

1 Scope

- 1.1 Customer Voice is Aster's approach to involving and engaging with customers to try to ensure their voices influence and shape the way in which we deliver our services. We consider engagement, participation, consultation, involvement, communication and complaints to all form part of the Customer Voice.
- 1.2 We know and value that effective customer engagement can provide us with more customer focused and responsive services, greater value for money, and increased customer satisfaction.
- 1.3 This policy supports us in meeting the vision and objectives of our Customer Service Strategy and [Customer Voice Commitments](#). Our vision is of customer focused, easily accessible, good and safe landlord/housing-related services. A strong Customer Voice should feed into the widest possible range of related activities.
- 1.4 This policy sets out Aster's commitment to inviting, listening and responding to the Customer Voice, and sets out the Boards' aims to ensure that our customers are involved and influential within our business, improving the services we provide and the decisions we make about our homes and communities.
- 1.5 Implementing this policy means we will meet and aim to exceed our requirements in the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard of the Regulator of Social Housing's Regulatory Framework. We have an expectation that this will evolve and reflect a strong emphasis on Customer Voice.
- 1.6 This policy relates to all Aster's customers.
- 1.7 Our focus on Customer Voice will support our membership of the Institute of Customer Service and will be central to the customer principles Aster delivers.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 We will ensure the Customer Voice is heard across Aster. We would describe this as an holistic approach. Our colleagues will be open and transparent when providing information which will enable effective consultation with a clear goal.
- 2.2 We will strive towards a model of Co-Production where our customers develop and design our services with us, and recognise this is an ongoing two-way process. We define co-production as the development of services with customers involved throughout the process. We welcome ideas and innovation proposals from customers through all channels available to them.
- 2.3 We will strive to increase the numbers and diversity of our involved customers so that the customer voice is increasingly representative of all our customers. We will do this by giving all customers opportunities to shape our services, and we will use customer information to improve representation and involvement for all customers.

- 2.4 We will use customer insight, intelligence and engagement to try to improve the customer experience, for the benefit of our customers and Aster. This data will be stored confidentially and securely on our contact management systems.
- 2.5 The Customer Voice Team will act as the pathway between colleagues and customers, supporting and coordinating all parts of the engagement process for any project where this is required. We recognise involvement by the Customer Voice team may not always be required or appropriate, but would expect colleagues to discuss any planned projects or changes to service with the Customer Voice team to see if consultation is necessary.
- 2.6 We will work with service leads to invite customer consultation whenever an existing customer facing service is reviewed, or a new service proposed.
- 2.7 We aim to make our work as inclusive as possible for all our customers. We will do this by trying to remove barriers to customer involvement and allowing them opportunities to tell us ideally what they want, when they want, and how they want. We will use this feedback to try to adapt and improve our services.
- 2.8 We will support our customers who express an interest to work with us to improve services. We will work closely with customers to address any skill or confidence gaps or other barriers, always building on their individual strengths. This could mean linking with colleagues in the Aster Foundation.
- 2.9 We will engage with as broad a range of our customers as we are able to, using their preferred methods where possible and working with them on the issues that matter to them most.
- 2.10 We will optimise opportunities to consult our customers digitally and aim to use social media where we can, enabling us to obtain high volume input quickly from a diverse range of customers. We recognise social media channels are generally public, so will assess and manage any risks associated with this.
- 2.11 We will expect customers to act and communicate reasonably, in a helpful and productive way, and with an understanding we may not always be able to put into use everything they propose. If we cannot, we will be open and honest with the reasons why.
- 2.12 We will aim to develop and embed a culture that places our customers at the centre of what we do. This means they will be consulted and given a range of opportunities to influence our strategic priorities and policy setting wherever possible, the delivery and development of our services and the continuous review and scrutiny of our performance.
- 2.13 We will use a variety of formal and informal methods to ensure that our customers are given a wide range of opportunities to participate.
- 2.14 We will allow customers adequate time to engage and respond to us.
- 2.15 We will support and develop our formal consultation groups and ensure that all Aster colleagues are aware of, understand, and benefit from their work. We will do this through a range of measures including our intranet Asternet.
- 2.16 We are committed to have customer representatives involved in our governance structure and will support any customer interest in this.

- 2.17 Our involved customer groups are the Customer Overview Group, Customer Scrutiny Panel and the Designated Complaints Panel. These groups will continue to review Aster services, approve policy, scrutinise performance, and support the objectives of Boards, achieved with the support of the Customer and Community Network. Further information on the customer groups is available [here](#).
- 2.18 We will develop subject specific consultation groups and regularly consult with these groups. These groups will have strong links to appropriate workstreams or working groups, service delivery teams, and/or projects within Aster.
- 2.19 We will provide involved customers with feedback following every consultation whenever possible. We will publicise the results of their involvement electronically and in our quarterly newsletter.
- 2.20 We will ensure that any queries or complaints that are raised through a consultation or by a customer to the Customer Voice team, are directed to the appropriate team or colleague to investigate the issue.
- 2.21 We will ensure customers are reimbursed for all reasonable expenses they incur during any involvement activity. This should be discussed with the Customer Voice Team and agreed before the activity takes place.
- 2.22 The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all Aster Colleagues, as they will be responsible for contacting the Customer Voice team with any consultation opportunities with any works, projects or proposed service changes. The Customer Voice team is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the customer consultation, and any involved customer groups or activities.

3 Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.
- 3.2 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored in accordance with the delegation matrix and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months by the *Customer Experience Panel*
- 3.3 We will develop and report on a set of performance indicators which will be agreed and monitored in accordance with the Delegation matrix. These are currently as follows-
- Number of customers involved in policy consultation
 - Response rates to policy consultation
 - Focus group activity
 - Neighbourhood enhancement consultation
 - Procedural changes following learning from complaints
 - Workstream consultations/surveys
 - Number of E-shot customer emails opened, deleted, and returned undelivered.
- 3.4 The Customer Voice team will ensure that the outcomes of involvement activities are captured and reported on.
- 3.5 We will publish an annual report which includes performance information, including repairs and maintenance budgets, to support effective tenant scrutiny.

3.6 We will monitor and review lessons learnt and outcomes from customer complaints in line with the Complaints Policy.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 Complaints Policy
- 4.2 Complaints Procedure
- 4.3 Expenses Policy
- 4.4 Honesty Policy
- 4.5 Diversity & inclusion Policy

5 Governance

Effective From:	01/01/2021	Expires:	31/12/2023
Policy Owner:	Customer Experience & Strategy Director		
Policy Author:	Customer Voice Lead		
Approved by:	<i>Customer Community Network</i>		
Delegation Matrix Reference:	R076	Version Number:	1.0