

Bulletin



ENERGY ADVICE SUPPORT SERVICE FOR BIELD TENANTS

We know that managing your energy bills can be worrying and at times confusing.

Thanks to funding from the Independent Age Grants Fund, we have partnered with Changeworks to deliver the Housing Association Energy Advice Support Service. The

service is free and gives Bield tenants access to energy information, advice and advocacy. One to one support is also available for those who need it most.

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ENERGY ADVICE SUPPORT SERVICE FOR BIELD TENANTS

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Changeworks are Scotland's leading environmental charity and experts in providing energy advice and support.

The service aims to help you stay affordably warm at home and includes:

- Access to the Housing Association Energy Support Service online advice library.
- Regular emails or letters over the coming months around energy advice.
- Access to telephone advice from Changeworks for more in-depth energy advice.

- Tailored one to one support over the phone from Changeworks, if you have more complicated problems such as energy billing issues or debt and are looking to speak to someone.

The Housing Association Energy Support Service online advice library can be accessed at: <https://changeworksinfo.org/bieldhousingandcare> or you can call Changeworks for a paper copy of the guides.

You can contact Changeworks on freephone **0800 870 8800** between 9am-5pm, Monday - Friday to request printed materials, or if you feel you need some additional support or a more detailed chat.



Priority Services Register



The Priority Services Register is a free service which gives you extra support with your energy supply. It's there to help if you're in a vulnerable situation – even just temporarily such as leaving hospital.

Once you're on the Priority Services Register you can get advance notice of power cuts, support taking meter readings, priority support in an emergency, and more. It's available at no cost by your energy supplier. Find out more about the service and how to sign up by visiting: <https://changeworksinfo.org/bield-priorityservicesregister>

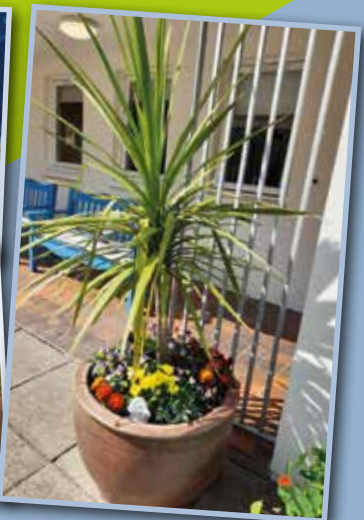
Soil of the century!

In May, the back garden at our **Menzies Court** development in Cumnock was renovated. A big thank you to everyone at Menzies Court who contributed as well as Ardview for all their hard work and Tom Andrews and the volunteers from Auchinleck Community Shed for the hanging baskets and flowers they provided.

Tenants can now enjoy spending time and helping out in the sensory garden and we think you'll agree it looks fantastic!



Tenants at our **Langvout Court** development in Biggar pitched in to transform their garden area and the results are incredible! A huge well done to everyone involved.



One of the talented tenants from our **Foley Court** development in Rothesay has been working hard on the gardens, with some of the other tenants contributing to the cost.



The gardens at our **Lomondgate** development in Balloch also received a makeover earlier in the year thanks to the hard work of our tenants. Everyone enjoys sitting out in the garden now – weather permitting!



Torosay Court were sorry to say goodbye to resident gardener, Margaret, back in August. Margaret didn't move too far though and is now a tenant at our Lynn Court development. Everyone at Torosay Court wishes Margaret every happiness in her new home and thanks her for taking such good care of the flowers, especially the roses!

An open letter to all BIELD tenants

Hello, my name is Lesley.

I've been a Bield tenant since 2010. Like most people, the years of lockdown were difficult and lonely. But here we are, building up our lives again, getting out and about, but at the same time getting older.

During those years, I had more and more difficulty with the hill. My building, Eamont Lodge Court, is at the top of quite a steep hill and if I went down, I had to get back up. I was also diagnosed with the start of a hip deterioration and was placed on the list for replacement.

I became quite despondent about my mobility and began to explore the possibility of moving into a care home or to another property which didn't have that difficult hill.

Then, thanks to Emma Kennedy (my Bield Area Housing Manager), my life changed for the better. She told me about Assistance Allowance which is one of the payments issued by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This money is NOT in any way means tested and is available to anyone who qualifies, including those who own their own property. It is a payment for seniors who have worked all their life. It is given to those who need a little help to stay in their own home. It is loosely based on medical needs,

such as a person who has asthma and can't climb stairs or someone who has arthritis and finds it difficult to do the basic housework. But everyone's condition is taken into consideration.

I applied for this payment with the help of GGG (Glasgow Golden Generation), an agency which gives information on any issue regarding older people. With the help of one of their dedicated staff members, I completed the form and sent it off. I would emphasise that it is best to have help filling in the form, as the information needed is given in the language the DWP understand and are looking for.

Within about 8 weeks I was told that I was eligible for the payment, and very soon it was paid into my bank account. Now the payment is made every 2 weeks. This amount has made it possible for me to stay in my home of the past 13 years and I expect to live here for many more years to come. I no longer hesitate about taking a taxi home from the foot of that hill, or anywhere in my area.

I would urge all Bield tenants to contact Bield's Income Advice Officers about this payment. It can help you stay in your home without worrying about how you can pay for someone to help with the cleaning, for example, and it's certainly worth a phone call.

Lesley



Allocation Policy review - update

Our Allocation Policy plays a significant role in who becomes your new neighbours. In the spring edition of this newsletter, we introduced the upcoming review of our Allocation Policy. This essential framework guides how we allocate our homes when they are available. Now, several months down the road, we're here to highlight the progress we have made.

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Since our initial announcement, we've been hard at work. Our dedicated team kicked off the process by delving into best practices within the housing sector and engaging in meaningful conversations with both tenants and colleagues. Your insights and feedback have been invaluable, and we couldn't have made progress without you.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

We understand the importance of involving you, our tenants, in this process which is why we sent out an early survey to individuals on our 'interested parties' list. Your candid responses and suggestions have significantly shaped our policy proposals. We took your views on board and used them to refine our ideas, resulting in a stronger, more tenant-focused policy.

YOUR FEEDBACK

We were thrilled to receive over 40 responses, which allowed us to make vital adjustments to our policy and its implementation. These adjustments will ensure that the policy reflects your needs and concerns. For a detailed look at the feedback we received, and how it influenced our policy, we invite you to explore the comprehensive report on our website: www.bield.co.uk

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next step in the journey involves obtaining the Bield Board's approval for the new policy. Once approved, we will diligently work behind the scenes to update our systems and provide necessary training to our colleagues, ensuring a seamless transition. The new policy is expected to come into effect on 1st April 2024.



A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you who took the time to provide your comments on the proposals and draft policy. Your participation is instrumental in shaping the future of our housing association, and we are incredibly grateful for your involvement.

If you're interested in getting involved in future projects and consultations, i.e. by joining our Interested Parties List or one of our many tenant groups, please get in touch by emailing:
feedback@bield.co.uk

Housing team changes

Following a number of changes within our Housing teams, we have appointed some new Area Housing Managers and Customer Services Advisers. You should have been updated on which Manager covers your development and, over the course of the next few months, they will be carrying out visits.

The new structure of the Housing team is as follows:

	East	West
Housing Services Managers	Gerry Smith	Alison Allan
Area Housing Managers	Kenny Ayre Kirsty Braid Lynne Davies Marion Hallas Laura McLanders Craig Meek Shona Rintoul Scott Robertson Natasha Stewart	Cath Boyle Jacqueline Campbell Lisa Crossan Emma Kennedy Terri Thomson Kirsty Wilson
Customer Service Advisers	Emma Brown Catriona Carruthers Melanie Donlon Carol Henderson Jennifer Hosea David Ingram Abby Langton	Busani Dabudabu Teri Docherty Joseph Forrest Natalie McDonald Carol Smith

We have also created a new team which will focus on Allocations and Voids and this is managed by Sharon Hossack.

Tenant Safety

– a message from the Bield Partnership Forum



The Partnership Forum is a group of Bield tenants who meet on a regular basis to talk about things that matter to all Bield tenants. At the latest meeting, we talked about tenant safety because we know it is important to so many of us. We want to share some safety tips to help keep everyone safe.

1. LOCK YOUR FRONT DOORS

Always lock your front door. It is a simple way to keep unwanted visitors away.

2. USE THE PEEPHOLE

If your door has a peephole, use it before opening the door to someone you don't know.

3. DON'T LET STRANGERS INSIDE

Be careful about letting people you don't know into your home. Ask for ID if someone says they're here to do a job or deliver something. If you're not sure, call the company to check.

4. WATCH OUT FOR PHONE SCAMS

Scammers use the phone to trick people. Your bank or other real companies won't ask you to send money over the phone or move money to another account. If someone asks you to move your money, take time to think. Hang up and call the company to check.

5. PROTECT YOUR INFORMATION

Don't tell strangers your private information, like where you live or your bank details. Be careful about what you share on social media, as scammers can use that information.

If you want to get involved with the Partnership Forum, or have questions about how to get involved in other ways, please contact us at feedback@bield.co.uk or ask your Local Manager to have the team call you.

Stay safe.

The Bield Partnership Forum

Houston Court are keeping safe

Tenants at our Houston Court development in Johnstone were visited by local officers from Police Scotland in October for a safety briefing. The officers are due to return again soon to deliver a workshop based on safety issues and concerns.



Development



Tenants from our Anderson Court development in Leven are pictured just before heading out for a group lunch at a local restaurant. The tenants organise a get-together every so often, whether it be a meal or an activity they can all take part in.



It was back to the 80's at our Coxton Gardens development in Garthamlock in July. Residents from nearby Loch Laidon Court were also invited, giving the opportunity for tenants from the different areas to meet and socialise.



Tenants at our Baldwin Court development in Penicuik were very proud to host the Hunter and Lass in May. They provided tea and cake for their arrival and had a nice chat with them all about the tradition which goes back to 1936!



Tenants and staff at our Campsie Gardens development in Cumbernauld held a fun-filled Ladies Race Day in September. There was good food, great company and some fantastic prizes to be won!

Coxton Gardens also hosted a karaoke and quiz night in September. George, our General Assistant at nearby Loch Laidon Court, helped out by bringing his equipment and running the karaoke. Laughter and singing could still be heard as the tenants walked along the corridors to head home at the end of the night!



A recent party at our Clyde Court development in Arbroath was well-attended and even included some karaoke!

news & events



Tenants from our Fife Court development in Bothwell took part in the Bothwell Scarecrow Festival for the second year. Check out their fantastic decorations, including some which were provided by family members.



In May, tenants from our Mansewood Court development in Whitburn competed in the Can Alympics – an event run by Xcite West Lothian.



Teams compete in various games which are suitable for all abilities. The Mansewood Court team were the overall winners and received a commemorative shield – well done ladies!

Our Oakburn Park Day Care centre in Milngavie were treated to a visit from adorable therapy ponies, Flicker and Wilson in August. The ponies visit the service users at Oakburn twice a year.



Fife Court also held a fantastic celebration of Ukrainian culture recently and are excited to repeat it again next year. There was a delicious spread, traditional attire and a special rendition of the Ukrainian national anthem.



Tenants and staff from The Butts development in Haddington recently won first place in the Blooming Haddington Wheelbarrow Trail.

Their winning design captures the 'Health and Wellbeing' theme and features the Haddington river, Lammermuir hills and some ceramic characters. Well done to everyone involved!



The lovely Mary and Margaret from our Greenlawn Court development in Wishaw organised a high tea in August to raise funds for Breast Cancer research. A great day was had by friends, family and neighbours and an incredible £1,038 was raised for charity.



Ted Gear, a tenant from our Wheatley Gardens development in Saltcoats, was presented with the prestigious 'Victory Coin' in June for his service during World War 2. Huge congratulations Ted!



The Great Biield Bake Off

We were incredibly proud of all of our tenants who hosted MacMillan Coffee Mornings this year to raise vital funds for people living with cancer.



Tenants at our Springfield Gardens development in Uddingston raised a whopping £1,140.60 at their coffee morning in September.



Our Glenview Court development in Motherwell raised an incredible £1,000 at their coffee morning in September.



Tenants, family and friends were invited to the coffee morning at our Campsie Gardens development in Cumbernauld in September which also included a raffle. £608 was raised altogether.



Residents at our Torosay Court development in Oban held an event in October which raised £542.25. One of our tenants, Christine, is pictured with the cookies which she baked for the event.

Tenants at our Dalriada Grove development in Dunoon also raised £204.30 at their event in October but were too busy drinking tea and eating cakes to take any pictures!

HALLOWEEN

We loved seeing all the pictures of tenants and staff at their Halloween parties this year – it looked like everyone had a great time!



Abercorn Court



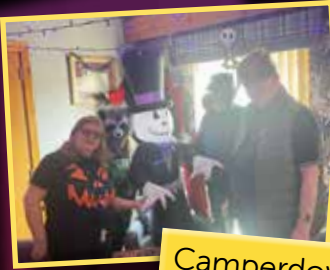
Wheatley Gardens



Campsie Gardens



Clyde Court



Camperdown Court



Crosshill Gardens



Coxton Gardens



Dalriada Grove



Jamaica Court



Foley Court



Meet our new Tenant Engagement & Participation Lead!

Alan Morris joined Bield earlier this year as our new Tenant Engagement and Participation Lead. He tells us a bit about what his role involves below.

“My role with Bield is to talk to you, our tenants, to identify what we are doing well and not so well and how we can make improvements. Working alongside other Bield staff, I am focusing on ways to improve our tenant groups so that more of you can get your voices heard.

I have managed to visit twelve developments in my short time at Bield so far and have met some nice, open

and friendly people. Topics raised around engagement and participation are lack of opportunities to socialise and a feeling of loneliness in some developments. I am here to help with this and to give you the tools to start something for those who wish to get involved.

I have worked in social housing for the last eight years, firstly with Yoker Housing Association and then with Key Housing Association. I have good all-round knowledge of housing and really enjoy talking to people about their homes or life in general. I don't mind talking about



niggles or complaints as long as everyone remains calm and respectful!

If you know I am coming to your development, or if you happen to see me in the lounge, then please come and talk to me!

I hope to see you soon.”

Alan

Intergenerational friendships

Primary 7 pupils in Bo'ness have begun making regular visits to tenants living in our Dean Court development. The Deanburn Primary class are learning about kindness, compassion and empathy towards others and will be visiting monthly to play games, sing, read and share technology with the tenants.

The first visit from the pupils took place in October and, as you can see from the photos, was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended. The theme for the next visit is 'crafting' – tenants are going to teach the pupils how to knit and, in return, the pupils will teach the tenants how to crochet.



Special Birthdays

The very generous Thomas from our Crosshill Gardens development in Port Glasgow celebrated his 70th birthday in October. All of his fellow tenants were invited with food and live music arranged by Thomas!



Marilyn from our Menzies Court development in Cumnock celebrated her 70th birthday with lots of presents and cake in September.

Nan from our Menzies Court development in Cumnock celebrated her 80th birthday in July together with husband Jimmy.



Barbara from our West Port development in Linlithgow turned 100 in August. Barbara is pictured front right enjoying a tea party with friends, family and Bield staff.



Captain Tomas Vedebrand also celebrated his 80th birthday and is pictured with his wife Jill. Captain Vedebrand is a retired sea captain who recently moved to our Foley Court development in Rothesay.

Brenda, a resident at our Foley Court development in Rothesay, celebrated her 90th birthday in April with friends and family.



Eleanor from our Dean Court development in Bo'ness celebrated her 102nd birthday in April together with family and fellow residents.

My first year as a Bield employee

– Scott Alexander, Income Advice Officer

It's now just over a year since I started my employment with Bield as an Income Advice Officer. I have a background spanning two decades in providing welfare benefit advice working for Local Authorities, specialising in project work. I previously worked alongside various NHS departments, charities and housing departments so had a fairly good understanding of partnership working and of how to build a successful project.

Whilst I had worked with housing in the past, I had never actually worked for a housing association. Bield provided me with this opportunity and, having done my homework on Bield's values prior to my interview, I knew they aligned with my own and I was excited for the challenges that lay ahead.

What struck me very early on in my position as an Income Advice Officer was the warm, friendly, almost family-like atmosphere that existed within Bield. The "can do" attitude from colleagues was evident in abundance. This was so refreshing and contributes so much to having a happy work life. While COVID-19 very much forced a reliance upon homeworking and digital technology, I certainly feel that this has not had a lasting impact.

I am part of a team of five alongside Zhan McIntyre (Head of Policy & Customer Standards), Rebecca Summers (Income Advice Officer), Robert Black (Customer Standards Assistant) and Alan Morris (Tenant Engagement & Participation Lead). Geographically, we live miles apart but, professionally, we are a close-knit, supportive team focused on our efforts to maximise income and engage tenants.

It became quite apparent very early that the Development Managers and Area Housing Managers were pivotal if the Income Advice

Officers' role was to become a success. To that extent, they have been nothing short of amazing. Their roles are already so busy but they always find the time to do whatever they can. The relationship that I have with them is a huge positive and a part of my job that I really enjoy.

The ongoing success of the Income Advice Officers is definitely due to everybody pulling in the same direction. To date, Rebecca and myself have spoken to nearly 600 tenants across Scotland and increased their incomes significantly.

Sometimes, due to the hustle and bustle of life and busy working days, we can forget the good work we ALL do for tenants. The extra mile I see colleagues going on a daily basis is not unnoticed. All this makes Bield a stronger organisation and provides a happy and safe environment for tenants. I have more than enjoyed my first year with Bield and look forward to many more to come!



If you would like to be referred to the team for income advice and support, please email: incomeadvice@bield.co.uk

How we're performing

The Scottish Housing Regulator has now published performance information about us and all other Registered Social Landlords in Scotland. They do this every year so that customers can see how well their landlord is doing and how they compare to others.

You can access Bield's performance information for 2022/23 at: <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/bield-housing-care>

Our performance has improved in a number of areas since last year including the amount of rental income collected, the average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs and the number of properties meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing (ESSH).

However, we acknowledge that we have areas to improve on, particularly regarding repairs. Rising prices, disrupted supply

chains and a shortage of labour had an impact on our repairs service this year.

Nevertheless, we completed a total of 10,067 day-to-day repairs in 2022/23 (in addition to the usual cyclical, service and major repairs programmes) and over 81% of tenants who had repairs or maintenance carried out were satisfied with the service.

Our latest Tenant Performance Report (available in both text and video format) was co-produced with Bield tenants and can be found on our website at: www.bield.co.uk/performance



Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

You may have seen reports in the media recently regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

RAAC is a lightweight form of reinforced concrete. It was mainly used for non-load bearing structures in flat roofs, but also some floor and wall construction, in the UK from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s. RAAC was used in a range of building types, both public and private sector, but is believed to be more common in schools, hospitals and public buildings.

There has recently been an increased focus on the potential for RAAC to be present in social housing stock. We want to be open and transparent with you about what this means, as the safety of our residents is of paramount importance.

Following an initial desktop survey and visual inspection of our developments by our Property team, Bield have employed specialist chartered structural engineers to assess all properties built within the aforementioned time period.

We are working with other Scottish housing associations and cross-sector public bodies to share knowledge and ensure our response is joined up.

If and when we are made aware that RAAC is present in any of our properties, following the detailed assessment reports from the structural engineers, we will write to residents to keep them informed of any remedial action which may be required.

In the meantime, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us on **0141 270 7200**.

You Said, We Did

We know how important it is to listen to the concerns you bring to us so that we can put things right and help make sure they don't happen again.

One way we do this is through our Compliment and Complaint Collective, a group open to all tenants, who look at the complaints we have

received and suggest improvements. This group meets quarterly online to delve into a sample of complaints, leading to insights and recommendations to enrich the Bield tenant experience. Some of our most recent complaints, and the action we have taken in response, are detailed below.

Missed opportunities

You said: We need to tackle issues proactively to prevent them from becoming complaints.

We did: This insight was shared with Bield's Leadership Team. We're stressing the importance of early intervention and open communication with all of our tenants.

Unreliable lifts

You said: There are concerns about the reliability of lifts across different properties.

We did: The Bield Property Team has been made aware of this and work is ongoing.

Empowering Local Managers

You said: Local Managers should have the autonomy to assist tenants directly.

We did: Efforts are underway to support and empower Local Managers to do this.

Emergency key use

You said: There are concerns that emergency key use was not being followed in accordance with our policies and procedures.

We did: We updated our procedure, taking the opportunity to include some of the process on our housing management system Cx. We then shared this information with all Local Managers and Area Housing Managers.

Support for bereaved tenants

You said: Tenants require clear guidance on tenancy procedures after the loss of a spouse or partner.

We did: We've designed a leaflet detailing the tenancy procedure after the loss of a spouse or partner.

If you're interested in getting involved in the Bield Compliment and Complaint Collective, or any of our tenant engagement groups, please get in touch at: feedback@bield.co.uk

Across: 1 Applaud, 5 Pastor, 9 Advantage, 10 Undue, 11 Mats, 12 Dumping, 15 Sultana, 16 Israel, 17 Tic, 19 Twilit, 21 Eastest, 24 Haymaker, 25 Etna, 28 Drive, 29 Rembrandt, 30 Beat up, 31 Shortly.
Down: 1 Alarmist, 2 Pivotal, 3 Anna, 4 Dean, 5 Prejudiced, 6 Sculptress, 7 Old-time, 8 Reign, 13 Parliament, 14 Rattlettrap, 18 Stealthy, 20 Wayside, 22 Extinct, 23 Shady, 26 Xmas, 27 Trio.

Gaining access for essential checks

As a responsible landlord, ensuring the safety of our customers and staff is a priority for Bield. To keep everyone safe, there are several essential regular safety checks that we require to carry out in your home. These include:

- Gas Appliance Safety Check - an inspection of all gas appliances, pipework and carbon monoxide detectors must be carried out annually.
- Fire, Smoke and Heat Detection Test - an inspection of all smoke and heat detectors must be carried out annually.
- Electrical Inspection Condition Report - an inspection of the fixed wiring installation in your home must be carried out on a three or five year cycle.

Your Tenancy Agreement sets out the requirements for access for emergency and essential checks. We are required to give you at least 24 hours' notice before entering your property and visits must only be made at reasonable times of day.

We start the process of arranging access two months in advance of the anniversary date for each check to make sure that we are able to meet our statutory obligations. The process we follow is outlined below.

1. A letter is issued in advance of all scheduled inspection visits confirming the date contractors will be on site to carry out the checks.
2. If access is unavailable to carry out the check at the first visit, we will issue a letter titled "We have tried to contact you". This will encourage you to get in touch with us within 7

days to arrange a new, mutually-agreed appointment date.

3. If access is still not granted, a third letter will be issued explaining the need for access and offering additional timeslots. This letter requires a response within 7 working days.
4. Where there is still no response, a fourth warning letter will be hand delivered, giving a final opportunity to make contact and arrange an appointment that suits. This letter will give 7 days' notice of potential forced entry.
5. As a last resort, Bield will gain access to carry out the essential check by using the master suited emergency key (where available), or by changing the door locks.

We will always take into account any special circumstances that you may have which may affect access to carry out any work. Please get in touch, at any stage, if you need to rearrange your visit date by emailing: servicecontracts@bield.co.uk or by calling us on 0141 270 7262. A member of the team will be happy to assist. If we are unavailable, please leave a message with your contact details and we will get back to you as soon as possible.



Strategy update

In May, we launched our new Corporate Strategy: *Setting the Pace...Our People, Our Homes, Our Communities*. This strategy puts you, our tenants, at the heart of everything we do. It is our vision for how we will continue to improve customer experience, invest in our homes, explore how evolving technology can support tenants and further achieve our purpose: to make it possible for more people to live their best lives, at home, surrounded by a supportive community.

The strategy contains 12 priorities which set clear goals for Bield. Our goals are designed to be ambitious, we make no apologies for this!

In the six months since the strategy launched, we have begun to deliver on our ambitious new vision including:

- Changing our adaptations funding structure so that, in future, more tenants will be able to receive aids and adaptations to their homes faster.
- Listening to your responses from the latest satisfaction survey. Following the most recent survey, three key themes were found: our tenants want their homes to be safe, secure and accessible. These responses will inform how we implement our strategy and make decisions going forward.
- Collecting your customer engagement preferences. This will allow us to communicate with you in the way/s you would like us to. For those who have provided these preferences, we will try to communicate using your preferred method wherever possible.
- Launching the 'My Bield' online customer portal. This gives you greater control over your tenancy, for example, you can use the portal to pay rent and request a repair. We encourage all tenants to sign-up if you have an email address.
- Adopting a co-production approach to delivering our strategy. Co-production refers to a way of working where Bield colleagues partner with tenants to make improvements and reach a goal. After the success of co-production with residents at West Port in Linlithgow throughout the TAPPI project, we want to use this way of working in other aspects of delivering the strategy.

These changes are just the start of us delivering on our strategy and we will continue to keep you updated over the next five years. This is an exciting time for Bield and anyone can get involved. Please keep an eye out for details of opportunities to engage with us.



Rent consultation 2024

We want to get your views about your rent for next year.

Last year, after talking to tenants, the Bield Board agreed to increase rents by 7%. This reflected rising operational costs, benchmarked against the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which measures the average change in prices paid for goods and services. Despite a CPI rate of 10.1% in September 2022, we kept the rent increase below inflation levels, as you told us that the cost of living crisis was having a big impact on you.

This year, the CPI in September was 6.7%. We want to align any rent increase with the CPI to ease the financial burden on our tenants, keeping in mind the unpredictable nature of CPI rates.

Your feedback matters and we want to get your views on our proposals for 2024. Enclosed with this newsletter is our rent

consultation survey. Please take the time to respond and be in with a chance of winning one of six £50 shopping vouchers.

The deadline for sending completed surveys to us is Friday 22nd December 2023.

You can complete the survey by:

- Filling out the enclosed paper survey and handing this to your Local Manager to return to our Glasgow office
- Filling out the enclosed paper survey and returning it for free (no stamp required!) to: Rent Survey, FREEPOST RLXG – LIKH – AABE, Bield Housing Association, Craighall Business Park, 7 Eagle Street, Glasgow, G4 9XA
- Visiting our website and completing the survey online at: www.bield.co.uk

Win one of six £50 shopping vouchers!

- Scanning the below QR code using your smartphone or tablet and completing the survey online.



Changes to Radio Teleswitch (RTS) electricity meters

Does your property have a non-smart electricity meter which switches between peak and off-peak tariff rates? If so, your meter may use Radio Teleswitch (RTS) technology. The BBC radio service that supports RTS is planned to be phased out by 31st March 2024, so your electricity supplier will be required to upgrade any affected electricity meters before this date. Your supplier will be able to tell you if you have an electricity RTS meter.

Please visit the Ofgem website to view their latest update which has more information:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/radio->

[teleswitch-electricity-meters-consumer-guidance](https://www.bield.co.uk/energy-advice/teleswitch-electricity-meters-consumer-guidance)

Please note that if you have a heat with rent meter where Bield pay for the electric heating consumption and you have your own supplier for other electricity consumption, these should not be switched to smart meters yet. Bield are currently working on a solution with Scottish Power and we will be in touch in due course.

If you would like additional advice on this matter, Energy Advocacy service Changeworks can be contacted online at <https://www.changeworks.org.uk/referral>, or via telephone on 0800 870 8800.

What is a Building Management System?

A Building Management System (BMS) enables mechanical and electrical equipment such as heating to be automatically controlled. This ensures that the required levels of heating are provided at different times of the day as necessary throughout a building. Bield has 94 developments connected to a BMS system which is currently managed by our Property Management Team and is an element of our 'Digital Estate' project.

How do communal heating systems work?

94 Bield developments have a communal gas supplied heating/hot water system. The communal heating system (CHS) provides domestic hot water for all tenants in a building, as well as heating the building itself.

Each development has one or more heat generators, for example, a gas boiler or heat pump equipment. The heat is distributed through a two-pipe distribution network. Hot water from the communal boiler circulates through the pipes to radiators in each individual flat. Once the hot water has cooled, it's returned to the communal heating device via the same pipe network. This is the common system for most houses with the difference being that the CHS provides heat and hot water to multiple flats rather than requiring individual boilers.

Given that the CHS provides both heating and hot water, in most cases it isn't possible to switch off one without

the other. The temperatures are set and managed within the BMS.

Pipework losses for a CHS network are roughly 6% to 10% (Reference - Heatweb April 2022 guidance). As the water circulates through the building it cools down, meaning the flat furthest away from the boiler will receive a lower temperature of water than the flats closest to the boiler. This is managed by setting the flow and return temperature for the boiler. There are various factors involved such as the efficiency and age of the boiler as well as pipe insulation levels and external temperatures. There is a delicate balance when the temperature is set as this has an impact on how well the boiler can operate. Changes in the CHS are not instantaneous as it takes a while for the water and building fabric to heat. Temperature loss and demand need to be taken into consideration when setting the temperatures on the boilers to ensure consistency throughout a full building.

How do thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) work?

Within the flats, tenants can control the temperature using thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) fitted to each radiator to adjust the flow of water into the radiator. While this provides a level of control over the temperature, it can't be higher than the temperature set for the CHS as this is where the water is heated prior to circulation.

It is important to understand that the TRV controls the temperature of the room and not the temperature of the radiator itself.

If the room is warm and at the required temperature already, the radiator will switch off and go cold until the temperature of the room goes down and it is triggered to switch back on. This can mean that the radiator will feel cold to the touch, especially if it is also a warm day outside.

The TRV should be positioned so that the control head can detect the temperature of the air in the room. The sensor must not be shielded by curtains or other similar obstructions such as settees or cabinets. TRVs will not work effectively if any windows and/or doors are open and rooms will therefore feel cold.

As part of our work to reduce energy consumption, digital TRVs have been installed in various developments in the common areas. This enables the temperature to be controlled through the BMS system, avoids setting radiators at full heat constantly and maintains a comfortable standard throughout the building.

There are currently standard TRVs installed within individual flats. Standard TRVs are not intelligent enough to understand when a radiator is not at a given temperature.

What is the process for changing the communal heating system levels?

The BMS has overarching control of all temperatures within the building. The system is complex and requires staff to be trained and have a licence to be able to amend and control it. All 94 development BMS systems are set to enable the optimisation of their performance. Each system therefore requires to be adjusted individually ensuring temperatures are set per area (i.e. flat, common area, lounge, etc.) and specific times are programmed. This ensures the system knows when to generate and distribute heat to the specified areas of a development. Although most of this can be done remotely, some elements have to be completed on site to ensure the boiler is set correctly to stated temperatures and operating as it should.

What to do if your heating isn't working or you think it is too cold

If the temperature of the room has already reached its set target, radiators will switch off and will feel cold to touch. We would be grateful if you would check your radiators over a period of time, to ensure they are definitely not working and the room or area is uncomfortably cold, before reporting this as a fault.



Reactive repairs contractors – update

We are pleased to confirm that we have appointed Consilium Contracting Services Ltd and Rodgers & Johnston to provide our reactive repairs and maintenance service, in the West of Scotland and Central areas respectively, and hope to go live with the new contracts later in December.

The contract with Consilium was procured jointly with Trust Housing Association for whom they will provide the same service.

Craig Reid, Director at Consilium said: “We are thrilled to announce our first jointly-procured contract with Bield Housing & Care and Trust Housing Association, focusing on reactive repairs and maintenance for both organisations and their tenants. This contract heralds a significant milestone in our commitment to providing exceptional service and support to those that need it. Our dedication extends to fostering stronger communities and creating fantastic relationships with Bield, Trust and their tenants. We are really looking forward to this exciting partnership over the coming months and years.”

Greg Johnston, Managing Director, at Rodgers & Johnston (R&J) said: “R&J are delighted to announce that, following an extensive procurement process, we have been awarded the reactive repairs and void works contract for Bield’s central area. We look forward to continuing our excellent long-standing relationship with Bield, working in partnership to provide a high-quality responsive repairs service that is firmly focused on the needs of Bield’s tenants.”

As part of these new contracts, both companies require to give something back to the communities in which we operate – known as ‘community benefits’. We will provide an update on these in the next edition of this newsletter.

We are committed to ensuring that the transition to the new contracts goes as smoothly as possible. We respectfully ask for your patience and understanding during this time.

If you have any concerns regarding your repairs service, please contact us during office hours on **0141 370 2040**.

BR24: Your lifeline in an emergency

Winter is here and, while it brings the joy of the holiday season, it can also present challenges. At Bield, we understand the importance of safety and security for our tenants which is why we have our dedicated BR24 team in place to ensure your well-being, even in the harshest of conditions.

Who are BR24?

Bield Response 24 (BR24) is more than just a name, it's your lifeline in an emergency. Based in our Glasgow office, BR24 is our emergency alarm receiving centre, manned 24/7 by trained professionals who are always ready to respond to any situation that may arise. Whether it's a medical emergency, a fire, an out-of-hours repair or a security concern, the BR24 team is there to ensure your safety. As well as providing this service for Bield tenants, BR24 works in partnership with multiple local authorities and organisations across the UK, taking on average 1,700 emergency alarm calls per day!

Vigilance around the clock

BR24 never sleeps. Our team is on hand constantly, monitoring alarms and sensors throughout all Bield properties. They are equipped to respond swiftly to any potential emergency, ensuring a quick and effective resolution.

Trained professionals

Our team members at BR24 are highly-trained and certified. They know how to handle various situations; providing guidance, support and a calm, caring voice until help arrives. Whether it's assisting with dispatching emergency services, helping to arrange support after a fall, scheduling an out-of-hours repair or navigating any other tenant concerns, BR24 is here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Rapid response

Time is of the essence in emergencies and BR24 understands this. Our team co-ordinate with local emergency services, responder services, social and health care professions and contractors ensuring that help arrives as quickly as possible. BR24 are required to answer 97.5% of alarm calls within 60 seconds, giving you that additional peace of mind that your safety is their top priority.



How can you reach BR24?

In case of an emergency, it's essential to know how to reach BR24. You can activate your alarm at any time, day or night, and you will be transferred to a member of the team. For non-emergencies, you can contact them by calling **0141 950 1025** or emailing **br24@bield.co.uk**

Your role in keeping safe

While BR24 is here to ensure your safety, it's also essential for tenants to take steps to maintain a secure living environment. Regularly test your alarms, report any concerns promptly to staff on site or BR24 and please ensure that all your contact information is updated to BR24.

BR24 is always ready to assist you in times of need. We hope this glimpse into the work of BR24 helps you understand the critical role they play in our community. Stay safe, and don't hesitate to reach out to them if you ever need assistance.

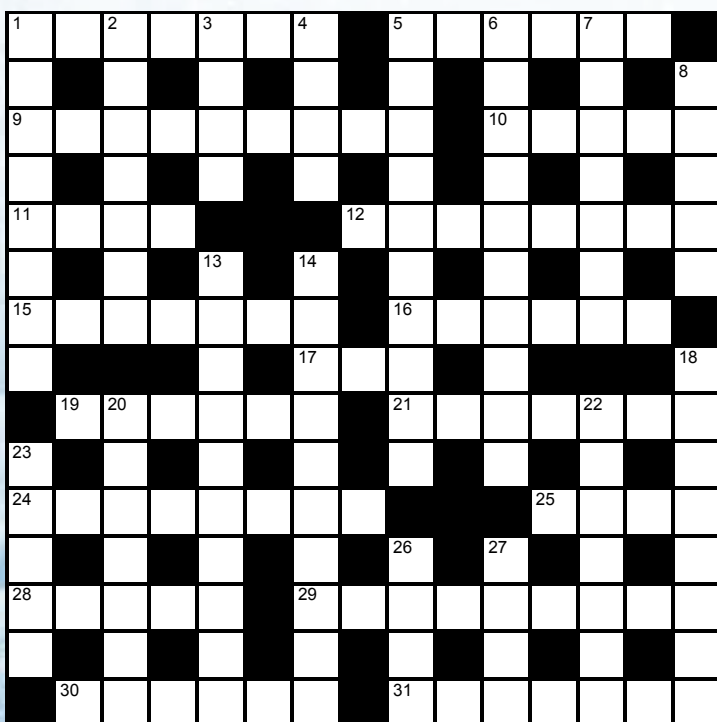
Pictured above are some of the friendly faces from our BR24 team who you may encounter when you call.



To find out more about the BR24 service, please visit: www.bield.co.uk/alarm-response-br24-telecare-services/ or scan the QR code.



Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 1 Clap (7)
- 5 Priest (6)
- 9 Benefit (9)
- 10 Unwarranted (5)
- 11 Floor coverings (4)
- 12 Rounded mass of steamed dough (8)
- 15 Seedless raisin (7)
- 16 East Mediterranean democracy (6)
- 17 Involuntary muscular contraction (3)
- 19 Dusky (6)
- 21 Least difficult (7)
- 24 Knockout punch (8)
- 25 Sicilian volcano (4)
- 28 Compel (5)
- 29 Dutch master (9)
- 30 Work over (4,2)
- 31 Soon (7)

Down

- 1 Scaremonger (8)
- 2 Crucial (7)
- 3 "Black Beauty" author --- Sewell (4)
- 4 Faculty head (4)
- 5 Biased (10)
- 6 Statue-maker (10)
- 7 Bygone (3-4)
- 8 Prevail (5)
- 13 Legislative assembly (10)
- 14 Rickety vehicle (10)
- 18 Furtive (8)
- 20 Edge of the road (7)
- 22 Permanently inactive (7)
- 23 Fly-by-night (5)
- 26 Yuletide (4)
- 27 Group of three (4)

Answers on page 16

Bield awarded 'Excellence in Digital Engagement'

Bield were the winner of the 'Excellence in Digital Engagement' award at the 2023 TIS National Excellence Awards.

The TIS National Excellence Awards recognise and celebrate housing organisations, staff, volunteers, tenants, residents and community groups who are leading the way and making positive change in the Scottish social housing sector. The Excellence in Digital Engagement award recognises housing organisations who have demonstrated creativity in developing meaningful digital engagement opportunities.

Bield's award-winning submission highlighted that we have made significant strides in promoting digital engagement and ensuring that tenants are at the forefront of our decision-making processes.

Last year, we were selected to take part in, and awarded funding as part of, the Technology for our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (TAPPI) project which aims to improve the way technology is used in housing and care for older people. We decided to utilise innovative practices and various online channels to encourage greater engagement and participation. Co-production, where service users and providers work together towards shared goals and positive changes, has been a key theme throughout.

We obtained feedback from tenants regarding their technological capabilities which laid the foundation for tailored digital engagement opportunities. The feedback highlighted

the importance of "hands-on" learning experience for tenants and led to the unveiling of the Bield Tech Hub in May 2023. The Bield Tech Hub is based at our West Port development in Linlithgow and showcases consumer and technology-enabled care devices. The innovative space has enabled Bield tenants and the wider community to interact with and test different devices, apps and systems across a variety of housing settings; building their confidence and developing their knowledge in relation to different digital tools which can be used to support independent living.

Our two tenant volunteer 'TAPPI Champions', Alice Bayne and Peter Paton from West Port, accepted the award alongside Bield staff at the TIS National Excellence Awards ceremony on 9th November. The ceremony took place in the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow and had a 'Grand Gatsby' theme.

Dr. Lynne Douglas, Chief Executive of Bield, said: "Technology has enabled us to engage with tenants, customers and communities who may have previously faced barriers to participation and our focus on meaningful digital engagement opportunities has resulted in a range of positive outcomes. By championing co-production and digital inclusion, we hope to set a high standard of practice and demonstrate the lasting benefits of meaningful digital engagement".

Pictured L-R: Gary Lamont (TIS 2023 Excellence Awards host), Gary Baillie (Bield TAPPI Programme & BR24 Service Manager), Peter Paton (Bield tenant & TAPPI Champion), Alice Bayne (Bield tenant & TAPPI Champion), Rebecca Lynch (Bield Project & Change Manager) and Callum Chomczuk (National Director (Scotland), Chartered Institute of Housing)



Tributes paid to former Biold tenants

We were saddened to hear of the death of Adelina 'Lena' Ferguson, a resident at our Strathallan Court development in Bridge of Allan earlier this year. Lena, a remarkable woman who started work as a cryptographer at Bletchley Park during World War 2, passed away in April at the age of 103.

After the war, Lena worked in Glasgow for WD&HO Wills, the tobacco merchants, where she met her late husband Jimmy. They married in 1948, and Lena became a 'housewife', filling her days with baking, knitting and sewing.

In 2009, at the age of 90, she received a medal and certificate for her war efforts from then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. She was a much-loved mother, gran and great-gran who enjoyed cake, company and sharing a laugh with friends. Her family say she will be remembered for her great sense of humour and sharp wit.



Lena is pictured on her 100th birthday. Photograph shared with permission from the family.

We were also incredibly sorry to hear of the loss of Etta, a resident at our Baldwin Court development in Penicuik, in May. Etta was elected as the Hunter's Lass back in 1958 – an important part of the Penicuik town festival which takes place every year in May and a tradition which dates back to 1936. Etta is pictured wearing the sash and ribbon she was presented with in 1958. Photograph shared with permission from the family.



Keeping you safe

In accordance with guidance from the Scottish Government and the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service regarding specialised housing, Fire Risk Assessments are in place in all of our developments. We need your assistance to maintain some general housekeeping control standards and ensure a high level of fire safety in and around your development.

Seasonal displays

- Christmas trees, seasonal displays, decorations and lights can all be displayed in communal lounges and dining rooms. All items should be fire retardant.
- All electrical items must have a current PAT test sticker attached at the plug.
- A Christmas tree (with PAT plug-in lights) can be displayed at the main entrance to the development as long as it does not encroach on the escape route. No other items should be displayed in this area.
- No items are permitted to be displayed in the stairwells. Please keep these clear.



Emergency escape corridors and stairwells

No storage is permitted in these areas - all unauthorised items must be removed immediately. Only a limited amount of suitable furnishings and accessories, owned by Bield, will normally be authorised for location and display in the fire escape circulation routes. It is acceptable to have a small personalised display of non-combustible items next to a tenant's door where an inglenook is provided, however these should not obstruct the escape route.

Please note that Book Club tables and other social club/seasonal displays must be located within the communal lounge areas.



External storage of household uplift items

- All items stored outside for uplift must be located in a safe location at least 5 metres from the building and not stacked against the external walls or storage sheds.
- Items should be placed outside as close to the uplift date as possible.
- Items should not be placed outside without arrangements for an uplift in place.



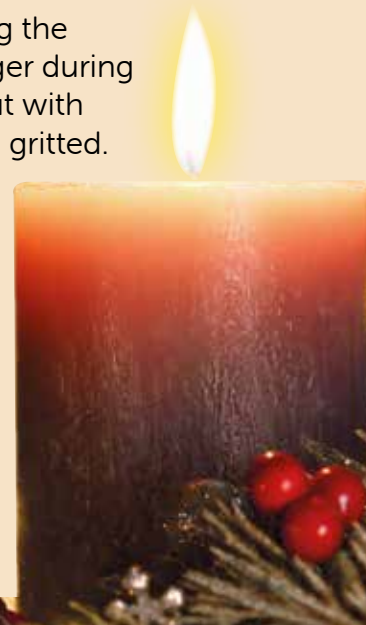
Fire safety at Christmas

Here are some top tips to keep you and your home safe over the festive season:

- Check your Christmas tree lights carry the British Safety Standard design.
- Never place candles near your Christmas tree or materials that can catch light easily.
- Most fires start in the kitchen. Avoid leaving your cooker unattended. Avoid cooking when under the influence of alcohol.
- Make sure your family and visitors know how to escape in an emergency.
- Make sure cigarettes are put out properly. NEVER smoke in bed.
- Decorations can burn easily – don't attach them to lights or heaters.
- Keep candles, lighters and matches out of the reach of children.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Don't overload electrical sockets. Always switch your Christmas lights off and unplug them before you go to bed.
- Take time to check on older neighbours/relatives as they are at greater risk from fire.

Additional safety advice

- Keep your front door locked at all times.
- Don't let unknown visitors into your development via the main door security entrance.
- In the event of bad weather such as ice and snow during the festive period, please contact your Development Manager during working hours or use your pull cord to contact BR24 out with working hours to request that pathways are cleared and gritted.
- If you need to contact our Housing team urgently during the festive period please call our main Glasgow or Edinburgh office numbers during normal business hours and you will be transferred to the on-duty Area Housing Manager. [See the back page for contact details and festive operating hours.]
- In the event of an issue, your first point of contact should be your Development Manager.



Staying well and protecting others

Respiratory infections including COVID-19 can spread more in indoor places. It is important that we keep doing the things that keep us all well.

To protect yourself and keep others well:

- if you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, try to stay at home and avoid contact with others – if you do need to go out, wear a well-fitting face covering.
 - get the vaccine if offered to give you the best possible protection.
 - follow the NHS guidance if you're feeling unwell – you can contact your GP, use the 111 service or visit: www.nhsinform.scot/winter-illness
 - socialise in well-ventilated spaces where possible.
 - give more space and care around those using the Distance Aware scheme (wearing a badge or lanyard).
- consider how many people are gathered in spaces and try to avoid overcrowded areas.
 - wash your hands and clean surfaces regularly.
 - look out for spaces that display Stay Well Signage to let you know what measures they are taking to make spaces safer for all.

[All information taken from NHS Inform website]



Forth Valley first responder volunteer, Martin Stuart, visited our Dean Court development in July and gave a demonstration to residents on using a defibrillator. A defibrillator for the use of the whole community was recently installed outside

Dean Court by the charity Friends of Forth Valley First Responders who also maintain the defibrillator.



Colin McColl from the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service paid a visit to tenants at our Foley Court development in Rothesay in July. He talked about the importance of fire safety within homes and tenants had the opportunity to ask lots of questions.



Bield's Staff Awards ceremony celebrates employees going the extra mile

In September, we hosted our second Staff Awards ceremony to recognise and reward the employees who went above and beyond their normal duties.

The ceremony took place following our AGM and Staff Conference at the Leonardo Hotel Edinburgh Murrayfield with employees across all areas of the organisation in attendance.

Seven awards were presented on the night with the winners of six of these chosen by a judging panel. The judging panel comprised of members of staff from across the organisation.

The Team of the Year Award was determined by an online public poll with our Oakburn Park Day Care Team in Milngavie receiving over 10,000 of the 12,000 votes cast. The team is highly valued in the local community providing a dedicated service to those living with dementia as well as supporting the caregivers of its service users.

Bield's Chief Executive, Dr Lynne Douglas, said: "The annual Bield Staff Awards are a chance for us to celebrate our workforce and their achievements and I am delighted to see each and every one of them recognised."



Some of the winning staff members who attended on the night are pictured right.

The winners were:

The Collaborator Award:
Michael Walton (Payroll Team)

The Customer Hero Award:
George Monteith (Loch Laidon Court)

The Employee Achievement Award:
Lisa Crossan (Housing Team)

The Making a Difference Award:
Sharon Tomany (Castlebrae Glebe)

The Problem Solver Award: **Helen McGinn (BR24)**

The Supporting Others to be Themselves Award:
Zhan McIntyre (Policy & Customer Standards Team)

The Team of the Year: **Oakburn Park Day Care Milngavie**

Bield strengthens Board with appointment of new Chair

Paul Edie was formally elected as Bield's new Chair at our Annual General Meeting in September.

Paul will play a pivotal role in guiding our new Corporate Strategy and Business Plan, steering us towards our goal of meeting Scotland's urgent housing needs, as well as continuing our dedication to innovation and creative housing services that help older people in Scotland live independent and fulfilled lives.

As former Chair of the Care Inspectorate, Paul brings almost 30 years' experience in the public sector, with roles in councils and health boards. His appointment saw Professor Lesley Holdsworth OBE step down as Bield's Chair after coming to the end of her three-year tenure.

Commenting on his appointment, Paul said: "Throughout my career, I've chosen to work with highly ethical organisations that align with my values.

"I was eager to work with Bield because of my positive experience leading housing initiatives in Edinburgh and due to the deep respect I have for Bield's mission and values.

"Providing homes for those who need them is one of the most meaningful ways to spend your life. Bield has always impressed me as a forward-thinking, progressive organisation unafraid to make tough long-term decisions to serve its tenants' interests."

Dr Lynne Douglas, Chief Executive of Bield said: "Everyone at Bield is incredibly grateful to Lesley for her service over the last three years. Following her departure, I am delighted to announce the appointment of Paul as our new Chair.

"This is a key time for Bield as we begin a period of significant transformation. We are committed to continuing to improve customer experience and satisfaction, collaborating and innovating and investing more into our homes.

"Paul brings a wealth of skills and experience and will be key to helping us drive forward with our five-year strategy."



We were delighted to welcome the following Board Members during the last year:

Derek Breingan, David Leaf, Angus McRae, Brian McLaren, Dougie Peters, Cath Strachan and Frances Wood.



Hello! Can you help us make benefits even better for Scottish pensioners?

If you're aged 66+, we want to know what you think.

Fill in a survey at mygov.scot/padp-pensioner-survey

Thank you!



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Crawf8


Festive season opening/ closing times

Our offices will be closed on **Monday 25th** and **Tuesday 26th December 2023** as well as **Monday 1st** and **Tuesday 2nd January 2024**. Local Development Managers and staff will not be working during this time. BR24, our care services and our meals services will remain operational.

Emergency contact details

Even though our office staff won't be working over the festive period, you can still report an emergency at any time by contacting BR24. Use your pull cord or call **0141 950 1025**.

Please contact communications@bield.co.uk if you require this document in a different format or language.

-  [bieldhousingandcare](#)
-  [bield-housing-&-care](#)
-  [BieldScotland](#)

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PF000146

