



# Your **Tenant** Handbook





This handbook gives you information about Bield, our responsibilities as a landlord, and the services we provide.

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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### **Bield Housing Association Limited**

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**Registered Office** 0131 273 4000

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**Glasgow Office** 0141 270 7200

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**Dundee Office** 01382 228911
















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**Bield Response24** 0141 950 1025

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# Welcome to Bield Housing Association



Welcome to your new Bield home.

## **About your Handbook**

The information provided in this handbook should help you to make the most of being a Bield tenant. We have tried to provide practical advice on a range of issues that you may experience during your tenancy.

Your Tenancy Agreement has detailed information about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

If you live in housing where additional support is provided, Section 9 of this handbook will provide you with more information about housing support services.

If you would like a language translation, Braille, large print or Audio tape version of any information please contact your local Bield office. The details of all our offices are in Section 15 of this handbook.

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ, ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਜਾਂ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ ਦੇ ਵਰਣ 'ਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਬੀਲਡ ਆਫਿਸ 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। ਸਾਡੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਦਫਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਵੇਰਵੇ ਸੈਕਸ਼ਨ 15 ਵਿਖੇ ਇਸ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ।

若你欲索取任何的文字翻譯、盲人點字、大字報或錄音帶版本的信息，請與你當地的 Bield 房屋協會的辦公室聯絡。有關我們辦公室的詳情可於本手冊的第 15 節察看到。

اگر کوئی بھی معلومات آپ کو کسی زبان میں ترقی، بریل، بڑی طباعت یا آڈیو ٹیپ کی صورت میں درکار ہیں تو براہ مہربانی اپنے مقامی بیلڈ (Bield) دفتر سے رابطہ قائم کریں۔ ہمارے تمام دفاتر کی تفصیل اس رہنما کتاب کے سیکشن 15 میں درج ہے۔

কোনো তথ্য অন্য কোনো ভাষায়, ব্রেইলে (অঙ্কলিপিতে), মোটা হরফে (লার্জ প্রিন্টে) অথবা বাজিয়ে শোনার ক্যাসেটে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আপনার এলাকার বিল্ড (Bield) অফিসে যোগাযোগ করুন। আমাদের সব অফিসের সাথে যোগাযোগের বিবরণ এই পুস্তিকার 15নং অধ্যায়ে রয়েছে।





## Housing

We offer a range of housing that includes;

- Amenity
- Sheltered
- Very Sheltered Housing
- Housing with Care
- Retirement Housing
- General Needs
- Private Retirement Housing
- Shared Equity (within Amenity, Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing)

Depending on the type of housing you live in some parts of the handbook may not be relevant to you. The type of housing you live in will also influence the staff you will meet. More detailed information about staff can be found in Section 4 of this handbook.



## Your Tenancy



All Tenants should be able to enjoy their home and live in a peaceful and safe environment.


### YOUR RIGHTS

All Bield Tenants are issued with a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement. You will have signed this when you started your tenancy. It details your rights and responsibilities as legally stated in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. If you are a Joint Tenant with another person you both have equal rights and responsibilities.

#### **Security of tenure**

A Scottish Secure Tenancy offers increased security of tenure and can only be ended in one of the following ways:

- by the tenant giving four weeks notice
- on the death of the tenant
- by a written agreement between the tenant and the landlord
- by the landlord taking court action to recover possession of the house

- 
- by the landlord taking action because the tenant has abandoned the house
  - where a tenant is the subject of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order

Some tenants in shared equity tenancies will have different terms to those outlined above. These will be detailed in your Shared Equity Agreement. Your Housing Officer can provide further information if required.

*Further details about ending a tenancy can be found in Section 14 of this handbook.*

Your tenancy will continue during absences from home due to holiday or illness as long as you continue to pay rent and meet your other tenancy conditions.

You should let your Scheme Manager know if you intend to be away from home even for one night so that everyone can be accounted for in the event of a fire or other emergency.

### **The right to have a joint tenancy, take in lodgers, sub-let or assign your house**

If you wish to have a joint tenancy with another person, take in a lodger, sub-let or assign your house you can if certain conditions are met, and you obtain written permission first.

If you wish to change your tenancy in any of these ways contact your Housing Officer to discuss what is required, or write to your Housing Officer to request permission.

We will advise you of our decision within one month of receiving your application.

*Further details on changing your tenancy can be found in Sections 4 and 10 of your Tenancy Agreement.*

### **The right to buy**

As Bield is a registered charity you do not have the 'Right to Buy'.


### **The right to enjoy your home**

For many Tenants living in close proximity and sharing facilities such as a laundry and communal lounge is a new experience. This requires understanding and consideration of the needs of your neighbours.

If you experience difficulties with your neighbours or their visitors, Bield will try to help you resolve the matter. An informal solution is always preferable and can usually be reached through amicable discussion between the persons concerned.

If you feel the difficulties cannot be dealt with through discussion, you should let your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer know that you have a problem as soon as possible. They will investigate and let you know the outcome within 28 days of you advising them of the matter.

All Tenants should be able to enjoy their home and live in a peaceful and safe environment. Anti social



behaviour and harassment against staff and / or other tenants is not acceptable. This includes harassment deemed to be of a racial nature. Where appropriate, and with the consent of the tenant, the Association will seek the advice and support of other agencies, including the police, to resolve any neighbour dispute, harassment or anti social behaviour.

Where the Association is unable to resolve a neighbour dispute, harassment or anti social behaviour it may in certain circumstances approach mediation services. Other options which may be considered are; internal housing transfers, external mutual exchange or consider action of a move through MoveUK.

Where the matter is serious and / or persistent and no solution can be obtained the Association may as a last resort, pursue court action.

*Further information about anti social behaviour is available from your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.*

## **The right to alter or improve your house**

You must get permission from Bield before you carry out any alterations to your house, apart from decoration. Permission will normally be granted as long as the proposed work leads to an improvement to your house and is carried out by competent tradesmen. You are responsible for obtaining any Planning Permission that you require. You will need to submit this to us prior to starting work.

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 you may be able to apply for compensation from us for improvements that you have made to your home on or after 30th September 2002. For you to qualify for this compensation;

- We must have given you permission to carry out the improvement
- Your tenancy must have ended

You can get a leaflet on the “Right to Compensation for Improvements” from your Scheme Manager.

If you wish to apply for permission to carry out alterations within your house you should speak to your Housing Officer or write to us setting out the works that you propose to do.

*For further information about alterations to your home, please see Section 6 of this handbook.*

### **The right to be consulted**

Bield’s Tenant Participation Strategy sets out our commitment to create opportunities for Tenants as individuals or groups to become involved in the affairs of Bield and their scheme.

*Please see Section 10 of this handbook for further details.*





## **The right to keep pets**

You can have pets if you wish but you should first write to us to get permission. This will be given on the basis that you keep the pet under control at all times, and it does not foul or cause damage to your house or any part of the scheme, including communal garden areas.

As some Tenants do not like animals you should keep dogs on a lead whilst in the communal areas. You should also make sure that cats do not wander as they may cause other Tenants to stumble or fall.

*Further details regarding pet ownership can be found in Section 2 of your Tenancy Agreement.*

## **The right to complain**

We aim to provide a high standard of service at all times. However, we recognise there may be occasions when you are not happy with some aspects of this.

We hope that a complaint can be sorted out informally, however we have a complaints procedure that sets out clear steps you can take if you wish to lodge a formal complaint.

The procedure also allows Bield to monitor the quality of service that we provide and make improvements when they are required.

*Further information about our Complaints Procedure can be found in Section 11 of this handbook.*

## POWER OF ATTORNEY / GUARDIANS

If you appoint a Power of Attorney to deal with your affairs you should advise your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer and provide us with a copy of the relevant documentation.

If you have a Guardian that you would like to deal with your affairs speak to your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer so that we can agree with you how this will work to suit your needs.

You can choose to appoint a family member or friend as your Financial Contact Person to assist you with managing the financial aspects of your tenancy. Although you will be responsible for all tenancy issues, we will write to both you and your Financial Contact Person about any changes that could affect you. If you would like more information about appointing a Financial Contact Person, please contact your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.

You have the right to appoint an independent representative to speak or act on your behalf. We can provide you with details of specialist organisations that provide advocacy services.



# Moving In



We want your move into your Bield home to be as smooth as possible.

## **Keys**

When your tenancy starts we will give you 3 sets of keys. In most cases these will be security type keys. Copies for your regular visitors can be arranged through your Scheme Manager or Property Officer. You will need to meet the cost for any duplicate keys.

## **Gas**

Where charges for gas are part of your monthly charge you do not need to contact the gas supplier to transfer the supply into your name.

Where your home has an independent supply you will need to contact the gas supplier. Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will be able to advise you of this.

## **Electricity**

You will normally be responsible for paying for any electricity you use. You will need to contact the electricity supplier and arrange for the bills to be sent to you.

In a small number of schemes electricity is included as part of the monthly charge. Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will be able to advise you of the particular arrangements.

### **Council Tax**

You will be responsible for making Council Tax payments and should contact the local Council to advise them when you start your tenancy. Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer can provide help with this.


### **Television Licence**

Some Bield tenants do not need an individual Television Licence as a special licence covers the houses within a scheme. Tenants over 75 do not require a licence at all. However, Bield need to let the licensing authority know which tenants are 75 or over and we may contact you to provide proof of your identity.

As a general rule, Tenants below retirement age will need to purchase an individual TV licence. However, in some cases tenants below retirement age may be entitled to a concessionary licence. Please check with your Housing Officer or Scheme Manager if you are unsure if you need to purchase a licence.

### **Telephone**

In most schemes Bield provides at least one telephone socket in each flat. You can arrange to have your old telephone number transferred to your new home or take



over the current line installed. Your Housing Officer or Scheme Manager may be able to help you with this.

## **Insurance**

Tenants who live in General Needs housing will need to arrange their own contents insurance. We can recommend a range of flexible insurance services that may be suitable for you – please speak to your Housing Officer if you would like further information.

For all other tenants Bield has arranged a comprehensive Contents Insurance Policy for your home. This covers your contents and personal effects in the home. The level of cover is reviewed by Bield each year. Some of the main points of cover are summarised below but please consult your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer for further details.

If you wish to arrange your own contents insurance you can do this. You will need to notify your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer if you have made your own arrangements for insurance.

## **Summary of Cover**

- Damage by Fire, Smoke, Explosion, Lightning and Earthquake
- Malicious Damage and Vandalism
- Theft from the home (loss of money is covered only if force or deception is used to enter your house)
- Storm or Flood damage

- Damage from Burst Pipes or Leakage of Oil
- Accidental Damage to fixed glass, sanitary fittings, TV sets, computers and other home audio/video equipment only
- Damage to Frozen Foods which are spoilt in a deep freeze unit
- Tenants' Personal Legal Liability up to £1 million

### **Limitations of Cover**


The tenant must pay policy excess on any claim. There is a limit on the cover of any one individual item, which is reviewed each year. Settlement is on the basis of new for old except for clothing and household linen.

### **Additional Cover**

If you think that the contents of your home are worth more than the level of cover that Bield provides, or you require wider protection for your valuables, e.g. accidental loss or damage away from your home, you can arrange additional insurance direct with our brokers.

### **Making a Claim**

If you wish to make a claim against Bield's insurance policy you must write to the brokers as soon as possible. Your local Bield office can tell you the address and your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer can assist you to make a claim if required.



*Further information about the current insurance policy is displayed on your scheme notice board, or available from your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.*

## **POST ALLOCATION VISITS**

Your Housing Officer and Property Officer will contact you shortly after you move to ensure you have settled in. Your Housing Officer is available to help resolve any outstanding issues and offer assistance and advice. Your Property Officer will advise you how to report household emergencies or arrange for repairs.

## **New Tenant Survey**

Within 2 months of your tenancy commencing you will receive a survey through the post asking questions about your move. We would be very grateful if you could complete and return this as it helps us to monitor the services we provide and make improvements where necessary.



## Staffing



Bield employs scheme staff to provide services at your scheme. Office based staff will also regularly visit your scheme.


### **Scheme Manager**

The Scheme Manager will provide a range of services to you. The service level you receive will depend on the type of housing you live in.

They look after the general building repairs and will report and check items within your home and in the communal areas. They are responsible for maintaining the safety and security of the building and carrying out health and safety checks of the communal areas. They will monitor and test scheme equipment and are responsible for the overall management of the building.

The Scheme Manager is also responsible for managing the local staff team, such as cleaners, scheme assistants and cooks. They will ensure services such as meals are delivered in accordance with Bield policies and practices.

Your Scheme Manager can also help you by contacting your doctor, home help or other services. They will help you to maintain personal safety and security within your home and assist in an



emergency. They can advise on how to claim benefits and rent issues and even help you to arrange social activities.

### **Depute / Relief Manager**

A Deputy or Relief Manager is employed in most schemes to deputise for the Scheme Manager at the weekend or during holidays and sick leave. They will undertake similar tasks to those of the Scheme Manager.

Some schemes have alternative holiday cover such as a Mobile or Peripatetic Scheme Manager.

Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will advise you of the cover arrangements at your scheme.

### **Other Bield Staff**

A Cleaner is employed at most schemes to ensure that communal areas in the scheme are cleaned and maintained to a high standard.

Scheme Assistants are employed in Very Sheltered Schemes to provide a cleaning service and to assist with meals provision. Some Scheme Assistants undertake other duties and help provide support to tenants.

Cooks are employed in Very Sheltered Housing schemes to arrange all aspects of the meals service. They will plan the menu with tenants, purchase food, undertake food safety checks and cook the main meal at lunch time.

### **Additional / other Staff**

Bield may employ other staff to provide additional housing support or personal care services. The work undertaken by these staff is paid by a Supporting People funding from your local Council.

*Further information about these services is available on request from your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.*

At some schemes Bield works in partnership with other organisations who are contracted to carry out Housing Support services. In most cases the same organisation will undertake personal care tasks too. Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will be happy to explain this separation of responsibilities to you.

Scheme staff are on duty at fixed hours. Details of the rotas are displayed at your scheme. You can contact staff during these times by calling at the scheme office or, in an emergency, by pulling any alarm cord in the scheme. At all other times cover is provided by Bield Response24.

### **Housing and Property Staff**

Scheme staff are supported by office-based staff. These staff can be divided into two groups, Housing Officers and Property Officers. They work closely together to ensure service levels are of a high standard.

- **Housing Officer.** Each Bield scheme has a dedicated Housing Officer who will normally visit your scheme monthly to meet with the Scheme Manager and any

tenants who wish to discuss the housing service. These issues may include rent and benefits, information about transfers, concerns about the communal facilities or any tenancy matters you may have.

Your Housing Officer will normally let your Scheme Manager know the date of their next visit and this will be displayed on your notice board. If you wish to see your Housing Officer in private, you should ask your Scheme Manager to arrange a visit. Alternatively you can write to or telephone your Housing Officer to arrange this.

- **Property Officer.** Each Bield scheme has a Property Officer who will normally visit once every three months to ensure that the buildings are maintained to a high standard. If major works are being carried out at your scheme your Property Officer will visit more regularly. Your Property Officer will also organise the maintenance of garden and grounds and authorise any requests for alterations or improvements.



If you wish to see your Property Officer you should ask your Scheme Manager to arrange a visit. Alternatively you can write or telephone your Property Officer to arrange this. Your Property Officer is based at our Glasgow Office.

## **Other Staff Services not provided by Bield**


- **Medical Services**

The medical service you received prior to moving to your Bield home will normally continue. You are responsible for arranging your own doctor, nurse or health visitors to call although we can assist you with this if you require. Medical staff, not scheme staff, are responsible for administering medication. The only time you need to let us know that you have asked a doctor or the emergency services to call is when access is needed either to the main entrance door or to your home. Your Scheme Manager will however call for a doctor or the emergency services if an emergency arises, and will remain with you or arrange for someone to be with you until help arrives.

Home helps or home carers will be arranged and employed by your local Council.

- **Home Help/Home Carers**

Home helps or home carers will be arranged and employed by your local Council. They will normally assist you with both housework and personal care. If you feel you need help in these areas, you should contact your local Council Social Work Department



or ask your Scheme Manager to refer you to them. A Home Help Organiser will normally visit you to discuss what help you require and then make arrangements for it to be provided.

## **BIELD VOLUNTEERS**

We have many volunteers, all trained by Bield, who assist with a variety of activities from lunch clubs to computer tuition. We also offer a befriending service, whereby a carefully selected person will visit you on a one-to-one basis at times agreed between you.

If you are interested in having a befriender, please contact your Scheme Manager for further details.

## **Casual Staff**

Casual staff are used to help provide cover during sick and other leave. These staff are fully trained and adhere to the same working practices as other Bield staff.

## **Code of Conduct**

All Bield employees have to adhere to the Association's 'Code of Conduct'. The Code is designed to protect the rights of Tenants and staff.

## **Gifts**

Staff can only accept gifts or hospitality subject to clear procedures and they must record any gifts that are

accepted. Cash cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Gifts with a value of over £15 cannot be accepted. You are requested not to embarrass staff by offering gifts or hospitality as a refusal can often cause offence.

### **Wills**

You are also asked not to make any Bield staff beneficiaries of your will. We have found this can cause distress to families, and compromise our staff who are advised not to accept cash under any circumstances.



# Rent and Money Matters



We are conscious that our charges have to be affordable. Your monthly charge is set with these in mind.

## **How your rent is set**


In order to provide you with high quality services and maintain your property we have to ensure that we receive enough money to cover these costs. We are conscious that our charges have to be affordable. Your monthly charge is set with these in mind. It also takes into account the size and location of your house and the development your home is in.

If you have the right to have your basic rent registered by the Rent Officer this right will continue while you remain in your current house. You also have the right to choose not to have your rent registered. These rights mainly apply to Tenants who signed their tenancy with Bield before 1989.

## **What you pay**

Your monthly charge is made up of some or all of the following:

- **Basic Rent** This is the charge for occupying your house. This money goes towards the management and maintenance of your house and any long-term improvement or replacement programmes. It also covers any loan charges taken out by Bield to build or buy properties.
- **Service Charge** This charge relates to maintaining the communal areas of the scheme. This may include some scheme staff costs, gardening, electricity, cleaning of communal areas etc. The type of services you receive and the cost of these varies between schemes. A full breakdown of the list of services for your scheme is attached to your Tenancy Agreement.
- **Heating Charge** This covers the cost of heating and hot water to your house. In some schemes Tenants are billed directly by the gas or electricity company for these costs.
- **Energy Charge** This covers the cost of all of the energy to Tenants houses and includes all electricity as well as heating and hot water. Only a few schemes have this service provided by Bield.
- **Board Charge** This covers the cost of the meals service for those Tenants who receive them.
- **Other Charges** Bield may also provide a housing support or personal care service to you. You are not charged by Bield for these services. You may however be charged by the Council for these services depending on your income and savings.



*More information about Housing Support or personal care services can be found in Section 9 of this handbook.*

### **When you pay**

Rent is collected monthly. The payment is due on or before the 14th of each month. The period covered by the charge is a calendar month (1st - 31st Month).

### **How you pay**

There are a number of ways to pay your monthly rental charge. You can choose the method that is most convenient for you.


- **Rent Payment Book** You will be given a rent book at the start of your tenancy. You can use this book to make your monthly payment at The Royal Bank of Scotland or any Post Office. No charge will be made for this. If you use other banks you may be charged. Always ensure the book is stamped and the amount paid is entered on the counterfoil. This is the only record that you have paid your rent. We recommend that you keep your old rent books.
- **Bank Standing Order** You must have a Bank or Giro Bank account to pay using this method. Some Building Society accounts can also be used. Each month your payment will be made to Bield by your bank, on the agreed date providing there are funds in your account. To arrange a Standing Order

complete the form at the back of your rent book and send or take it to your bank. As your monthly rental charge is reviewed in April each year you will need to complete a new standing order and take it to your bank each April when you get your new rent book.

- **Direct Debit** You must have a Bank or Giro Bank account to pay this way. Some Building Society accounts can also be used. Each month your payment will be made to Bield, by your bank, on the agreed date providing there are funds in your account. To arrange a Direct Debit payment contact your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer. As your monthly rental charge is reviewed in April each year the amount you pay by Direct Debit will automatically be updated by Bield when your rent is reviewed.
- **Other Methods** You can forward a cheque each month to our registered office in Edinburgh. The full address is found in Section 15 of this handbook. Your name and address should be clearly written on the back of the cheque to ensure it can be processed. You should not forward any cash payments through the post.

### Rent Account

All rent payments you make to Bield are entered on a computerised rent system. During the summer months you will receive an annual rent statement.



You can contact your Housing Officer or nearest Field office at any time to ask for details of your account or a rent statement.

### **Rent Review**

Your monthly rental charge will normally be reviewed and amended once a year and implemented from 1st April. We look at the money spent over the past year and calculate how much we will need to run the services for the coming year. We will also write to you and ask for your views on our proposed charges before confirming the new charges.

We will give you a minimum of 4 weeks notice in writing if we intend to change your monthly rent.

The only other time we are likely to review your charges is when we propose to develop services at your scheme e.g. converting a Sheltered Housing Scheme to a Very Sheltered Housing Scheme. In such cases we would hold meetings to consult you about these changes prior to taking any decision.

Your monthly rental charge will normally be reviewed and amended once a year and implemented from 1st April

## Help with your rent and Housing Benefit


Many Tenants are eligible for Housing Benefit. This is a government scheme run by your Local Council that could help with the payment of all or part of your monthly rent. If you are in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee you will qualify for full Housing Benefit. This will cover the cost of your basic rent, most of your service charge, and if you get a meals service some of your board charge. It will not cover your heating, energy or the remaining part of your board charge. If you are not in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee, you may still qualify for full or partial Housing Benefit depending on your income and savings.

You may find the claim form for Housing Benefit complicated and difficult to complete. Your local Council, Scheme Manager or Housing Officer can provide assistance with completing the form if required.

## Housing Benefit and Short Absences from home

When you are away from home you are still liable to pay your full monthly rental charge. For absences other than going into hospital such as holidays, you will normally continue to receive Housing Benefit for at least 13 weeks, provided that it is your intention to return home no later than the 13 week period.





If you receive Housing Benefit and you go into hospital for more than 28 days (if you receive Attendance Allowance) or 52 weeks (in all other cases) your Housing Benefit may be reduced or stop. This may affect your ability to pay your monthly rental charge. It is important that you or the person managing your affairs seeks advice if you find yourself in these circumstances.

Your local Council, Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will provide advice and assistance if required, and will also be able to give you a leaflet which explains what happens in different situations. They will also be able to give you letters to fill in and send to your local Council to ask for your Housing Benefit to continue.

If you receive a Meals Service, deductions may be made to your Board Charge if you are away from home. The conditions and deductions which can be made to the Board Charge are outlined in a leaflet on the Meals Service which can be obtained from your Scheme Manager.

Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer can also provide general information about the availability of benefits for older people and assist you with completing claim forms.

**Many benefits are not claimed. It is therefore worth checking to see if you are entitled to help. Advice can be obtained from the Pensions Service, The Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern (Scotland), Help the Aged (Scotland) or a Housing Advice Centre.**

## Problems Paying your Rent

If you have problems making your monthly rental payments, it is important that you contact your Housing Officer without delay to discuss the problems. It is always easier to manage problems at an early stage and anything you discuss will be kept strictly confidential.

Should you fall behind with your monthly rental payments and fail to make contact with us, action will be taken to recover the arrears. The first stage of the process will involve a visit from your Housing Officer where advice and assistance will be provided and a payment arrangement agreed.

Where a Tenant persistently fails to keep to this payment plan, Bield may consider taking legal action.

*Further information about this process is detailed in Section 6 of your Tenancy Agreement*



## Property Matters



Bield arranges all repairs and maintenance for both your home and the communal areas where applicable.

We classify repairs into four areas, although when works do not fall clearly into one of these categories, an inspection will take place prior to the order being processed.

### **Emergency repairs**

These are when you are put in danger by the fault or there could be serious damage to property, such as burst pipes or electrical failures. We aim to respond to all emergency repairs within 6 hours of them being reported.

### **Urgent repairs**

These are repairs that if left unattended could cause danger to you or damage to property for example over flowing pipes, leaking taps, or broken lighting. Bield aim to complete all urgent repairs within 3 working days of them being reported.

## **Routine repairs**

These are minor repairs and adjustments that do not pose a danger to you or damage property. Some examples are minor external or plasterwork repairs, or adjustments to doors or windows. Bield aim to complete all routine repairs within 20 working days of them being reported.

## **Qualifying repairs**

Under the Scottish Secure Tenants (Right to Repair) Regulations 2002, you have the right to have certain small but urgent repairs (called Qualifying repairs) carried out by the Association within a given timescale. Under these regulations tenants have the right to call out a second contractor if the first contractor fails to attend in the time given for the repair. When a repair is reported, the Association will confirm whether or not the repair is a qualifying repair and advise as to the deadline for the contractor to attend to the item. You can get a leaflet on the “Right-to-repair” scheme from your Scheme Manager.

Bield will not undertake:

- Decoration within your home
- Repairs that have resulted from misuse or abuse by you or your visitors.

*The legal responsibilities and rights of Bield and tenants with regard to repairs and maintenance are detailed further in Section 5 of your Tenancy Agreement.*



## How to Report Repairs

- **Emergency / Urgent** During your scheme office hours these should be reported to your Scheme Manager who will in turn contact Property Services.

If your scheme office is not open you should pull the cord on the speech unit and tell the Bield Response24 operator what the problem is. The operator will assess the situation and get whatever help they feel you need.

- **Routine Repairs** All repairs should be reported to your Scheme Manager who will contact Property Services. Your Scheme Manager will keep a record of your repair request in the scheme office.

You will be sent a copy of the work order for every repair you request for your house. This will detail the repair required, the name and the address of the contractor who will do the work and the target date for completion of the work. When the work has been completed, you are asked to sign your copy of the work order and hand it to your Scheme Manager to let us know the job has been done to your satisfaction.

**If you live in Amenity or General Needs** housing repairs can be reported during office hours to the property department in Glasgow.

Outside office hours either use the pull cord or telephone Response24 on the repair line number (*the number can be found in Section 15 of this handbook*)

### **Access to carry out the repair**

When you report a repair you must let us know when the contractor can visit. The more flexible you can be about access times the greater the likelihood that your repair will be done quickly.

### **Tenant Satisfaction**

We send out a questionnaire to a random sample of tenants who have had repairs completed in their home. This lets us find out if you are satisfied with the works and the contractors who have completed it. If you are seriously dissatisfied with any repair please ask to see your Property Officer who will visit you in order to resolve the matter.

### **Planned Maintenance**

These are works that Bield schedule in advance so we can tell you when these will take place, taking into account safety, convenience and cost.

We have four types of planned maintenance:

#### **Service Contracts**

Bield schemes are fitted with a wide variety of emergency and safety systems such as fire alarms and warden call systems. All of these require service contracts to make sure that they are tested appropriately. The maintenance of gardens and window cleaning also fall within this heading.

## **Cyclical Maintenance**

To maintain our high standards of appearance, external and internal communal areas are redecorated at regular intervals. Replacing carpets in communal areas and inspecting electrical wiring fall within this heading.



## **Plant and Equipment Replacement**

It is important that mechanical and electrical systems within your scheme operate efficiently and reliably. We have a programme to replace boilers, refurbish lifts and replace heating systems.

## **Major Repairs**

Bield replaces or repairs major components of your home such as windows, kitchens, and bathrooms. We also do major works or alterations such as converting schemes to Very Sheltered Housing where it is needed.

If planned works are proposed for your scheme you will be advised of the proposals and how they will affect you. If the work is within your house you will be given a choice of colours and finishes where this is possible.

## **Aids and Adaptations**

Generally, aids are moveable items e.g. bath seats and raised toilet seats and are normally supplied by the Social Work or Health Services. Adaptations are more

permanent e.g. installation of grab rails or level access showers. These works are generally carried out by our contractors with funding from Communities Scotland.

If you require special aids or adaptations in your house you should let your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer know. We will then contact the Occupational Therapy Department of your local Council to assess and recommend what you need.

If you require special aids or adaptations in your house you should let your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer know.

Each year Communities Scotland allocates funds to each of their local areas. When funds are available we will carry out adaptations in priority order. Each applicant will be given a priority rating based on need as assessed by the Council's Occupational Therapy Department. Where there are identical assessments the earliest application will be done first. In exceptional circumstances Bield may also be able to fund some adaptations.

*For further information on any issue related to repairs, maintenance or adaptations please contact your Scheme Manager or Property Officer.*

## Emergencies and Your Safety



Bield's housing is specifically designed to provide Tenants with additional security.

Features such as security keys, door entry systems, intercom and an alarm service (Response24), fire and smoke alarms all help to provide a safer environment for you and other tenants.

### **BIELD RESPONSE24**

All Bield houses (apart from General Needs) are linked to Bield's Response24 alarm service. We also provide this service to other housing associations, local authorities and many individuals in the community.

Bield Response24 has a fully trained team of operators who provide a 24 hour monitoring service, 7 days a week 365 days a year. It gives you peace of mind and reassurance that help is available at all times.

As well as responding to personal emergencies, Response24 helps to maintain the security of your scheme by monitoring the doors, lifts, intruder alarms and smoke and fire alarms.

**How do I contact Bield Response24?** There is a speech unit and pull cord in each room of your home. If you require assistance you simply pull the alarm cord or press the button on the speech unit. The equipment at Response24 allows the operator instant access to your details held on our computer so they know immediately who you are and where you are calling from.

**What if I have difficulty in getting to the pull cord?**


You can have a pendant to help you call for assistance if you have difficulty in reaching pull cords. Pendants are generally worn around the neck or on a bracelet. If you feel a pendant would help you, please ask your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer for further information.

**What if I cannot speak or they cannot hear me?**

If you are unable to speak via the speech unit the operator will try to contact you by telephone. If you are unable to answer your telephone your call will be treated as an emergency and the operator will immediately summon help.

**Who will come to help me?** The Response24 operator will evaluate the situation and call whatever help they think you need. Your Scheme Manager or another member of Bield staff may be called. The operator may contact your doctor, family or a friend if you have asked for this to be done in an emergency.

**What if I pull the cord by mistake?** Pull cords are often pulled by mistake. Over 10% of calls made to Bield Response24 are false alarms. Response24 is used to these calls. All you need to do is tell the operator who



answers that you are safe and well and that the pull cord was pulled by mistake and they will happily cancel the call. Never tie your cords up. It is far better for Response24 to receive false calls than for you to find you cannot reach the cord in a real emergency.

### **How you can help Response24**

- It is essential that all of your details are up to date so make sure you tell your Scheme Manager if your doctor or family contact details change.
- Tell your regular visitors that Response24 will only give them access when the main door is locked after checking with you first that you want to allow them in. This is a safety precaution but it does mean your visitors will have to wait outside the main building until this check is done which can take some time if the operators have a lot of calls. Instead you can arrange to get an additional key for regular visitors.
- If you are unhappy with the way Response24 handled any of your calls to them please let your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer know as soon as possible. Almost all calls to Response24 are recorded, similar to the way the fire, police and ambulance services monitor calls so your call can be checked by senior staff.
- Your comments on how calls have been handled help us to improve our service.

*Further information about Response24 is available from your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.*

## **SECURING YOUR HOME**


You can contribute to the safety and security of your home and the scheme in general.

### **Access**

In most Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing Schemes there is a main door which locks automatically, on a time switch. Tenants agree what time the main door is locked. Everyone is asked to accept the decision of the majority. Decisions can be reviewed regularly to make sure that they reflect the view of the current Tenants. Access to the scheme after the main door is locked is with your own door key or by pressing the call button at the front door to ask Response24 to let you in. If you want additional keys for your regular visitors please ask your Scheme Manager to order them. A small charge will be made for additional keys. For everyone's safety please do not let any strangers in through the main door. If you have any doubts contact one of your staff members or Response24 immediately.

### **Master Key**

There is a master key for each scheme which will open the front door to your home. It is held in a security key cabinet. The master key will only be used on your written request or in an emergency, such as flooding,



fire or if you have an accident or sudden illness and are unable to open your door. Your Scheme Manager or Bield staff will only enter your home in an emergency or if you invite them in, unless you give them a written request asking them to go in for a specific reason e.g. to let a contractor in to carry out a repair.

## Fire Safety

There are a number of precautions that everybody can take to make their home and scheme safer from fire.

- Doormats and furniture left in corridors are a hazard in the event of fire as they can hinder the movement of people if an evacuation of the building is required
- Never leave your cooker unattended
- Take special care when cooking especially with chip pans, grills and toasters
- Put out cigarettes properly and never smoke in bed or whilst using oxygen
- Before emptying ashtrays make sure contents are cold
- Do not overload electrical sockets by using multi-plug adapters
- Switch off unessential electrical appliances at night




- Never burn candles but use a torch as an emergency source of light
- Make sure portable heaters are clear of paper, clothes and that they are positioned well away from furniture and curtains
- Do not use aerosol sprays near smoke detectors
- Never use or store bottled gas unless it has been provided by Bield
- Never use or store paraffin
- Never use the lift during an evacuation due to fire

Unless the fire is in your own home, it is safer to stay put and await instructions from the emergency services if the fire alarm sounds. In general, Bield houses are built to keep heat and smoke out for a maximum of one hour. The Fire Brigade are automatically called whenever the fire alarm goes off. The alarm at your scheme is tested regularly and your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will advise you of the specific fire safety procedures for your scheme.

### **Personal Safety**

There are a number of precautions that everybody can take to make their home and scheme safer.

- Never let anyone into your home unless you know them.

- 
- If you have any repairs scheduled you will receive a copy of the works order from our Glasgow office to show when the work had been planned. If repairs are taking place in communal areas, your Scheme Manager will let you know in advance when the contractors are going to call. Do not let contractors into your house unless you are expecting them.
  - Always ask for identification. If you have any doubt, pull the alarm cord.
  - Do not tie up the alarm cords. This may prevent you making a vital call for help. Response24 does not mind the cords being pulled by accident.
  - Never leave your house unlocked or leave the keys in the door.
  - Do not over furnish your home, have trailing electrical wires or loose rugs. This may increase your risk of falling.

Always ask for identification. If you have any doubt, pull the alarm cord.

## Communal Facilities




The majority of Bield's Sheltered, Very Sheltered and Housing with Care schemes have some communal facilities for the use of all tenants.

Your scheme may have some or all of the facilities detailed below.

### **Lounge**

A communal lounge helps to promote social contact and companionship. Many also have a small kitchen with facilities for you to use to make hot and cold drinks. Bield encourage you to use the lounge and invite your friends and relatives to visit you here.

Often local groups use the lounges for meetings, which are usually arranged by the Council's Social Work Service. You may be interested in participating in one of these groups yourself. The lounge is only used by such groups if the tenants living in the scheme agree to this. Bield will sometimes charge for the use of the facilities. This fee is passed on to tenants within the scheme, either to reduce their scheme charges or to purchase items for their scheme.



If you wish to use the lounge for a social event please speak to your Scheme Manager to ensure it is available on that day. After using any communal facility please ensure it is left clean and tidy and all doors and windows are secure.

### **Dining Room/Meals Service**

Very Sheltered Housing schemes have a meals service provided in a dining room facility. This is normally a 2 course cooked lunch and a snack at tea time. If you wish to receive our meals service you will be asked to sign an agreement. This gives you details of which meals will be provided, the cost of the meals service and how to end the service.

The Cook will speak to you to find out your likes and dislikes and a menu (with choices) will be planned around what you and other tenants like and dislike. The Cook will also incorporate good nutrition and special diets into the service.

The size of the dining room may restrict how many tenants can have a meals service. In these cases, priority will be decided by a needs assessment. In exceptional circumstances e.g. due to health we may be able to deliver meals to your house. We may also be able to provide occasional meals if you are ill or if you are thinking of accepting the meals service but wish to try it out first.

The meals service is regulated by strict health and safety guidance overseen by the local Council's Environmental Health Service therefore only trained staff can go into the kitchens.

*Further information on any aspect of the Meals Service is available from your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.*

### **Laundry**

There is a laundry at most schemes. This is for tenants' laundry only. The Laundry can be used in most schemes at any time, unless the noise causes disruption to others. In this case opening times may be restricted and a rota, co-ordinated by your Scheme Manager may be in operation. Home helps / Carers are generally given priority to use the laundry in the morning as this is when they are usually employed.

*Your Scheme Manager will be able to give you further details regarding laundry facilities.*

### **Assisted Bathroom**

In most schemes an assisted bathing room is provided for you to use in addition to your own facilities. The bathroom enables District Nurses or Carers to assist tenants with bathing. It also gives you the opportunity to use a bath if you only have a shower in your house.

To make sure the bath lift in our assisted bathrooms is used safely only staff who have had training may use it. If you require assistance to use the assisted bathroom please ask your Scheme Manager.

## **Guest Room**

A Guest Room is available at most schemes. This can be used by your relatives and friends, although priority for the use of the guest room is given to staff who are providing cover at the scheme, and thereafter to relatives of tenants who are ill. On some occasions bookings may have to be changed to accommodate these priorities.

If you wish to book a Guest Room let your Scheme Manager know and they will give you a leaflet about how to do this. A small nightly charge is made for the Guest Room facility. Your guests will be asked to pay on arrival.

If you do not have a Scheme Manager your Housing Officer can help you make arrangements to use Guest Room facilities at other schemes.

## **Smoking in Bield Properties**

To comply with legislation and to maintain everyone's safety, smoking is prohibited in all communal areas, including the lounge. Tenants and their visitors are asked to refrain from smoking in the presence of any Bield staff or contractor when they are visiting the tenant in their home.



## **Gardens**

Most of Bield's schemes have a garden area that you can use at any time. Arrangements for looking after the gardens are made by Bield.

## **Window Cleaning**

For the majority of tenants Bield arranges for the outside of your windows to be cleaned, along with all windows in the communal areas. You are responsible for arranging for the inside of your windows to be cleaned. Some tenants living in Amenity and General Needs housing will not receive this service. Your Housing Officer will be able to confirm if you receive this service.

## **SMART Technology**

Some of our more recent schemes have SMART technology installed. These systems are developed to provide enhanced safety and security for you. A core package can include a video door entry system, emergency call facilities, smoke, flood, fall and heat detectors. As they are an integral part of the development there is no extra charge to you for them. Your Scheme Manager can show you how to use them.

## **Parking**

Most schemes have a limited number of parking spaces for use by tenants and their visitors. There may not be enough parking spaces available to provide you with a dedicated space. Parking spaces are filled on a first

come first served basis. Tenants are encouraged to show consideration to those tenants with mobility problems. If you are a registered disabled driver speak to your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer as we will try our best to ensure your needs are catered for where possible.

### **Electric Scooters**

Many tenants find that using a Mobility Scooter benefits their everyday life. It is important for the safety of other tenants that scooters are used and stored properly. If you wish to use or store a scooter within your scheme you need to obtain our permission. Please ask your Scheme Manager for further information.

If you have a conventional or electric wheelchair you do not need permission to use it within the scheme.

### **Refuse Disposal**

There are usually external bin stores or a communal bin room at each scheme for domestic refuse. No other items should be stored in these areas.

The Council will normally arrange a special uplift if you need larger items to be removed.

*Further details regarding removal days and special uplifts can be obtained from your Scheme Manager or your local Council.*



## Housing Support




The term “Housing Support” covers a range of services. These services aim to help you maintain your independence.

The term “Housing Support” covers a range of services. These services aim to help you maintain your independence, to stay in your own home for longer, and continue your life in the local community. The level of services provided will vary depending on the type of housing support service offered at your scheme. Your Housing Officer will be able to confirm the level of services you receive.

**At some schemes Bield does not provide Housing Support therefore the information in this section may not be relevant to you. If you are unsure if you receive a Housing Support service your Housing Officer will be able to advise you.**

If you receive Housing Support Services we will have provided you with a Schedule of Housing Support Services at the same time we sent the Tenancy Agreement. This schedule outlines the types of help you can expect.



Housing Support services are designed to help make your life easier. The services we offer include:

- General counselling and support. This may include befriending, advising on food preparation, reminding you about appointments and non-specialist counselling where this does not overlap with similar services
- Assisting you with the security of your home
- Helping with maintaining the safety of your home
- Advising and helping you to make use of domestic equipment and appliances

Housing Support services are designed to help make your life easier.

- Assisting with arranging minor repairs and servicing of your own domestic equipment and appliances
- Providing life skills training to help you maintain your home
- Assisting you to liaise with individuals, professionals and other bodies that you may have contact with

- Arranging adaptations to your home to enable you to cope with disability
- Advising or assisting you with personal budgeting and debt counselling
- Advising or assisting you when you need help dealing with relatives and neighbours
- Advising or assisting you with benefit claims and other official correspondence relevant to sustaining your tenancy
- Advising or assisting with moving in and settling into your new home
- Advising or helping you to move on to accommodation where less intense support is required
- Assisting with shopping and errands where this does not overlap with similar services provided as personal care or personal support
- Providing and maintaining the emergency alarm and calling you on a daily basis
- Responding to any emergency alarm calls that you make
- Cleaning of your home and/or windows
- Encouraging social interaction with other tenants and ensuring you are well
- Arranging social events for tenants



## Housing Support Plans

When you apply for housing with Bield we carry out a housing assessment to help us determine what, if any help you may need. We will also visit you at home prior to you being offered housing. During the visit we discuss how we can develop a Housing Support plan to suit your needs.

Within one month of you moving into your new home we will arrange to complete a Housing Support plan with you. A Housing Support plan enables us to provide a service which is tailored to suit your individual needs. We discuss services with you and ensure these will be delivered in a manner and at times that fits in with your lifestyle. The plan will let you know what you can expect from the service.

The plan will be reviewed annually (or more frequently at your request), to ensure that the services meet your current needs. If you wish to change the details of your Housing Support plan at any time, please speak to your Scheme Manager who will be able to arrange for this as soon as is practically possible.




## Housing Support Staff

Housing Support services are provided by your Scheme Manager, Deputy or Relief Scheme Manager, or where available your Scheme Assistants and Housing Support Assistants. Staff will be on duty at the scheme or on call, or Bield's Community Alarm Service, Bield Response24 will deal with emergency situations where there are no staff on duty or on call.

The staff who provide Housing Support services have been carefully recruited and selected. We undertake criminal record checks where appropriate and ensure staff are fully trained before they undertake their role.

We have developed appropriate policies and management systems to support staff and help them in their day to day work. We keep staff up to date about changes in legislation and other matters that may affect their working practices. Policies include how to manage risk and accident recording and reporting. Annual appraisals and regular formal staff supervision help us to identify any training or support issues. You can be confident staff have the knowledge and skills to carry out their role.

Policies and procedures have been established for recording information and this is done in strict confidence ensuring compliance with data protection legislation. All financial transactions undertaken by Bield staff are carefully recorded for the protection of all parties concerned. All our records are available for inspection by regulatory bodies such as the Care Commission.



Regular liaison between staff and using records such as the Housing Support plan help to avoid you having to repeat things to different members of staff.

If there are any changes to your Housing Support plan that are unavoidable e.g. staff illness, another member of staff will let you know as soon as possible either by visiting you at home, via the emergency call system or by telephoning you.

If you were expecting a service and the member of staff does not arrive and no one has contacted you beforehand, you should let us know immediately by telephone, by using the emergency call system or by speaking to any scheme staff member. We will then find out why your Housing Support provider has not arrived and let you know as soon as possible.

*Further information about staff and their roles can be found in Section 4 of this handbook.*

## **Your rights**

We will ensure the services we provide comply with the National Care Standards. Through the provision of support services we will ensure that you maintain your dignity, privacy, choice, safety, equality, diversity and encourage you to realise your potential.

We aim to give equality of opportunity in all of our activities to all people irrespective of gender, race, age or disability and to support equal human rights for all.

This means that as an individual you have the rights to live your life according to your social, cultural and religious beliefs. Staff will help to support you to live your life as you wish to do so.

Staff will help you to make choices about the service that is provided and ensure that it meets with your individual needs.

We will ensure that your right to privacy is maintained and all personal information will be kept secure. We will only ask you for information that is essential for us to carry out Housing Support services. We will explain why we need the information and what we will do with it. Any information we have about you will be available to you upon request.

If you wish you can appoint an independent representative to speak or act on your behalf. We can provide you with details of specialist organisations that provide advocacy services. If you appoint a Power of Attorney to deal with your affairs we will agree with you how this should work to suit your needs.

### **Regulation / Monitoring**

Bield's Housing Support services are registered with the Care Commission. They undertake independent inspections at least once a year to ensure we meet the National Care Standards.

If you wish you can be involved in the inspection of your service. Contact your Scheme Manager, Housing Officer or the Care Commission to arrange this.

A copy of the Care Commissions' most recent report about your Housing Support Service is displayed on your notice board or can be obtained from your Scheme Manager, any Bield office, the Bield website or from the Care Commission.

*Contact details for the Care Commission can be found in Section 15 of this handbook.*

We monitor the quality of our services through regular meetings with tenants and staff. Your Housing Officer will meet regularly with the Service Manager for your area to discuss service delivery and the standard and quality of services. Quarterly reports are made to the Bield Housing and Community Services Committee.

If you have a concern about the quality of the services you receive please tell us. We can only improve

or put things right if we know you are unhappy. Suggestion cards are available at each scheme. These can be used to make suggestions for improving services. We welcome your views.



### **Charges for Housing Support Services**

Your local Council may charge for Housing Support Services. Prior to your tenancy starting we will have given you details of the council officers who deal with charges

so you can discuss this with them. We will also give you details of the charges which the Council may expect you to pay.

The charges made by Councils is reviewed annually and they will notify you of any changes to the charges they make.

*Please ask your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer for further information.*

You have the right to have funding for your Housing Support Services paid by the Council direct to you. This would allow you to source you own housing support services. Please speak to your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer for more information about such direct payments.

You have the right to have funding for your Housing Support Services paid by the Council direct to you. This would allow you to source you own housing support services.

### **Ending the Service**

You can end your Housing Support service with us at any time. If you wish to do this please speak to your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer. Alternatively, the service will end when your tenancy with us terminates.



We may end your Housing Support service if we feel that we are unable to continue to meet your needs. We will have discussed this with you when reviewing your housing support plan.

If we feel we cannot meet your needs we will discuss other options with you and listen to your views before making any decisions. We can help you if you decide to use a different service.

As Councils pay us for providing this service we will not end your service without first discussing it with the Council.

When your Housing Support service ceases your records will be sent to our area offices where they will be dealt with in accordance with our data protection policy. You can obtain more information on this from your Housing Officer. If you would like us to pass your records on to your new Housing Support Provider we will make sure that they are up to date before we do this.

## **Making a Complaint**

If you have a complaint about the Housing Support service you receive there are a number of ways you can make a complaint:

- Make a complaint to Bield
- Making a complaint to the Care Commission
- Making a complaint to the Local Authority who contracts us to provide the service

Contact details for the Care Commission can be found in Section 15 of this handbook.

Contact details for the Local Authority can be provided by your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.

*Further information on how to make a complaint can be found in Section 11 of this handbook.*

### **Other Information**

We actively encourage Tenants to participate in our activities. We welcome your views on how we can improve our services to you. We also provide you with information about our activities and our performance.

Section 10 of this handbook provides more information on how you can get involved.

Section 12 of this handbook provides more details about information you can request from us.

If you cannot find the information you are looking for please do not hesitate to contact your Scheme Manager, Housing Officer or any Field office.

Contact details for our offices can be found in Section 15 of this handbook.

## Getting Involved



We encourage all tenants to get involved as individuals or groups...

We encourage all tenants to get involved as individuals or groups in the affairs of your scheme and Bield. This enables tenants to have a say about the services and issues that affect them.

Information on any policy or procedure is available to you at any time, but these are some of the other ways you can get involved.

### **Participation within your Scheme**

- **Your Scheme Manager**

Within your scheme your Scheme Manager is your first point of contact for advice and information. Your Scheme Manager will listen to your views and ideas on how services can be improved.

- **Your Housing Officer**

Your Housing Officer will visit your scheme regularly, usually every month, and will be pleased to visit you in your own home to discuss issues such as rents, benefits, services or complaints.

- **Notice boards**

Most schemes have a notice board near the entrance door with information about forthcoming activities and events.

- **Scheme Meetings**

Meetings of all Tenants are arranged at least once per year to discuss the management and maintenance of the scheme. Additional meetings may be held to consult you about the redecoration of communal areas or replacement of fixtures and fittings in your own home.


- **Satisfaction Surveys**

We carry out various Tenant satisfaction surveys as we want to hear your views. These help us to improve our services to you. Surveys are carried out at all newly built properties, at schemes where we have done major work such as bathroom or kitchen replacements and where individual adaptations, such as the installation of a shower, have taken place.

- **Registered Tenant Organisations**

We encourage Tenants to form a Registered Tenant Organisation at their scheme. We will then consult with your group about specific issues within your scheme and wider issues within Bield. This is a good way of involving Tenants in the day-to-day running of their scheme and of Bield.

A Registered Tenant Organisation needs to be properly set up to be representative of the views of all Tenants within the scheme. We can give you a leaflet that tells



you how you can set up a Registered Tenant Organisation and your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will be happy to assist you with this.

## **Participation at the National (Strategic) Level**

- **National Partnership Forum**

We have a Partnership Forum made up of Bield Tenants, Board Members and senior staff. Members of the Partnership Forum share information, ideas and decision making. The Forum meets 3 to 4 times each year to discuss national issues such as proposals for housing services, standards of service provided and the tenant participation strategy within Bield.

Tenants are elected onto the Partnership Forum by other Tenants to represent their views on national issues. Tenants serve on the Forum for a period of three years. Two tenants from the Forum are co-opted onto Bield's Housing and Community Services Committee and two onto the Property Services

Committee. Two of these four tenants are also co-opted on Bield's Board of Management. This ensures Tenants are involved at every level of the decision making process within Bield.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Partnership Forum let your Scheme



Manager or Housing Officer know and they will tell you when the next elections are taking place so you can arrange for another Bield Tenant to nominate you. Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer will also be happy to tell you more about what is involved in becoming a member of the Partnership Forum, and to arrange for you to be sent an information pack.

- **Membership of the Association**

Membership of the Association is open to all Bield tenants. If you become a member of the Association you can attend and vote at Annual General Meetings and have a say in Bield's affairs. However, unlike the Partnership Forum, it is not specifically for the purpose of involving Tenants. You do not need to be a member of the Association to be involved in the Partnership Forum or a Registered Tenant Organisation.


## **Other Participation**

- **Newsletter**

You will receive a newsletter three times each year. The newsletter keeps you up to date with current affairs within Bield and asks for your views on these. You can submit items to be included in the newsletter by passing these to your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.

- **National Tenants Satisfaction Surveys**

Tenants' views about Bield's accommodation and services are valued. We therefore ask an independent



agency to carry out a Tenants Satisfaction Survey on a regular basis. As only a random sample of tenants are selected for this survey, you may not be involved directly. The results of these surveys are available on request.

- **Other literature**

Periodically you will receive other literature such as the Annual Report. This literature gives you information about our housing and services and our performance in areas such as repairs, arrears and allocations.



## Making a Complaint



All complaints are treated positively as they give us important feedback on how we are performing and also allow us to monitor our work to improve services.


### **Standard of Service**

Bield aims to provide a high standard of service to you at all times. However, there may be occasions when you are not happy with some aspects of this.

We hope that a complaint can always be sorted out informally. However we operate a formal complaints procedure that sets out four stages you can follow if you have a complaint. All complaints are treated positively as they give us important feedback on how we are performing and also allow us to monitor our work to improve services.

### **Complaints Procedure**

A full copy of our complaints procedure can be obtained from your Scheme Manager, Housing Officer or any Bield Office. All Bield Tenants have the right to use the complaints procedure. Someone acting on your behalf and with your agreement can also make complaints.



You can complain about any aspect of our service, although if you are unhappy with minor repairs, neighbours or transfer allocations we ask that you follow the separate repair, estate management and allocation complaints policies first.

If you are still dissatisfied after following these specific procedures, you should then use the formal complaints policy. It is important that all complaints are made in the correct stages as set out in the complaints procedure.

It is not normally possible to deal with anonymous complaints.

You are however encouraged to make your views known on any aspect of the services we provide. You do not need to give your name when making comments or a complaint we will still look into any concerns that are brought to our attention.

If you wish to use an independent and confidential advocacy service there are a number of organisations that can act on your behalf. If you appoint an independent representative we will listen to what they have to say on your behalf as if you were expressing the views yourself.

### **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

If you feel that your complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved through our own procedure, it is your right to take a complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. This is a free and impartial service

although you must have normally followed our complaints procedure before the Ombudsman can investigate your complaint. Any complaint must normally be submitted to the Ombudsman within 12 months of the grounds for your complaint arising. A leaflet about the Ombudsman is available from any Bield office.

*Contact details for the Ombudsman can be found in Section 15 of this handbook*

### **Care Commission**

Some of the services we provide are registered with the Care Commission. They will undertake regular inspections to ensure basic things are in place such as the staff are correctly trained and the building is safe for use.

*Contact details for the Care Commission can be found in Section 15 of this handbook*

### **Other Independent Organisations**

You may wish to get independent advice before you decide whether to complain to us formally. You can get advice from independent sources such as a Law Centre, Solicitor, Housing Advice Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Tenants Association, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission or the Equal Opportunities Commission. Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer can provide contact details for these organisations.



## **Improving our Service**

We welcome suggestions and comments on how we can improve our services. We understand that you may not wish to make a formal complaint and we therefore encourage you to write to us with your suggestions and comments. We also provide suggestion slips in the communal areas of your scheme or you can get one from your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.



## How to Find Out More



As a Bield Tenant you have a right to access certain information before and during your tenancy.

The information you will be given is:

- **A Tenancy Agreement** is given to you before your tenancy starts. As this is a lengthy document you will also be given a summary of the agreement.
- **Complaints procedure** – please refer to Section 11 of this handbook for further details.

Other information is also available to you, which will be provided free of charge. If you want a copy of this information ask your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.

- The Terms of your Tenancy
- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Policy on Setting Rents and Other Charges
- Allocation Policy for Supported Housing
- Policy on Repairs and Maintenance
- Decision Making Process on Housing Related Matters



## **Personal Information**

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you also have the right to get a copy of any personal information that we hold about you. This includes manual records as well as those held on computer. We will charge you £10 for a copy of this information. If you write to us to ask for this information, we will send it to you within 40 days of receiving your request.

If you apply to us to move to another house you can check the information that you have put on your original application free of charge.



## Moving Home



The Common Housing Register, known as SHOP (Scottish Housing Options) will allow you to apply for any housing managed by Bield.

### **SHOP**

During Spring 2006, Bield is introducing a new application process that will be used by all new housing applicants and also by current tenants who wish to transfer to another scheme. This Common Housing Register, known as SHOP (Scottish Housing Options) will allow you to apply for any housing managed by Bield, Hanover (Scotland) or Trust Housing Associations. Application forms can be obtained from your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer, who can also offer you assistance to complete them.

Within the City of Edinburgh, Bield are involved in another Common Housing Register called EdIndex. If you live in Edinburgh and wish to transfer to another property in the city you will need to complete a separate EdIndex application form. Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer can offer further information about this.

## **Transferring or exchanging to another Bield House**

You can apply to transfer or exchange to another house within your scheme or to another Bield scheme at anytime. If you wish to apply for a transfer or to exchange with another Bield Tenant you should let your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer know. They will arrange for you to complete an application form. Your Housing Officer will then visit you to discuss the allocation process, and any relevant criteria for the scheme you wish to move to. All transfers will be arranged in accordance with our Allocations Policy, a copy of which will be given to you at time of application.

If you live in specially designed accommodation for example Very Sheltered Housing, you can only exchange with someone else who will be eligible for this type of accommodation. You must not exchange houses until you have received written permission from the Association.



*For further information about transferring or exchanging properties, please see Section 4.3 of your Tenancy Agreement or contact your Housing Officer.*

## **Transfers or exchanges to another Landlord**

You can apply to transfer or exchange to another landlord. You can either contact the other landlord directly, or you can ask us to help you find another landlord or person to exchange with through the scheme MoveUK.

You will only be able to transfer if you meet any criteria for the scheme you wish to move to. For example a general needs tenant would not be eligible to move to a sheltered housing scheme.

You also have the right to apply for a Mutual Exchange with any other Tenant who holds a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement. However, you can only exchange with a Tenant who meets the criteria for the scheme you currently live in.

*For further information please see Section 4.3 of your Tenancy Agreement.*

Your Housing Officer can give you advice about either of these options.

If you are transferring or exchanging to another landlord please read Section 14 of this handbook 'Ending Your Tenancy' as this tells you how to give notice and outlines your responsibilities before you leave.

You can apply to transfer or exchange to another house within your scheme or to another Bield scheme at anytime.



## **Move UK**

This is a UK wide scheme, funded by the Government, to work with Councils and Housing Associations and offers a range of services to help tenants move.

### **1) Homes Mobility Scheme**

People can apply to this scheme if they need to be closer to receive support from relatives or for other pressing reasons such as harassment. The Association will contact other landlords in the area to which the person wishes to move and will nominate them for a house. If the application is accepted, the landlord will inform the applicant and he/she will be put on the waiting list.

### **2) Homeswap**

Homeswap is available to any tenant wishing to move for any reason. Tenants complete a homeswap form and return it to Available Homes. They will then send details of any possible swap partners from its database. The list of possible swaps is updated every month and if a suitable property is found tenants can arrange a viewing. As with mutual exchanges, the landlord's permission must be given.

## Ending Your Tenancy



If you wish to end your tenancy with us, you must write to us giving 28 days notice.

A tenancy can be ended in various ways.

### **Giving notice**

If you wish to end your tenancy with us, you must write to us giving 28 days notice. You can send us a letter or complete a Termination Notice which you can get from your Scheme Manager or any Bield Office. If you have a joint tenancy it is essential that both parties signatures are provided. Your tenancy will terminate at the end of your notice period or on the day the keys are handed in, if this is after the end of the notice period.

### **On the Death of a Tenant**

Where a Tenant dies, the tenancy will terminate on the date of death. Bield will allow the person managing their affairs up to 14 days to clear the property and return the keys. During this period no rent will be charged.



## **Clearing the property**

Before handing in the keys to your Scheme Manager or to any Field Office arrangements should be made by you or someone on your behalf to:-

- Remove all furniture and carpets
- Clean the house
- Have electricity or gas meters read if you are responsible for paying the supplier
- Contact the telephone company to arrange a transfer or termination of the line
- Inform the Council's Housing Benefit and Council Tax Offices
- Contact Social Work Services to uplift any aids that are no longer required
- Return keys from all key holders
- Comply with any conditions which were attached to any permission for alterations which you applied for during your tenancy
- Apply for any compensation which you feel is due to you for improvements made to your house in accordance with your right to compensation for improvements

Your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer may be able to help you to arrange the above.


### **Rent Charges on the Termination of your Tenancy**

When you give notice to end your tenancy you will continue to be charged the full monthly rent until your tenancy is terminated and the keys have been handed in. You may not get Housing Benefit for this termination period. Once you have cleared out your house and handed your keys to us we will write to you, or the person managing your affairs, to let you know the situation with your rent.

For tenants moving outwith Bield properties the notice period will be 28 days. A shorter notice period will only be accepted where the house can be re-let before the expiry of the notice period.

When the tenancy is terminated due to the death of the tenant (and no-one is entitled to succeed to the tenancy) the tenancy ends on the date on which the tenant dies. No further rent charges will be made. Arrangements will be made with the tenant's representatives to clear the property as soon as possible. The Association reserves the right to make charges for loss of rent when a property is not cleared and the keys not returned within 14 days.





If you are due a refund we will send you a cheque. If there is an outstanding balance on your rent account we will ask you to make a final payment to us for this amount. Payments can be made by cheque or via your rent book. If you have difficulty making a payment, you, or the person managing your affairs should contact us to discuss the matter further.

If you receive Housing Benefit and it is paid direct to Bield by the Council we will need to write to them first to find out if they have paid the correct amount before we can let you know the situation with your rent. It can take a few months for them to give us this information. However we will write to you as soon as we get their response.

Some tenants in shared equity tenancies will have different termination arrangements to those outline above. Please refer to your Shared Equity Agreement or ask your Housing Officer for further information.

## Useful Contacts



### **Bield Housing Association Ltd**

Registered Office  
79 Hopetoun Street  
Edinburgh EH7 4QF  
Tel: 0131 273 4000  
Fax: 0131 557 6327

1 Bonnethill Gardens  
1 Caldrum Terrace  
Dundee DD3 7HB  
Tel: 01382 228911  
Fax: 01382 224088

12 Somerset Place  
Glasgow G3 7JT  
Tel: 0141 270 7200  
Fax: 0141 331 2686

### **Bield Response24**

18 Castlebank Gardens  
Anniesland  
Glasgow G13 2BG  
Tel: 0141 950 1025  
Fax: 0141 959 0788

**Repair Line** contact Tel: 0141 270 7215

Email: [info@bield.co.uk](mailto:info@bield.co.uk)

Web: [www.bield.co.uk](http://www.bield.co.uk)



**Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

4 Melville Street

Edinburgh EH3 7NS

Tel: 0870 011 5378

Email: [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk)

**The Care Commission (Head Office)**

Compass House,

11 Riverside Drive,

Dundee, DD1 4NY

Tel: 01382 207100 / 0845 603 0890

Email: [www.carecommssion.com](http://www.carecommssion.com)

**The Care Commission (Central East Region)**

4th Floor

Nethergate Business Centre

35 Yeaman Shore

Dundee DD1 4BU

Tel: 01382 207200 / 0845 600 8331

**The Care Commission (Central West Region)**

4th Floor

1 Smithhills Street

Paisley PA1 1EB

Tel: 0141 843 4230 / 0845 600 8334

**The Care Commission (South East Region)**

Stuart House

Eskmill

Musselburgh EH21 7PB

Tel: 0131 653 4100 / 0845 600 8335

**The Care Commission (South West Region)**

Princes Gate

Castle Street

Hamilton ML3 6BU

Tel: 01698 208150 / 0845 600 8336

**Age Concern (Scotland)**

Tel: 0845 8330200

[www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk)

**Help the Aged (Scotland)**

Tel: 0131 551 6331

[www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)

**The Scottish Helpline for Older People**

Tel: 0845 1259732

**NHS24 Helpline**

Tel: 08454 242424

Your Notes



## **Bield Housing Association Ltd**

Registered Office  
79 Hopetoun Street  
Edinburgh EH7 4QF  
Tel: 0131 273 4000  
Fax: 0131 557 6327

1 Bonnethill Gardens  
1 Caldrum Terrace  
Dundee DD3 7HB  
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Fax: 01382 224088

12 Somerset Place  
Glasgow G3 7JT  
Tel: 0141 270 7200  
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