



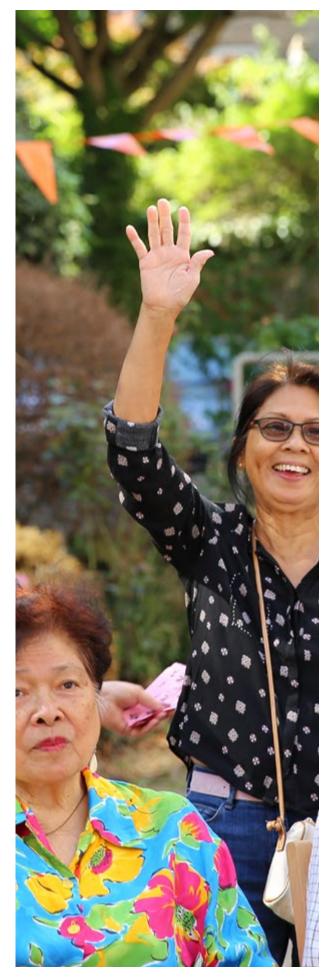
## Resident Annual Review 2021-2022







ASTER



## Welcome

A warm welcome from the Central & Cecil leadership team.

Welcome to C&C's annual review, which covers the 2021/22 financial year.

This time 12 months ago, just as the final touches were being put to our <u>previous review</u>, we were in the process of announcing to residents <u>our</u> <u>intention to merge</u> with Aster Group.

At that time, there were a many hurdles to overcome and decisions to be made before the intended merger could become reality. Above all else, we wanted to ensure that the merger was the right thing for our residents – and that we had listened to and acted upon their suggestions, questions and concerns.

Following a comprehensive consultation process, where we received broadly positive feedback, we were delighted to progress with our plans. The merger was completed in early January 2022.

Since then, we have continued to work tirelessly on integrating the two organisations together, enabling us to provide better services and support to both current and future housing and care residents. As a result of the merger, C&C is operating under a new leadership structure. Julia Ashley, who was Chief Executive for six years, has taken a new and exciting role as Business Development Director for Aster, with primary responsibility for delivering a new strategy for meeting the housing needs of our ageing population.

We now form the team responsible for C&C's operations: Jean Dalziel, Customer Services Operations Director for Aster, Sharon Bye, Director of Care and Sam Scharf, Director of Housing and Customer Services.

Of course, this past year hasn't just been about the merger. The challenges presented by Covid-19 continued to dominate, and while broader national restrictions had been lifted, many still remain in our care settings.

We're also acutely aware that many of our housing residents continue to shield, or at least take additional care, to help avoid catching the virus, and C&C will continue to do all it can to support until Covid-19 is downgraded.

With easing restrictions, we haveincreasingly been able to reintroduce our award-winning in-person activities programme to both housing and care residents. Our Move For Care initiative in the winter helped raise £25,000, which will enable new sensory gardens to be installed at each of our four care homes.

You may notice that this year's Annual Review has been significantly slimmed down compared to previous years. This is in recognition that C&C is now a part of Aster Group, and therefore many of our key updates, challenges and opportunities are now shared at a groupwide level. You can find much more information and detail about the Group, including its future plans, by reading <u>Aster's annual report</u>. Nonetheless, there is a great deal to

reflect back on at C&C level – with many achievements to celebrate over the past year. This Review honours that progress, and we hope you find it an enjoyable read.

Jean, Sam and Sharon

Jean Dalziel Customer Services Operations Director, Aster (with responsibility for C&C)

Sam Scharf Director of Housing, C&C

Sharon Bye Director of Care, C&C

**Note:** As part of C&C's ongoing commitment to the environment, this year's Annual Review is available in digital-only format.



## C&C: now part of Aster Group



A S T E R

C&C joined forces with Aster Group, a large housing association with over 32,000 homes, at the start of 2022. But how did the merger come about, and why is it of benefit to C&C and its 2,000 residents?

#### Setting the scene

In June 2021, C&C and Aster Group announced our intention to merge, with C&C to become a subsidiary company within the larger Group.

For some time, we had been looking for the right opportunities to partner with other like-minded organisations in order to broaden its services and improve its ability to invest in both new and existing properties.

A number of recent changes in wider society, along with new government targets for housing association governance and building reforms, challenged us to develop and invest even more in our future. Brexit and Covid-19 changed the way we needed to plan for this future. We recognised that we want to be at the forefront of providing more and better homes for our ageing population, while also responding to the climate crisis, and therefore needed to build more resilience.

Following an in-depth and rigorous board review of our options, we entered into early discussions with Aster. We recognised similarities between our organisational visions immediately. Moreover, we recognised that the merger enables C&C to accelerate planned investment into our own homes and create more connected communities through digital services. The Group's charity, the Aster Foundation will increase community events, involvement and volunteering opportunities.

And of course, coming together will enable C&C and Aster to build hundreds more homes over the next seven years than otherwise could have been, had the organisations continued to operate alone.

#### Completing the merger

In the first few months following our announcement, C&C and Aster worked closely with all stakeholders – housing residents, care residents, friends and families of care, our Service Scrutiny Panel (SSP), partners, suppliers, funders, and colleagues included.

Having written to all residents to initially announce the plans, we set up a variety of ways for them to respond.

15 dedicated meetings were held both onsite and virtually, attracting 150 residents, while a website page answered some 25 frequently asked questions (FAQs). E-mails, digital screens, posters, social posts, scheme and home walkarounds, internal colleague briefings and press releases were just some of the channels used to communicate news of the merger, and answer questions residents might have.

We received approximately 70 written and 130 verbal responses. A number of positive responses in support of the merger were received, particularly regarding the investment in properties and services, and we were able to respond to some residents who had concerns around the security of their tenancy. A small number were critical of the merger plans, with concerns expressed about C&C's current services or Aster's motivations. Reassurances were provided about our role at a senior level to lead on Aster's over-55 offer going forward, while Aster senior management attended several meetings to engage directly with residents.

Our dedicated website page <u>ccht.org.uk/</u> <u>aster-merger</u> received around 1,500 hits while <u>Twitter posts</u> related to the merger attracted over 14,000 impressions.

Having completed the consultation and reported all feedback, we received unanimous agreement from both boards and C&C shareholders that the merger should go ahead. The combined Aster Group, following the merger's completion in January 2022, now offers around 34,000 homes.

#### Joining forces

Since the start of this calendar year, we've been busy integrating the two organisations together for the benefit of residents. To date, the main focus has been on integrating our central team services along with support systems to ensure a consistent and collaborative approach.

C&C and Aster have been working hard to identify where property improvements can be made, along with sites for opportunities to build new homes to add to the overall Aster portfolio. Importantly, Julia Ashley's new role at Aster has been to put together a new strategy for how the Group will help meet the housing needs of our ageing population. Several C&C residents have already offered invaluable insight and support to Julia as she prepares to outline the full strategy, and we anticipate this will be published in autumn 2022.

The decision to merge was made based on the best interests of our residents now and in the future, and one that has secured much needed investment into our homes and services.



## Our year in numbers: C&C's performance in the 2021/22 financial year



## Our year in numbers (continued)

#### Compliance - as of 1 April 2022

- 99.07% fire risk assessments completed.
- 100% periodic gas safety inspections completed.
- 100% asbestos re-inspections in date.
- 99.69% periodic electrical inspections in date.
- 100% legionella water risk assessments in date.

#### C&C Direct

- C&C Direct received 74% of all day-to-day repairs at our properties (2,229 out of 3,018) (20/21:73%).
- 87% completed within the target date, against a target of 95% (20/21: 86%).
- 75% completed as a first-time fix against a target of 85% (20/21: 76%).
- 95% resident satisfaction with the way C&C Direct handled their repairs (20/21: 90%).

#### Our resident satisfaction

- Average level of overall satisfaction for the year 83.3% (20/21 76.2%).
- Average level of residents that would recommend C&C as a place to live 89.4% (20/21 84.2%).
- Average level of satisfaction with call handling for the year 89.5%.
- Average level of residents who feel C&C listens to resident views and acts upon them 77.0%.
- Average level of residents who feel their home is safe and secure 83.9%.

#### C&C on social media

- 1,308 Linkedin followers up 18%.
- 779 Twitter followers up 8%.
- 399 Facebook followers down 39%.
- 160 Instagram followers down 14% (this is not a channel C&C actively uses).

# Responding to the ongoing challenges of Covid-19

The start of the 2021/22 financial year in April 2021 coincided with the cautious lifting of various Covid-19 restrictions. Since then, we've had periods of high cases caused by variants, resulting in tough restrictions, along with times when restrictions have been eased or removed altogether.

While Covid-19 no longer dominates the news agenda, we've continued to work tirelessly to ensure residents in our housing and care schemes have been well supported, can access everything they need, and can rely on us to act with their best needs at heart.

We reviewed our approach to housing and care on a weekly basis, continuing senior management calls to adapt policies in line with the latest government guidance, and ensure we were communicating important changes directly to residents and the loved ones of our care residents. Our COVID-19 Management Plan is <u>now on version 14.</u> Protocols were established for working on each C&C site, and updated as circumstances changed.

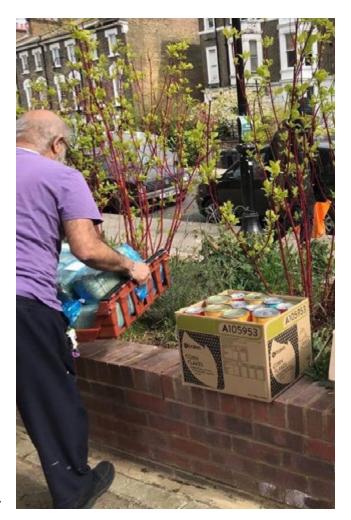


#### Housing

All our sheltered and supported schemes remained staffed throughout the year, with onsite services maintained. Our teams adapted to continued waves of the pandemic to provide first class support services to residents across schemes and in our general housing, and we encouraged residents and colleagues to be vaccinated.

Food parcels and shopping continued to be offered to residents who were self-isolating or shielding. And the return of our popular 'Winter Watch' campaign saw us reach out to residents to check on their wellbeing, as well as gather views of over 200 people about their attitudes towards isolation and loneliness, especially in light of the ongoing pandemic.





The repairs team continued working throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, making sure repairs were carried out during the lockdown periods.

At Grace House, where construction work has been underway, there were strong mitigating measures laid down to ensure progress continued, especially during the various lockdowns. Social distancing, meetings via video conferencing, face masks and extra cleaning facilities were among the measures put into place. Deliveries of building materials/finishes were made ahead of schedule to avoid any delays.

#### Care

All four of our care homes experienced at least one lockdown period due to positive cases being recorded, and we sadly lost a very small number of residents to the virus.

Continued efforts were made to ensure that care home residents could maintain regular contact with loved ones. Our safe and secure visitor pods, installed at all of our homes in late 2020, continued to be well used throughout the year and were valued by many. Residents were actively supported to have video and telephone calls with their friends, relatives and loved ones in lockdown periods, and the homes championed the role of "essential care givers" to maximise contact with families and loved ones.

All homes fully engaged with the care home testing regimes and maintained the highest possible level of enhanced infection control. In addition, they achieved full compliance with the national reporting process in place for Public Health England and local boroughs to monitor vacancies, work force and resident testing and vaccination progress.

Our care residents were among the first nationally to receive the various vaccinations provided in the fight against Covid-19. We also encouraged care colleagues to be vaccinated as soon as possible and were pleased to see a strong take-up of 94%. C&C entered into a meaningful consultation period with our care colleagues as a result of a new law that came into force on 11 November 2021, requiring mandatory vaccination across all adult care services. While we provided encouragement of the vaccine programme to all colleagues, the small number of colleagues who were not vaccinated received our support. Two utilised legal exemptions, one transferred to a permanent post in the Housing team, and six resigned. The law was subsequently revoked in March 2022.

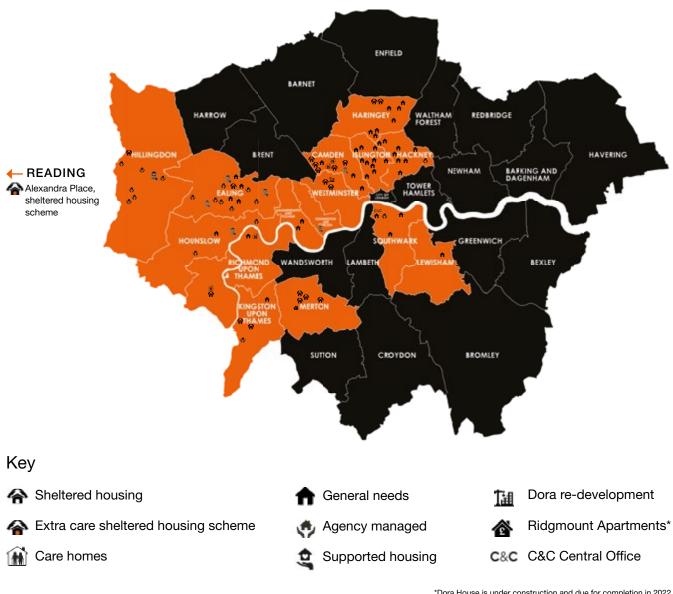


Despite understandable concerns from family members, along with the practical challenges associated with moving new residents in during lockdown periods, we actually improved our care home occupancy rate to 88% over the year.





## Housing highlights



\*Dora House is under construction and due for completion in 2022



Below is just a flavour of the various highlights and progressive actions taken by C&C to support sheltered scheme and general needs housing residents over the past year:

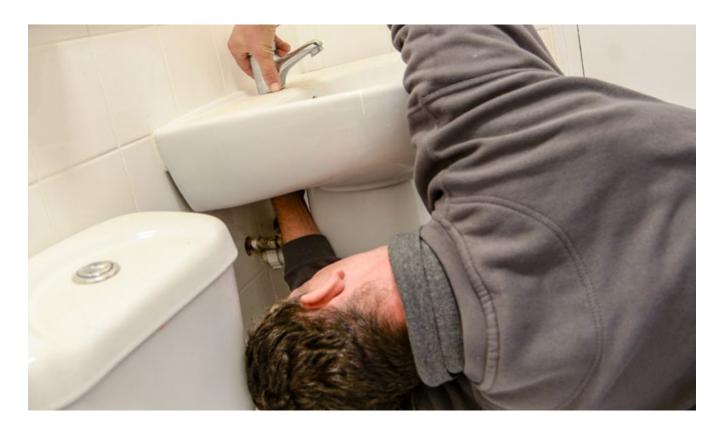
#### General updates

- To reflect the increases in the cost of living, and changes to service charges, we
  introduced a support fund for residents to ensure those most affected could get
  support. With further energy price increases, this has been extended to support residents
  through the 22/23 financial year.
- Throughout 21/22 our Service Scrutiny Panel (SSP) resident members continued to
  play an active role in key policies, strategy, and other projects. To align with our approach
  to customer engagement, our SSP group is integrating with Aster's established
  Customer Voice groups. Aster has several Customer Voice groups that allow
  our residents to choose the area of the business they want to influence and the level
  of engagement that is right for them. All C&C residents have been invited to
  express their interest in joining.
- With the impact of Covid-19 becoming evident in a variety of ways, the front-line teams have managed 29 safeguarding cases alongside local partners, with the highest referral reason being self-neglect.
- Further development of our sustainability strategy was paused due to the Aster merger discussions. C&C will work with Aster to develop a group-wide Sustainability Strategy.
- We bought zero carbon electricity for our communal supplies when renewing energy contracts in October 2021. We are including clauses within our procurement to ensure our contractors deliver high environmental standards (including an electric fleet for moving residents to Grace House, and through a renewed laundry contract).

#### Investing in the future

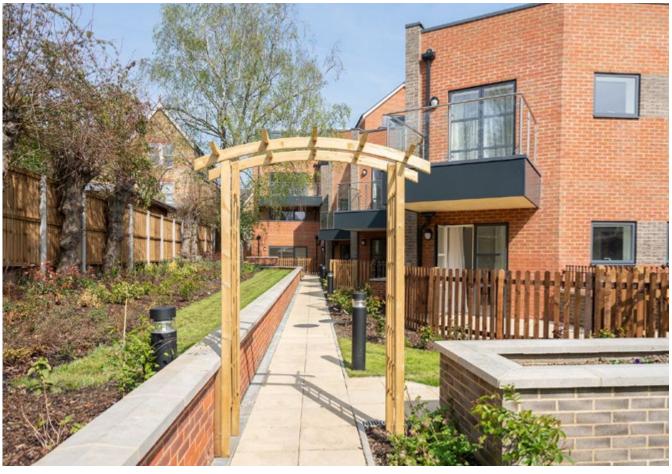
- Major capital works were carried out at several schemes. £1.2m was spent on upgrades to the communal heating system at Ada Court; internal decorations to Alexandra Place were carried out; 60 new domestic boilers were installed; and major fire upgrade works were made to Blackham, Erica House and Raymond Road. Similar fire upgrade works at Fairhall Court and Moray House are due in 22/23.
- The merger with Aster Group has accelerated our seven year fire upgrade programme to three years with £19m funding being made available to complete the works. These include replacing flat entrance doors with new fire certified doorsets; passive fire protection; upgrades to fire alarms; new communal and emergency lighting; and internal communal decorations.
- Through our voids process of empty properties, 49 new/upgraded bathrooms and kitchens were completed at a combined cost of £380k.
- Over £1.3m was spent by the property compliance team to ensure that our homes are safe and have achieved high levels of regulatory compliance.
- One property was overdue a fire risk assessment due to lack of access; this was completed in April 2022. The housing and property compliance teams have worked together to complete outstanding electrical inspection checks.
- Larger refurbishment works were carried out in house by C&C Direct at several of our properties, rather than giving the work to external contractors.
- The C&C Direct team took unvented cylinder installation training to enable them to fit unvented hot water cylinders.

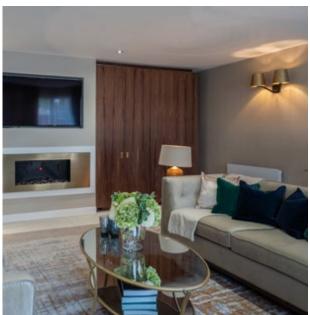
 The launch of a mobile-enabled application and an automated planning functionality for our repairs system was delayed, with implementation now planned for Q2 2022/23. This will allow for better diary management and planning of works orders along with the C&C Direct team being able to update works orders in real time. Repairs diagnostic software will also be put in place in the Service Hub, which will help improve the first-time fix rate.



#### Ridgmount

Sales at our over 55s development, Ridgmount Apartments in Wimbledon have continued to progress slowly. Following a revised sales strategy and the lifting of restrictions in early 2022, seven sales have now completed with offers accepted on a further three units. Six of the seven flats let in 2020 have now been refurbished and are being offered for sale.







# Grace House: an innovative solution for affordable over-55s living



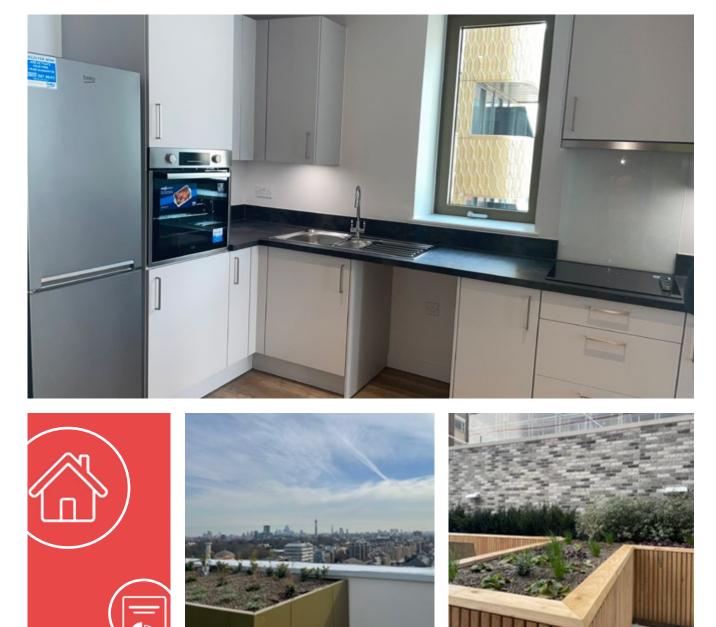
The new development at the old Dora House site in St John's Wood continued to progress at pace throughout the year. The 170 new apartments, of which 17 will be market rent, are set to complete 17 weeks ahead of schedule, meaning we expect the first residents to move in during August 2022. This is despite the challenges caused by Covid-19 lockdowns, national labour and material shortages, and price rises.

A 'topping-out' ceremony, so called as it marks the point that work on a development's structure and roof is completed, was held in June 2021, and attended by representatives of C&C and developers Regal London.

Even before it has opened, the development is award-winning. It won in the International Property Awards within the Best Social Housing category for London, UK and Europe, collecting a total of three awards. Among those set to move into the new development are around 60 residents who lived in Dora House before it closed in 2018. Several have been engaged both in the choice of decorations and the design of the new building.

In November, we announced that a naming competition held among Dora House residents had selected the new name, Grace House. Resident Barry Mitchell came up with the name, which both reflects its proximity to Lords' Cricket Ground and acknowledges C&C's custom of using female names at a number of our sheltered housing schemes.

As well as preparing to welcome residents and to assess any support they may need, significant work is underway for a 'Grand Opening' of Grace House, to be held later this year, as well as using the communal spaces for a successful events programme to be rolled out.



## **Celebrating care**

Here, we round up just some of the top highlights that have taken place at our four Richmond and Camden-based care homes this year:

Three of our care homes had Care Quality Commission (CQC) infection control inspections take place during the past year. All were assured in all areas. The four care homes remain rated as "Good" overall, with Cecil Court rated "Outstanding" for leadership.

Among our care residents, our four homes received 100% satisfaction levels.

Use of our care management software, Nourish was further developed during the year and has proved beneficial for auditing and monitoring infection control and Covid-19 care planning throughout the pandemic. Cecil Court was highly commended for best use of technology in the national Care Home Awards 2021 (with all our care services being nominated in two other categories), while Homemead was a finalist in the same category for the Markel Third Sector Care Awards in 2022. Cecil Court was also a finalist in the South London Community Star & Care Awards in May, in the care employer category.

Use of agency staff has been significantly decreased across all homes and virtually eliminated other than during lockdown protocols – this benefits both financially and also in maintaining high standards of care.

Our Richmond based care homes (Cecil Court and Homemead) have continued their successful engagement with My Life Films, a local initiative for people living with dementia. The homes have worked with local health teams to ensure that "remote monitoring" systems are used for GPs and other health care professionals to access real time health data for residents. In October 2021, a small block contract for five beds at Compton Lodge was secured to run until the end of March 2022, to assist with the local borough Winter Plan.

## **Events and activities**

We have continued to grow our fantastic programme of activities, with 560 classes put on for housing residents, attracting 2,114 attendees over the year. This was a blend of online and in-person activities as we had to constantly adapt the program to meet the ongoing demands of Covid-19.

In care, we delivered a further 625 classes for residents, with a blend of online activities, in-person activities and activity packs.



Just a small selection of some of the amazing care events we ran include Compton Lodge hosting 'Albert's Band', the resident Royal Albert Hall band, for their <u>first in-person event</u> since the outbreak of Covid-19; several sheltered scheme residents playing their own part in supporting the Royal Albert Hall's 150th birthday celebrations; resident Ludwig's 100th birthday being <u>marked in some style at Rathmore House</u>; and all our care homes <u>running</u> concerts to mark the National Day of Arts.

Where possible, and in line with our "Out Not In" care strategy in particular, activities were held in-person, albeit many were hosted outside during the summer months to recognise the lower risks posed by Covid-19 and the ability to more easily socially distance.

A small number of events will continue to be held online, as we recognise that some residents prefer this approach – especially those who are still broadly isolating. However most events have now returned to in-person given the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

The monthly resident e-newsletter continues to attract around 450 residents.

#### Move for Care

During January and February 2022, C&C ran a "Move for Care" fundraising initiative. This saw housing and care residents, their family members, and colleagues at C&C record a combined 14 million step count, significantly exceeding the 9.5 million target set out in recognition of C&C's 95th birthday. A two-week 'danceathon' was also held at the start of February, comprising virtual activities teaching dances from all around the world.

Funds raised by Move for Care contributed towards us reaching our fundraising target which now enables us to build sensory gardens at each of our four care homes. In particular, C&C would like to thank its sponsors Regal London for their generosity in supporting this initiative.

Total donations received during the year were from a variety of charitable trusts and companies as well as from a number of individual supporters generating a total of around  $\pounds 22,000$ . This included  $\pounds 12,000$  from Richmond Parish Land Charity for our Richmond care homes.



## **Central office updates**

### Investors in People – we are Gold!

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE® We invest in people Gold

In January, it was announced that C&C had achieved Investors in People Gold status. This was a significant achievement, especially coming at a time of such substantial change with the Aster merger and the effects of work changes due to Covid-19 being felt. The accreditation was an upgrade on our previous Silver status.

C&C achieved an overall benchmark score of 766 out of a possible 900 – significantly higher than the average benchmark scores for both the Housing Association Real Estate sector (724) and the Investors in People community more generally (727).

The assessors found that colleagues 'lived and breathed' our organisation values, and remarked upon how we had truly embraced the value of investing in its people. Effective collaboration, an inclusive approach, a real sense of a shared purpose, open and honest communications and an overwhelming sense of pride and enthusiasm were all praised.

#### Other updates from the People team

- A key focus this year was on the challenging recruiting environment, and in particular aiming to fill all vacancies in care and housing to avoid the need to use agency staff. This was further complicated by the mandatory vaccination policy for those working in care settings (see p. 9).
- Despite these challenges, recruitment costs per hire continued to fall significantly during the year and the overall speed of hire remains high.

- Within the Housing team, multiple opportunities arose during the year for colleagues to 'act up' and take on additional responsibilities. The acting up proved highly successful, with multiple innovations being introduced.
- We hired a specialist lettings and void operative within our Service Hub to lead the work across repairs and housing, including building a robust pipeline of new applicants into C&C.
- C&C colleagues were awarded the deferred 1% pay increase for the year 2021/22 from 1 January 2022. At the same time, colleagues were also awarded a one-off, nonconsolidated payment equivalent to the benefit that would have been received if the pay had been awarded on 1 April 2021.
- Following C&C's merger with Aster Group, C&C colleagues were able to access a wider range of benefits - including an enhanced pension up to 10% employer contribution, and wellbeing apps Plumm, Thrive, and Perkbox. All qualifying C&C colleagues also







received a £500 end of year bonus and a 3.8% pay increase was announced, taking effect from April 2022.

- We have further increased the number of trained Mental Health First Aiders in the organisation to provide a first response and regularly reminded colleagues of the availability of support from our Employee Assistance Programme.
- Considerations over our Central office
  in Waterloo were accelerated during
  the year. While we will continue to retain
  a workspace presence in London going
  forward, we recognise that the current
  office may not be fit for purpose in the
  longer-term. A feasibility review of the
  office, including setting out alternative
  options, is set to conclude in the autumn.

#### Marketing

- As part of our 95th birthday celebrations, we ran a series of articles to celebrate C&C's rich history providing social housing solutions throughout the London region since 1926. We put together a timeline marking key milestones both for C&C and wider social housing in the UK; and wrote long-read pieces about some of our key figures and places of interest. We also spoke to both a care and housing resident who are older than C&C! <u>All articles can be accessed here</u>.
- We secured a record 147 pieces of media coverage during the year (20/21: 73). This
  included interviews in the Guardian, the Evening Standard, and AOL, as well as building
  our local profile in key regional titles including the Ham & High and the Richmond and
  Twickenham Times.
- Along with various reports and advertisements, we created 'cue cards' for each of our care teams following extensive sessions to determine the key messages for each of our homes.
- Our website ccht.org.uk achieved 138,716 unique pageviews during the year up 7.38% from the 20/21 financial year.
- A pop-up banner was developed and added to the focussed care home pages to assist with the user journey for potential new residents or their family members. The pop-up encourages users to complete the form to speak to a member of the care team or arrange a tour.



 We switched website accessibility software to Recite Me, which allows users to customise their digital experience to suit their own needs, including translation into over 100 languages.

## Executive/regional team update

There were some changes within the executive team during the year, with Sharon Bye joining in May 2021 as the Director of Care and Sam Scharf joining in September 2021 as Director of Housing.

In March 2022 we announced that Julia Ashley, who had been Chief Executive for C&C prior to the Aster merger, would be taking up a new role as Business Development Director.

Sam Scharf, C&C's Director of Housing and Customer Services, along with Sharon Bye, C&C's Director of Care, have taken overall operational responsibility for C&C. They are reporting into Jean Dalziel, Customer Services Operations Director for Aster, who is overseeing service delivery across all our housing and care schemes. With C&C now forming Aster's London region our executive team has been renamed the 'regional leadership team'.

## Changes to C&C board structure

On 31 December 2021, all of C&C's Board members effectively resigned. The C&C Board was replaced by the <u>Aster Group Overlap Board</u> and the executive was replaced by the <u>Aster Executive Board</u>.

Peter Walters, C&C Chair, was appointed to Aster Group's newly formed <u>Aster 55 Committee</u> as Chair, and C&C non-executive director Paul Shipley was appointed as an independent member. Julia Ashley was appointed as a member. The committee was set up specifically to forward the new Group strategy for ageing.

C&C non-executive director Phil Insuli was also appointed to Aster's existing Customer and Community Network.

## Our financial performance

C&C remains fully committed to providing value for money in all that we do and to deliver the highest quality of service.

Having achieved a G1/V2 rating in our regulatory assessment with the Regulator of Social Housing, we have now assumed Aster's top G1/V1 rating across the organisation following our merger. G1 demonstrates that a provider has fully met governance requirements, while V1 demonstrates that a provider has fully met financial viability requirements.

C&C has partnered with Procure Public, establishing its own procurement framework. Fees were received in 2021/22 for the first time and should develop into a regular fee income stream, as the framework is used by other organisations.

C&C reported a before-tax deficit of £6.1m (20/21: £0.5m profit) for the year ended 31 March 2022. This includes non-cash pension buy-out costs of £2.8m, offset by a credit to reserves; and costs of £3.0m related to our merger with Aster Group.

You can find much more detail about C&C's financial performance in our 2021/22 Financial Statement.

You can find out far more about C&C, East Boro Housing Trust (EBHT) and the rest of the work across the whole Aster Group by reading <u>Aster's annual</u> <u>report</u>.





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