

## Customer Scrutiny Panel Report

<b>Report title:</b>	Scrutiny of Aster Care & Support services
<b>Date</b>	August 2017
<b>CSP Grade</b>	Customers can have some confidence in this service. Recommendations made to improve in some areas.

### Summary of Key Points

- The CSP consider that care and support services are likely to be one of the most important services disabled and vulnerable customers receive as it brings them into direct contact with the company and its employees by which they may judge the quality and response from the service.
- The main area of scrutiny was concentrated on support services.
- There is a risk that if there is a lack of support it would affect people's ability to live independently, service delivery is reliant on Local Authority (LA) funding. Services are not subsidized by Aster who are currently contracted to supply the support service and therefore support must be modelled on the contract income and outcomes required by the relevant LA.
- The CSP has noted that both Dorset County Council (DCC) and Somerset County Council (SCC) current contracts expire in 2018, March and October respectively.
- There are contract monitoring reports for both LA's, however the two were not compared with each other by the CSP as they have different requirements.

The CSP consider that both contracts were being monitored satisfactorily by Aster support and were meeting the contract requirements.

### Risks to Customers and Aster

#### Customers

Vulnerable and disabled customers could be affected both emotionally and physically if they do not receive a high standard of support service. Lack of support services affects the way people can live independently.

## **Aster**

No risks were identified from the risk register by the service area for support services

## **CSP recommendations, with actions by Aster support service shown in italics.**

### **Communication with customers**

There were a number of recommendations around improving communication with customers in order that everyone knows what services are available through Dorset and Somerset council funding respectively. These should include details of any extra services available at a cost to the customer should they wish to fund themselves, including the cost per hour.

A contact number should be given if a customer has a query on the level of support service they are receiving, require information on further support or if they need the correspondence in another format.

*The CSP has been advised that the process of sending out updated information sheets on support services is under way.*

If staff are on site and available the scheme office should have a simple sign on the door which shows staff availability and what day/s staff are on duty.

### **Staff**

Staff responsible for inputting customer information should be issued with i-pads or similar, with access to Asters Supporting People Assistant (SPA) software, and only use hard copy where legally required or to cater for the customers' requirements, this would speed up the process.

*The CSP have been advised that use of these have been trialled. However, there are difficulties when 'black spots' in coverage are encountered, this is especially noticeable in rural areas. Discussions are taking place with the service provider regarding Aster being supplied with a coverage map which will indicate where coverage is or isn't available.*

Ensure staff are kept up to date with any changes in the services to customers.

*The CSP have been advised that issues such as this will be discussed at the regular team meetings as and when they arise and information is available.*

## **Customer engagement**

- The Aster Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) meets the co-regulation requirement for landlords to support effective independent scrutiny by tenants

of its landlord's performance, and the company provides the administration support for the panel to be effective.

- The CSP requested that two groups of up to 10 customers in each who receive support services be brought together in Dorset and Somerset respectively to give their views on the service they receive from Aster Support directly to CSP members.

The CSP consider these meetings were especially important as they could express their views on the support service they were receiving. Communication about the services available was one of the key issues which is reflected in the recommendations section above.

## Conclusions

Both Dorset and Somerset customers consider there is a lack of communication regarding the services they receive from Aster support service. Most customers felt that improved communication would help people understand services available to them. The CSP consider that in both geographic areas customers should be kept informed of what is happening in the service especially as both Dorset and Somerset contracts are either currently under review or will be in the near future.

Whilst the CSP understand that Aster support are only contracted to provide these support services this is not necessarily understood by all the customers receiving support. As commented on by the CSP and included in recommendations Aster support should inform all their customers of the contract reviews and keep them informed, as everyone recognizes these are vulnerable, elderly and disabled customers who deserve to know what is happening to the service.

The CSP would like to thank all those who provided information for the scrutiny, especially customers and staff who took part in the face to face discussions with the CSP and gave their views.