspected to be involved in any of the following categories:
 - ❖ Physical abuse
 - ❖ Sexual abuse
 - ❖ Emotional or psychological abuse
 - ❖ Neglect and acts of omission
 - ❖ Domestic Abuse
 - ❖ Involved in modern slavery
 - ❖ We are aware that abuse may also include but is not limited to acts such as online abuse, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, bullying and cyber bullying, child trafficking, grooming and sexual behaviour. The circumstances of each case will be considered as to not limit what constitutes abuse or neglect.

- 2.5 Whilst safeguarding is everyone's responsibility in Aster, the responsibility structure at Aster is as follows:
- ❖ Designated Safeguarding Lead
 - Ensures that the safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed every three years or earlier if prompted by change in legislation or good practice.
 - Oversees the Safeguarding Panel meetings.
 - Leads the learning lessons following a serious case review.
 - Informs the Group Health and Safety Board in the event of a serious safeguarding incident or pending serious case review.
 - Presents an annual report to the Group Health and Safety Board on Aster Group's management of safeguarding throughout the year.
 - Measures performance in relation to safeguarding children.
 - Works with partnership agencies strategically as appropriate.
 - ❖ The Safeguarding Panel
 - Promote awareness and understanding of safeguarding within all departments at Aster.
 - Ensure that colleagues record and report safeguarding cases accurately.
 - Provide advice and guidance to colleagues, identifying any learning or training needs.
 - Attend and contribute to Safeguarding Panel meetings quarterly, conducting case reviews, and providing assurance that policy and procedure are being adhered to.
 - Will be central to policy and procedure review.
 - ❖ All employees and volunteers
 - Are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and are alert to any concerns for welfare, and signs of abuse or neglect.
 - Report all cases of suspected abuse or neglect.
 - Attend all mandatory safeguarding training appropriate to role and setting.
- 2.6 Information will be shared in line with each local authority's safeguarding protocols and Aster's Data Protection, Privacy and Confidentiality policy. There will be times when we need to make a referral without the permission of the child or parent, this includes reason to believe that a child is suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, or to prevent or detect a criminal offence.
- 2.8 We will meet our responsibilities in the safe recruitment and selection of employees. In accordance with the Recruitment and Selection Policy, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) registration and clearance may be required for particular roles. Where appropriate, this check will be repeated at three yearly intervals.
- 2.10 Any failure to report a safeguarding concern may be regarded as a conduct issue, dependant on circumstances. This will be dealt with under Aster's Resolution Policy, in conjunction with any Local Authority enquiry.
- 2.11 We are committed to inclusivity and accessibility and will endeavour to provide our communication and policies in accessible formats and in other languages when requested or required.

3 Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 Policy overview sessions will be delivered to relevant teams following implementation of this policy to ensure the content and responsibilities are understood.
- 3.2 Information on this policy and its associated procedures will be given during induction for all employees, volunteers and Board Directors and committee members.
- 3.3 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored, and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months by the *Group Health & Safety Panel*.
- 3.4 A Safeguarding Panel with clear terms of reference will meet regularly and take collective responsibility for safeguarding oversight and monitoring throughout Aster. A safeguarding headline report will be produced quarterly after each meeting for the Customer Service Leadership Team and the Group Health and Safety Panel.
- 3.6 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Safeguarding Procedure
- ❖ Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- ❖ Data Protection, Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- ❖ Resolution Policy
- ❖ Honesty Policy
- ❖ Domestic Abuse Policy and Guidance.
- ❖ Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- ❖ ASB Policy, Procedure and Appendices
- ❖ Working Together for Children Guidance 2018
- ❖ Children's Act 2004
- ❖ Equality Act 2010
- ❖ Modern Slavery Act 2015
- ❖ Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: National Referral Mechanism

5 Governance

Effective From:	19/08/2022	Expires:	19/08/2025
Policy Owner:	Regional Operations Director		
Policy Author:	Policy and Assurance Officer		
Approved by:	<i>Group Health & Safety Panel</i>		
Delegation Matrix Reference:	R074	Version Number:	1.0