

ASTER
FOUNDATION

Impact Report

2021 / 2022

We enable
better lives





**We enable
better lives**

Our vision

is to enable the better lives of at least 40,000 people by 2030 through our impact programmes and proactive approach to tackling social challenges.

During 2021 / 2022, the Aster Foundation had a positive impact on over 5,000 people.

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Impact Report Welcome

2021 / 2022

Foreword

This year, after working as a department within Aster Group for three years we became a registered charity, enabling us to reach more people through our impact programmes and take an even more proactive approach to tackling social challenges.

This report was written at a point in time where our country is emerging from the grip of a global pandemic and as a result, seeing unprecedented acceleration of the digital world. Although the inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic very much form part of our context, we're now very much focused on a newly developing crisis; one of increasing poverty through the cost of living.

Worryingly, an estimated 1.5 million UK households will struggle to pay for food and energy in the next year. A striking forecast from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) predicted that more than 250,000 households would "slide into destitution" in 2023 taking the number classed as being in extreme poverty to about a million. In this day and age, that statistic is unfathomable, and in this report, you can see the difference we can make when we are able to invest in, and grow our offer across our communities with support from our partners and donors.

With your help we can begin to close the gaps in financial inequality. We can support mental wellbeing and employment, and help our communities to thrive through volunteering.

I'd like to thank all those who have supported us in our journey so far and look forward to welcoming new partners who share our vision and passion to make a real, tangible difference. We are actively seeking new people to join us as the need for support in our communities continues to grow. Our vision is simple; to enable the better lives of at least 40,000 people by 2030. Come and join us, because together we can achieve incredible things.



Cam Kinsella,
Aster Foundation director

A note from **Chris Stenlake**, head of social impact

Our vision is to 'enable better lives' but we only know where to focus our efforts, and if we are doing what we aspire to, through our use of research, data, and insight. This intelligence is integral to our work, and we now have a great team of people whose role it is to tell our story in many different ways:

- Listening to and actioning the feedback we get from you, our beneficiaries, and supporters
- Being open and transparent against the goals we set through our impact reports
- Tracking what is happening in the local and national context and how this impacts you and how we work.

We also undertake research that supports our vision. We do this because we believe there is no one better to suggest positive changes to improve the social challenges which exist, than those who face them every single day.

We want to empower the people across our communities to shape and influence society and policy in a positive way. In partnership with academic, financial and other organisations we can highlight areas which need work, and use your opinions and collective voice to suggest ways things could improve.

We have some exciting projects scheduled through 2022 / 2023 which we look forward to involving you in.



5,182

people positively impacted by the Aster Foundation in 2021 / 2022

1,378

people positively impacted by our mental wellness and resilience programme

206

days of skills and time invested into our local communities to strengthen local infrastructure

44

people aged 55+ positively impacted by feeling a greater sense of social inclusion

2,014

people supported to have a healthier relationship with money through providing practical and or emergency support

10

social businesses graduated through the inc. programme and were supported to amplify their impact

14

homeless people supported to find and keep a home of their own

18

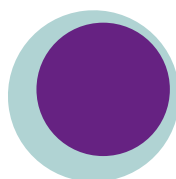
people moved into meaningful and sustainable employment

1,704

people empowered and engaged in research which contributes to positive social change

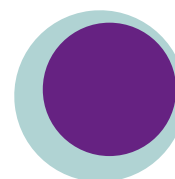


The **impact programmes** we offer



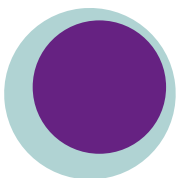
Mental wellness and resilience

Working with businesses, colleagues and our communities to train and educate people on mental wellness and resilience.



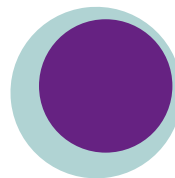
Ageing well (55+)

Making a difference to the lives of isolated older people through initiatives such as telephone befriending.



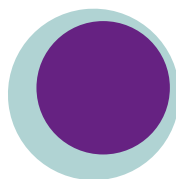
Financial wellbeing

Helping people to have a healthier relationship with money through providing practical guidance and emergency support.



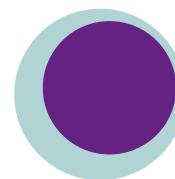
Employment

Helping those who are out of work to increase their confidence and skills and to connect them with their purpose.



Volunteering

Connecting our communities with volunteers, so they have the skills and resources they need to thrive.



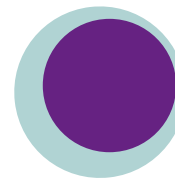
inc.

Building businesses to change the world through our social incubator, inc..



Homelessness

Committed to helping those who are homeless to have and keep a home of their own.



inc.ademy (coming soon)

Positive action to help unlock our communities' potential by developing the entrepreneurial capabilities of social housing customers.



Mental wellness and resilience

The national picture of mental health is one which is rapidly evolving. According to Mind, every week, one in six adults in the United Kingdom experience common mental health problems.

This predates the pandemic and organisations, such as the World Health Organisation, are indicating that there has been a 25% increase in anxiety and depression because of the pandemic.

We know that at least 20,000 people across our communities live with poor mental health and we've set a goal to help them improve their mental health and wellness by 2030.

We currently train and educate around 2,000 people a year and this includes working with businesses to improve organisational wellbeing through providing training and consultancy. We then, through our 'Pay it Forward' model, invest these funds into offering free training to community organisations and smaller charities who may not have the resources to invest in improving their own mental health. Without this investment they may not have the resilience to continue delivering the variety of important work they carry out for our communities in support of our strategy.

In 2021 / 2022 we created 13 new courses and refresher sessions to respond to local need. This has included Mental Health First Aider, Increasing Emotional Resilience and Physical Intelligence courses. We also created a course on returning to the workplace after the pandemic lockdowns, which has been very popular.

92% of our attendees go on to support and help someone else, with attendees saying that it has a positive impact on their personal, family and working lives. The demand for these programmes has also grown, and we are seeing an increase in need from young people, carers and those impacted by financial inclusion and the cost-of-living crisis.

Plans for 2022 / 2023

Due to the increasing demand for this programme, we'll be expanding our work in this area and will be looking for partners to support our aspirations. If this could be you, we'd love to hear from you.

2021 / 2022

1,378

people positively impacted by mental wellness and resilience training

92%

of people attending a mental wellness and resilience sessions go on to support others

3

other people, on average, are supported by those attending courses

20%

increase in people's understanding of mental health and wellbeing

33%

increase in people's understanding of how to help and support people with their mental health in the community

9/10

average score for the sessions attended

Don't just take our word for it... look at our feedback

“

“I can honestly say that I went into this workshop feeling rather pessimistic about how much I would get out of it. I couldn't have been more wrong. I was put at ease immediately and explained things in a way that made it easy to relate to.

“I have come away from the training feeling eager to learn more and feel that I now have the tools to start using straight away in my daily life.”

“The course was excellent and incredibly useful. I think everyone should do Mental Health First Aid training alongside physical first aid at college. I can easily see what I have learnt being applied in situations at work or when out and about. I just need to put it into practice now.”

“I love how the Aster Foundation encourages no stigma, and knows we all have mental health and some days it's good and on others it's not. Wherever you are on your day with your mental health there is someone who will be kind and listen to you here, and I mean really listen if you need it.”

“I found the Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) training absolutely incredible. The learning was so important and the trainer, Daran, really was an absolute star. I really learn from personal experiences rather than just reading/talking, and his ability to pull from his own experiences was incredibly valuable for me. I really think I will be able to use his teachings in both day-to-day life and in the workplace.”

Daran Bailey,
Wellness and resilience
programme lead



“I found today's session really helpful and practical in managing stresses that my life brings. The session explains mental health jargon in everyday language, and situations. There was also an opportunity to talk separately with other course members on applying the course to their situations. I have already recommended this session to others.”

“I think this is the most useful training course I have ever attended. It was well delivered, and extremely relevant to my occupation. Fantastic. I got home and used what I had learn straight away with a family member. I would recommend to anyone. Thank you very much.”

“The course was excellent and has really boosted my knowledge and confidence to support as and when needed.”

”



Financial wellbeing

Nationally the greatest risk to financial wellbeing was triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's economic response to this.

Whether furloughed, facing redundancy or working from home, it had a lasting effect on many people's financial health and wellbeing. Just how much the pandemic has affected financial wellbeing is highlighted in research conducted in the first week of May 2021 by Close Brothers. Its report, Changing Trends of Financial Wellbeing, found that **36%** of respondents were more worried about their financial health as a result of the pandemic, with women (**37%**) slightly more concerned than men (**34%**). Locally we have seen a steady **20%** increase in demand for the support we provide over the last four years, with a dip at the start of the pandemic in March 2020, and a sharp increase in the summer of 2020. The pandemic has helped to highlight the importance of being financially prepared – which is a key focus of the programme we offer.

Our aim is to improve the financial wellbeing of 20,000 people by 2030, but as service demand increases, so may our aspirations - if we can secure the required funding.

Through our financial wellbeing Impact programme delivered by our Financial Wellbeing Team we aim to educate around 2,000 people per year, to understand their financial circumstances enabling a healthier relationship with money, while ensuring they can access any assistance. We also provide Aster customers with a hardship fund; accessing emergency support through food vouchers, phone and energy meter top ups, and crucial white goods should they become faulty.

In 2021 / 2022 we have:

- Helped people apply for all the benefits they are entitled to
- Appealed against benefit decisions and sanctions
- Developed budgeting skills to make money go further
- Helped people to set up and manage bank accounts, and learn to save money.

2021 / 2022

2,014

people positively impacted
by financial wellbeing support

£358,732

of unclaimed support and benefit accessed
for people in our communities

£207,732

of benefit appeals for people in our communities

99%

of people who have received
support have kept their home

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

Plans for 2022 / 2023

At the forefront of our plans for 2022 / 2023 is developing our understanding of the feedback you provide so that we can continually learn and improve our offering. We also want to develop tailored guidance and support around energy advice and mental health for those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. We'll be implementing our learning from the financial wellbeing research we are carrying out in partnership with Newcastle University.

Volunteering

We are working to invest at least 4,000 days into our communities by 2030.

We aim to strengthen our community infrastructure by giving our communities access to the skills and resources they need to thrive.

Groundwork conducted a study in 2020 which showed that 60% of groups surveyed had to reduce or stop service delivery due to lack of available funds. With most using funding to support frontline services, our volunteering programme enables our people to help by strengthening areas which are in need.

The great thing about this programme is how those involved also develop leadership, networking and employability skills, as well as seeing an increased sense of wellbeing. They are able to enjoy new social circles, explore their creativity and improve interpersonal skills.

Volunteering supports all of our impact programmes to help others. Whether that's spending 15 minutes to check in on someone feeling lonely, bringing a communal garden back to life, or to collect litter at a local beach to make it safer and more enjoyable for the local community. Volunteering possibilities are endless, and we feel it is the best way to connect the Aster Foundation to the community as a whole and address some of life's biggest social challenges.

What have we done?

Although launched in December 2020, 2021 / 2022 was the first full year our online volunteering platform, 'VIP' was live and active across our communities. During this time, we had 193 new members bringing the total members to 362.

2021 / 2022

206

days volunteered by people for good causes in our communities

£32,000

value of time volunteered into our communities

50

community partners registered on the platform

362

community members registered on the volunteering platform, VIP

193

new members registered on the the volunteering platform, VIP

65

new opportunities posted on volunteering platform, VIP



Gill Roberts,
Volunteering programme lead

Hengistbury Head beach clean

In September 2021, a team of seven volunteers spent the afternoon litter picking at Hengistbury Head, Bournemouth.

The team was made up from Aster Group's Finance, Development and Communications teams who took part and contributed 3.5 days of volunteering.

Volunteer organiser and PA at Aster, Lianne Olsen, said: "It was great to get out and do some volunteering in the community once again. Hengistbury Head is a beautiful spot and we wanted to play our part in trying to keep it free from rubbish and other random items that could cause serious issues for the environment."

Volunteering

feedback

“

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

“I managed to get one lady a food parcel who couldn't go out due to having cancer. It is such a nice feeling that we are helping people.”

“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.”

“My befriending call said how much she had enjoyed our conversation and asked if I would be able to call her again. I came off the call feeling really great.”

“I found preparing for and delivering my volunteered session a great challenge and one that I hugely enjoyed. My confidence in my abilities has grown widely and I thank the Aster Foundation for the opportunity.”

”



Homelessness

According to Shelter, over 274,000 people were homeless on a given night in 2021, 8,000 of which were in the south west. It should be noted that London made up nearly 170,000 of the total. The south west had a higher rate of homelessness than the north east, Yorkshire and The Humber and East Midlands. It is a nationwide challenge, and one we want to address.

We are working to support 100 homeless people to have and keep a home by 2030.

Through the Housing First programme, we support around 10 people per year through a twelve month supported programme that moves those who were homeless, into a home and community.

What have we done?

We are committed to helping those who are homeless to have and keep a home of their own. We do this in a number of ways and usually in partnership with local organisations. These arrangements differ across different geographies because each area (and person too) has a unique set of needs.

We have worked to give people who have experienced homelessness, chronic health, and / or social care needs, a stable home from which to rebuild their lives. We have also provided intensive, person centred, holistic support that is open ended. Our Housing First programme works across Hampshire and Somerset and we are looking to expand our extra support offer in 2022 / 2023.



What is the impact in 2021 / 2022?

14

people being supported to get and keep a home

100%

of people have kept their home

“Everyone deserves a chance, and I cannot thank Aster and the Aster Foundation enough. This has given me my independence, freedom and the knowledge that I have a future.”

Housing First beneficiary

Ageing Well (55+)

There are nearly four million people who live alone in the United Kingdom with the south west of England having the highest amount of people aged 65 and above. By 2040, nearly a quarter of the UK's population will be aged 65+ and over.

Not only this, in 2021 / 2022, the restrictions enforced due to the pandemic meant that many communal and community activities available were put on hold. For those without family members or close friends, it often meant being alone.

We are working to improve the feeling of wellbeing and connectivity of at least 900 isolated older people by 2030.

What have we done?

We are working with our partners at Re-engage and volunteers to make regular calls to customers who may be feeling isolated and lonely through our telephone befriending service. With so many people living alone, with no family or friends to support them, these calls are often the only contact some of them will have.

We have also worked with one of our inc. social businesses, Humans of Weston to run socially engaging workshops and courses within the community. 23 people enjoyed painting and drawing in community spaces. These workshops have made a huge difference to those who attended by reducing social isolation and improving mental wellbeing.

Plans for 2022 / 2023

We are extremely lucky to now be working with a specialist in providing care and support to people aged 55+, Central and Cecil Housing Trust (C&C), which now forms part of the Aster family. We will be developing a strategy to accelerate our impact in this area.

2021 / 2022

92%

of people feel more socially included after six months of calls

100%

of people feel more socially included after attending a session

21

people joined our telephone befriending service

Feedback Re-engage Connect

“Having calls each week is a godsend. I really do look forward to it. Life's so rubbish and you don't want to admit you're lonely, but when she has gone off the phone, I feel uplifted.”

Older call companion



Bev G star,
Humans of Weston
founder

“

Feedback Humans of Weston Workshop

“It got me out more and meet new people and I feel more relaxed.”

“Feeling happy and enjoyed being with everyone.”

“It's great having a group where we all have our say and listen to each other.”

“Meeting friends from the community.”

“Everything, the people, the drawing, the interaction with everyone, wish it was longer and more weeks.”

”



Employment

We are working to help at least 450 people to find meaningful purpose-led careers they sustain, by 2030.

Unemployment has been decreasing across the country and is now under four percent nationally. Despite unemployment falling (no quicker than the national average) in the south west, this hasn't resulted in people escaping poverty in the region, which has remained static over the last ten years.

Wages in the south west also tend to be lower than average, especially amongst younger people. Employment in tourism, a significant source of jobs in many parts of the region, is often seasonal and was severely impacted by the pandemic. Low wages and seasonal jobs can also make it harder for young people to get on the housing ladder, which is why it's integral to create the pipeline of employers and industries to support young people into future-proof and diverse careers.

With the multiple employment challenges which exist, opportunities do arise. The skills shortage in the construction industry is at its highest since 2007. With the industry bringing in almost £100billion GDP each year, the knock on effects of the shortage are sure to be felt for a while. There are opportunities to explore and invest in this area, and we will be embedding this within the new contract we have secured to deliver opportunities for young people in Dorset. This will offer specialist, person centred support, enabling young people to understand their purpose, the choices available to them and how to secure meaningful work.

What else have we done?

Whilst developing our Department for Work and Pensions programme, we have continued to offer Aster customers our 'into work' service which supports people to find meaningful careers and help with sustaining that work. This service helps people learn and develop new skills, create a CV and find the right opportunities for them.

What is the impact in 2021 / 2022?

94%

of people who have received support sustained work

18

people moved into meaningful and sustainable employment

1

secured our first contract which will enable us to grow our employment offer





inc.

Tamsin Southby,
inc. programme lead

All of us have seen the impacts of homelessness or poor mental health. We see the challenges people face around financial exclusion or unemployment, and feel the impact that COVID-19 had on our communities, and the isolation that many felt, particularly in older age. At the Aster Foundation we want to tackle these challenges in a different way, through amplifying the work of emerging entrepreneurs who want to transform the world we live in. Our social incubator, **inc.** is for those who dare to innovate and care enough to make it happen.

We are working to support 100 social entrepreneurs by 2030 to change the world through our social incubator, inc. We believe this will have a positive economic and social impact across our communities, enabling diversity of thought in tackling the biggest social challenges.

We work on businesses in years one to three of their journey because we recognise that at least 60% of businesses fail within this time. That's a lot of talent and creative solutions to social challenges which the world then doesn't get to see. We've created unique anomalies which bucked that trend through offering a unique ten-month development programme, focusing on modules such as contracts and tendering, branding and social media, understanding your markets, or using the right impact framework. We also embed our inclusivity principles and commitment.

inc. focuses on supporting social businesses that make a real and lasting difference across our impact areas:

- Homelessness
- Unemployment
- Financial exclusion
- Mental wellness and resilience
- Ageing well (55+)
- Environmental sustainability.



2021 / 2022

10

social businesses supported to amplify their impact through inc.

£85,000

in funds raised by social businesses

148

people engaged in the inc. programme from our communities

£23,000

donated in value to the inc. cohort programme

9/10

feedback score for our syllabus sessions from the social entrepreneurs

What is the impact?

100% of our entrepreneurs completed the programme in 2020 / 2021 with all gaining offers of further support to explore; including over £85,000 of financial fundraising. £23,000 was also donated in value (e.g. business courses, accounting and legal advice etc.) to the businesses in the cohort.

inc. feedback

“

“We feel incredibly privileged to be a part of the **inc.** story. We love the fact that they truly believe in helping sustainable businesses ‘for good’ become successful. The support network and programme content cannot be faulted. I would strongly recommend any social enterprise to consider this programme to accelerate their growth.”

Dan Willis, founder of Well Good

“Owning and running your own business is like a mental roller coaster ride; Empowering highs and disheartening lows. Being part of **inc.** allows each of us to celebrate those highs and support those lows together. I gain so much from our weekly huddles and 1:2:1s.”

Kirsty, Well Cool Clothing

“Being part of the **inc.** programme has given me access to the resources and support of a much larger organisation and that brings with it experience and opportunities to collaborate. Learning through the syllabus helps me to understand where I can make improvements while also acting as a partner along the journey.”

Stevie Mitchell, founder of CDUK

“I cannot thank **inc.** enough for all the support they have given me to develop my social business. The personal support that is offered through this program, is what set it apart from other incubators I have been a part of.”

Dhivya Venkatachalam, founder of Get into Data

“**inc.** has the creativity factor. I genuinely feel supported.”

Arinola Araba, founder of bMoneywize

“**inc.** has provided us with actionable insights into the development of Padlock through expert led workshops, market leading mentoring and a vast community of bespoke support that has accelerated our progress as a social business.”

Eoin Heffernan, founder of Padlock



2021 / 2022

101

people helped into work by working with the **inc.** businesses

174

people in our communities who have developed skills associated with **inc.**

155

people have increased skills and confidence in finances

1,871

people have been engaged to improve their mental health and wellness

5

people have been positively impacted in later life by the development of a new product



Cat Divers,
Founder of My Pickle

Cat graduated from the **inc. programme in July 2021 with her social business, My Pickle.**

My Pickle aims to provide trusted online resources and signposting to support a range of issues, including mental health and financial wellbeing.

Through Cat’s **inc.** journey, My Pickle has bucked the trend of 60% of businesses failing in the first three years. My Pickle has been transformed from a business which was running out of funds into a National Support Network that hosts the UK’s largest database of vetted support resources such as national helplines. By pitching the business to an **inc.** arranged panel of investors and philanthropists, My Pickle secured a £50,000 investment from Big Issue Invest to grow the business and its offering.

“**inc.** offers a rock of support, from regular one to one advice from the team and mentors to a structured programme of expert sessions on a range of business topics. I am so grateful to the Aster Foundation for making this support available. As a solo social enterprise founder this support really is invaluable and has come at such a crucial time for me and My Pickle.”

Upcoming research

We undertake research that supports our vision to enable better lives.

We do this because we believe there is no one better to suggest positive changes which could be made to improve the social challenges which exist, than those who face them and live with them every single day. We want to empower the people across our communities to shape and influence society and policy in a positive way.

Understanding the barriers to becoming a social entrepreneur

Brief: We run a social incubator which works with social entrepreneurs who want to tackle some of the world's biggest issues with a focus in our communities.

Our social incubator is doing some really great work, but we want to make sure it is delivered in a way which has impact in our communities and we'd like your views on how we can maximise this impact. This research focuses on social entrepreneurship, social businesses and social challenges. We want to hear your opinions and potential experiences of social entrepreneurship.

Cost of Living Increase

paper available early 2023

Cost of Living

We will be undertaking social research on how the cost of living increase has impacted, and may impact in the future, people in our communities. As well as aligning to the national research and context, we would look to understand people in our communities' experiences, feelings, and suggestions at a community level.

Financial exclusion and the digital divide

2021 - 2022, paper available late 2022

Brief: We live in a digital era and are moving towards a cashless society. Research shows that some people fall within a 'digital divide' and are unfairly treated by the current financial system due to their personal circumstance.

We are working with Newcastle University supporting the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and want to give our customers a voice in improving this challenge. We want to understand, how the financial system could improve to be fairer for everyone.





Our vision is to enable better lives.

Do you want to help us?

There are so many ways you can get involved and you can explore these by clicking the circles below.

All donations are used to run the charity and to deliver our impact programmes with the aim of enabling the better lives of 40,000 people by 2030.

Donating
online

Donating
by text

Fundraising

Volunteer
with us

Corporate
Partner

Charity of
the Year

The impact of your support

£33

enables a person to access mental health, wellness or resilience training and coaching

£86

enables us to invest a full day into a local cause or organisation to help with specific skills

£333

will enable a person to have access to financial wellbeing support they need

£71

enables us to reduce the isolation or loneliness of someone aged 55+

£442

enables us to support someone to move into meaningful work

Thank you

to all of our partners

LV=

Carer Support Dorset

Carer Support Wiltshire

Carer UK

Rowcroft Hospice

Enham Trust

Stonewater

Unity

Fairfield Farm College

Citizens Advice

Volunteering Dorset

Prama Care

Heads Up Somerset

Two Saints

Mendip District Council

Connected Housing

First Service

Bell Group

We Are Resource

St. James's Place

DK Legal

Alison Edgar

Thrive Growth Partners

Clarke Willmott

Capsticks

Foot Anstey

Remarkable Women

Tide 55

PHC Parts

Switchee

Hubbub

Jewsons

Goodsted

The Mendip School

Three Ways School

DorPIP

Julia's House

Dorset Council

Yellow Brick Road Projects

Scratch

Youth Options

Dementia UK

PROMISEworks

Dorothy House Hospice

EBP South

All Cannings School

We Hear You

Wiltshire Youth for Christ

Dorset Community Action

Trowers Hamlin



www.aster.co.uk/foundation

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Aster Foundation is a CIO (registered charity no. 1198145).

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