

# Bulletin

## Debbie Collins appointed as our new CEO



**We are very pleased to announce the appointment of Debbie Collins as our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).**

Debbie stepped into the permanent position at the end of March after a successful year as Interim CEO, where she steered Bield through key strategic milestones and helped shape the next phase of our development.

Her promotion followed a competitive recruitment campaign and sees her take the helm at a pivotal moment for Bield, as we drive delivery of our corporate strategy and long-term vision.

Paul Edie, Chair of Bield's Board, said: "We are delighted that Debbie has accepted this role. Over the past year, she has shown outstanding leadership, guiding Bield through important milestones and several key achievements.

"We're confident that Debbie can successfully drive forward our core purpose – making it possible for more people to live their best lives, at home, surrounded by a supportive community."

A CIMA-qualified accountant, Debbie's experience spans senior roles in both the public and private sectors – including

eight years working in social housing. She originally joined Bield in 2023 as our first Chief Operating Officer, where she led across financial and organisational delivery.

Speaking on her appointment, Debbie said: "I feel incredibly honoured to be asked to lead Bield. During my time as Interim CEO, I have had the privilege to see the extraordinary impact our work has on the lives of older people across Scotland.

"Our Independent Living approach sits at the heart of everything we do, and I'm excited to continue strengthening and evolving how we support people to live safely and independently in their own homes.

"We have a highly committed, talented team who work tirelessly for our tenants. I'm proud to lead such a dedicated group and I look forward to working closely with them, and with our partners, to deliver real and lasting change."

She added: "Bield has a wealth of experience in delivering high-quality, supportive housing. We are ambitious in our goals, from expanding digital innovation to influencing sector-wide policy, and we are determined to play a leading role in shaping the future of housing and care in Scotland."

# Storage heating meters

**Do you still have an old meter for your storage heating?**

They will be Scottish Power or Scottish Hydro meters, possibly with a label that says 'Radio Teleswitch'. See the below image for an example of what they look like.



These meters were controlled by a signal broadcast on the BBC longwave radio signals. That signal will be switched off at the end of June 2025 and nobody knows how these old meters will react. We wish this was simpler than it is, but dealing with

the power suppliers can be challenging at the best of times. There are complications that can arise for individual meter installs so our guide opposite may not be universal, however we have endeavoured to set out the most common issues.

If you use storage heaters, you may need to take action. Follow the steps below to check what applies to you:

# What you need to do

## 1. Do you have storage heaters?

**No:** You don't need to do anything.

**Yes:** Continue to Step 2.

## 2. Do you already have a smart meter?

**Yes:** You don't need to do anything.

**No:** Continue to Step 3.

## 3. Do you use electric heating in your home and pay Bield for this via a heating or energy charge each month?

**Yes:** Bield are working with their supplier to arrange new meters and will be in touch directly with you. If the meter change requires you to contact your energy company directly, Bield will be in touch to provide more details on what to do next.

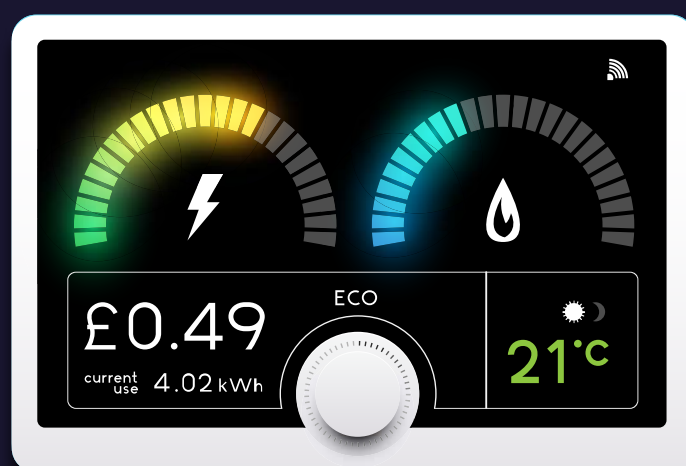
**No:** If you still use storage heaters, pay for your heating through your electricity bill, and don't yet have a smart meter, contact your energy company and ask for one as soon as possible.

If you are unsure about any of this, please speak with your Development Manager or, alternatively, email: [utilities@bield.co.uk](mailto:utilities@bield.co.uk)

**Please note:** The information in this article was accurate at the time of publication but may be subject to change.

Get free  
energy advice  
and support  
**CHANGEWORKS.**

We've partnered with Changeworks, Scotland's leading environmental charity, to offer all Bield tenants free help through the Tenant Energy Advice Support Service.



You can refer yourself using their new online referral portal: <https://cwreferrals.powerappsportals.com/register-portal/> or call free on **0800 870 8800** (Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm).



# Plans announced for Bo'ness development closure due to structural concerns

**We have made the difficult decision to close off one of our developments, following the identification of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), a material known to pose long-term structural risks.**

Following extensive structural assessments, it has been determined that the level of remediation work required to address the RAAC-related issues at our Dean Court development in Bo'ness is not viable.

While the building remains safe to occupy in the short term, a carefully-managed relocation plan will ensure all tenants are supported throughout the transition, with the process expected to be completed by early 2026.

Our priority remains the wellbeing of our tenants. We will continue to monitor the building's condition to maintain a safe living environment throughout the transition period while providing dedicated support to help tenants secure suitable alternative accommodation.

Debbie Collins, Chief Executive at Bield, said: "This has been an incredibly difficult decision for us, as Dean Court was our first service and has been a thriving community for over 50 years, holding deep significance for Bield. However, the long-term safety and security of our tenants must always come first and, after careful consideration, we firmly believe this is the right course of action to ensure their long-term wellbeing.

"We fully appreciate that this will be unsettling news, and we are committed to working closely with every tenant to provide tailored support and a smooth transition into alternative housing."

Our dedicated Housing Team have met with each tenant individually to discuss their needs, preferences and options for alternative housing. Every tenant will receive help with the costs of moving and Bield will also offer practical assistance.

We recognise the impact this will have not only on tenants, but also their families and the local community, and are committed to working in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition for everyone affected. Regular updates and information sessions will ensure that tenants, their families, and the wider community remain informed throughout the process.

Debbie added: "We understand the challenges this presents, but our team is dedicated to ensuring every tenant has the support they need during this transition. We will continue to communicate openly and provide updates as we move forward."

**For more information, tenants and their families are encouraged to contact their Development Manager who will ensure a member of the Housing Team gets in touch.**





# Reassurance on RAAC assessments across our properties

**Following the decision to close Dean Court due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), we want to reassure all our tenants that we have carried out a full assessment of our properties.**

We have reviewed all buildings constructed between 1950 and 1996, the period when RAAC was commonly used. We are pleased to confirm that no other developments have

been found to contain RAAC.

Your safety and peace of mind remain our top priority. While no further issues have been identified, we will continue to monitor and review this closely as part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining safe, high-quality homes.

If you have any concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

## Tenant Participation update

**Spring has arrived and the Engagement team have spotted quite a few daffodils, snow drops and crocuses at the developments on our recent visits!**

We also noticed discussions for new bathrooms at St Andrews Court, Uphall and new windows at West Port, Linlithgow which is really good to see. Our team is tasked with engaging with tenants who we know want to get involved and seek new participants via our surveys and visits. The number of tenants wanting to get involved has been really encouraging and we wanted to express our gratitude to you.

You can choose the level of your involvement – this includes being on the Tenant Insight Network to receive pulse surveys and Bield updates, being part of one of our tenant groups or being an active and inclusive tenant in your own development to help with social activities.

There are a lot of options available for you if you want to get involved. For more information, please contact the team via email at **[engage@bield.co.uk](mailto:engage@bield.co.uk)** or speak to your Development Manager.

We're looking forward to working with those of you who are keen to make a difference!



**Alan Morris**  
Tenant Engagement and  
Participation Lead

# Small Grants Fund

We had a huge number of entries to our winter Small Grants Fund with 28 applicants. This round was scored by tenants and staff members whose developments had previously won. £1000 was awarded to five developments, each receiving £200. The items purchased ranged from a day trip to a music system.

While not everyone was successful in receiving a grant this time, we're exploring other ways to offer support. This includes adding requests to our Community Benefit list and working with local charities to grow our funding or provide help in other ways.

We're also delighted that Bell Group has reached out again to offer assistance with some of the projects on our list. As a team,



we're always looking for ways to expand our fund so that more people can benefit in the future.

We look forward to opening the fund for another two rounds in the next year. If you would like to submit an application, please feel free to speak to your Development Manager.

## Driving innovation in alarm monitoring: Bield joins the Shared ARC in Scotland



**Bield Response 24 (BR24), Bield's Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC), is making an important transition to the Shared ARC in Scotland platform.**

The Shared ARC is a national platform that brings together multiple housing providers and local authorities, ensuring a more resilient and streamlined telecare service for tenants across Scotland.

Over the next few months, we'll be moving our monitoring services to this new system, designed to enhance the reliability and efficiency of our telecare support.

This change brings several benefits, including improved resilience, access to the latest digital telecare technology, and a more streamlined

service that ensures we can continue providing high-quality support to tenants when they need it most.

We'll keep you updated as we progress, but rest assured, there will be no disruption to your service during this transition. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to get in touch by calling **0141 950 1025** or emailing **br24@bield.co.uk**

L-R: Tracey Howatt, Bield's Director of Customer Experience, Victoria Wilson, Bield's Commercial & Partnership Officer, Gary Baillie, Bield's Head of BR24 & Assistive Technology Development, Debbie Collins, Bield's CEO







# Responding to Domestic Abuse: Our commitment to support

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, at any stage of life. While it's often hidden, it's more common than many people realise. In Scotland, thousands of cases are reported every year, affecting people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances. Domestic abuse is not just physical violence - it can also be emotional, financial, or psychological control that makes someone feel unsafe in their own home.

At Bield, we are committed to ensuring that our tenants feel safe and supported. That's why we have signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Make a Stand pledge, demonstrating our commitment to taking action to support tenants who are experiencing domestic abuse.

We have recently adopted a 'Responding to Domestic Abuse' policy that outlines how we respond to domestic abuse within our communities. Our approach is survivor-focused, meaning that we listen to and prioritise the needs of those experiencing abuse.

Tracey Howatt, Director of Customer Experience, said: "This policy formalises a lot of our existing practice and emphasises our commitment to responding positively to domestic abuse."

Zhan McIntyre, Head of Policy and Customer Standards, added: "Domestic abuse is not acceptable. This policy helps us demonstrate to our tenants and applicants that we will respond in a sympathetic way, helping to keep people safe."

## Support and Advice

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, or are worried about someone else, there is support available:

- Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline: **0800 027 1234** (24/7, free, confidential)
- Women's Aid Scotland: [www.womensaid.scot](http://www.womensaid.scot)
- Men's Advice Line: **0808 801 0327** (for male survivors)
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: **0808 2000 247**

You are not alone, and support is always available. If you need to speak to someone, please do not hesitate to contact us in confidence. Our staff are here to listen and help signpost you to the right support services.

Together, we can stand against domestic abuse and help create a safer community for everyone.

# Strategy update

Since our last newsletter, we have continued to deliver our Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 'Setting the Pace...Our People, Our Homes, Our Communities'. This strategy is our vision for how we will continue to improve customer experience, invest in our homes and further achieve our purpose:

***"To make it possible for more people to live their best lives, at home, surrounded by a supportive community."***

Below are some highlights from the past few months, which we wanted to share with you:



## Independent Living Approach

At Bield, our Independent Living Approach ensures growing older doesn't mean losing your independence. While we continue to offer security, community and peace of mind, we're going further - placing your choices and wellbeing at the heart of what we do. Independent living means having the right support in place to help you live life on your own terms. We've recently run information sessions with staff and are updating some staffing structures to reflect this approach. Tenants will be involved throughout, as we work together to help everyone live well and thrive in later life.

## Bield's Design Principles for New Build and Remodelling

Since our last newsletter, the consultation on Bield's Design Principles for New Build and Remodelling has been completed. We've had great feedback and comments from staff internally and tenants in the Partnership Forum - thank you to everyone who contributed. To recap, these principles provide guidance and direction for new build and retrofit projects, ensuring they are designed to meet the needs and expectations of tenants now and in the future. The next step for staff is to draft our detailed Design Guide - a more technical document which will use the Design Principles to outline more detailed, specific guidance for architects and external contractors on how Bield want new build and retrofit projects to be designed.



Our new Charleston development in Dundee



# Communications Strategy

We have also developed a **Communications Strategy for Bield**, which aims to ensure Bield are communicating consistently and effectively, internally and externally, with tenants, the wider sector and the public. Internally, the strategy will better connect employees across Bield to enhance the workplace experience and services offered.

The strategy will make it easier for you to get the information you need about our services, helping you make the best choices for your home and community. It will also help us raise awareness of the important work we do to support older people to live independently in Scotland.

If you have any questions about our Strategy or any of the projects mentioned in this article, please get in touch with our Business Planning Team by emailing **BPT@bield.co.uk**



## Tenant Insight Network

**The Tenant Insight Network is a digital community of 249 Bield tenants. The first communication from the Tenant Insight Network was issued in February as a pulse survey to better understand tenants' preferences for participation.**

The results revealed strong tenant interest in engagement programmes, with 88% of respondents expressing a desire to participate. Most tenants prefer a multichannel approach, engaging through both the Tenant Insight Network and other tenant engagement programmes. This has

helped us identify tenants interested in our engagement initiatives which will, in turn, increase participation across several engagement groups.

Monthly updates were preferred by 64% of respondents, and 69% favour receiving documents directly via email. Additionally, 83% are enthusiastic about attending in-person events. These insights highlight

the importance of regular communication, direct email updates, and face-to-face interactions in fostering tenant involvement and shaping services.

If you would like to learn more or join the Tenant Insight Network, please contact our Policy & Customer Standards team by emailing **engage@bield.co.uk**

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# Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results 24/25

Bield recently conducted a comprehensive survey to gather valuable tenant feedback on key areas including the quality of your homes, our repairs and maintenance service and how well we listen to your views.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to the 1,846 tenants who participated - representing around 40% of our tenant base. By actively listening to tenants, we seek to continuously improve our services and address any issues promptly, ensuring the best possible living experience for all tenants. The results provide valuable insights into tenant

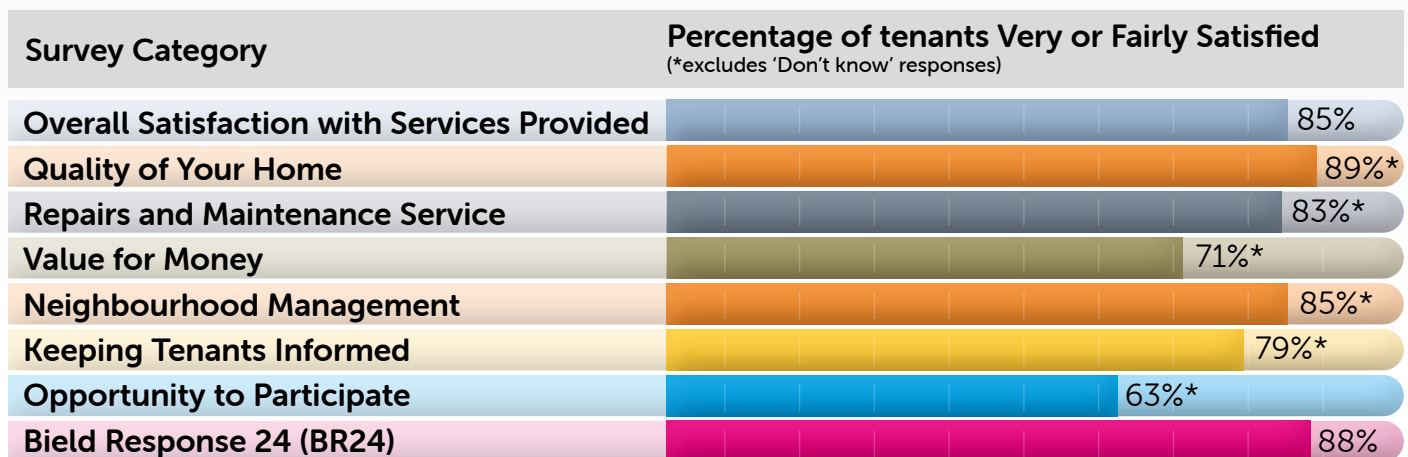


**1,846**  
tenants participated

experiences and expectations, helping us maintain high standards of service delivery.

We encourage all tenants to review the survey results and share any additional feedback or suggestions with us at [engage@bield.co.uk](mailto:engage@bield.co.uk)

Your input is invaluable in helping us create a better living environment for everyone. We are pleased to share some of the key results below:





## What we're doing well

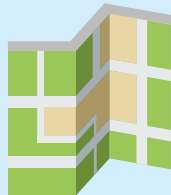
**Overall Satisfaction** – 85% of tenants are satisfied with the services we provide, reflecting positively on the work we're doing to support our tenants.



**Quality of Your Home** – 89% of tenants are satisfied with the quality of their home, reflecting our commitment to maintaining high housing standards.



**Neighbourhood Management** – 85% of tenants feel positively about how their neighbourhood is managed, highlighting the value of maintaining safe and welcoming communities.



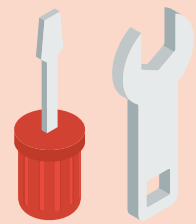
**Bield Response 24** – 88% of tenants are satisfied with our response service BR24, reinforcing the importance of reliable support.



## Areas for Improvement

### Repairs and Maintenance

– While 83% of tenants are satisfied with our repairs service, we recognise the need to improve response times and communication to enhance your experience.

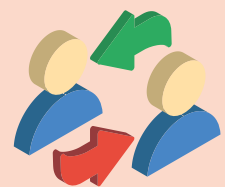


**Value for Money** – 71% of tenants feel their rent provides good value for money. We aim to improve this by delivering cost-effective services without compromising quality.



### Opportunity to Participate

– 63% of tenants feel they have opportunities to engage and participate. We are working to create more opportunities for tenants to get involved and share their views while actively promoting the tenant engagement and participation programme.



## Next Steps

We're committed to acting on the feedback you've provided. Our key focus areas moving forward will include:

- Improving communication and response times around repairs and maintenance.
- Promoting more opportunities for tenant engagement and participation.

- Continuing to invest in your homes and neighbourhoods to maintain high standards.
- Strengthening how we listen to and respond to tenant feedback to ensure Bield makes meaningful improvements.

*Thank you once again for your valuable input. Your feedback helps us make meaningful changes and improve the services we provide.*

For the full survey results and details of our action plan, please visit our website:  
**[www.bield.co.uk/tenant-satisfaction](http://www.bield.co.uk/tenant-satisfaction)**

# Benefit and pension rates 2025/26

You may be aware that benefit entitlements increased on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Details of the new rates can be found on the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) website at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2025-to-2026/benefit-and-pension-rates-2025-to-2026](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2025-to-2026/benefit-and-pension-rates-2025-to-2026)

Tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit need to report their rent increases to their local Housing Benefit/Council office as soon as possible. If your Housing Benefit is paid directly to Bield, we will inform them of the increase.

If you're unsure how your Housing Benefit is paid, we recommend that you contact your local Housing Benefit/Council.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 Universal Credit created a 'To Do' prompt for anyone claiming Housing Costs through Universal Credit. To confirm rent figures in your Universal Credit journal from 1st April, please follow the instructions opposite or refer to the Example Guidance image.

1. Log on to your Universal Credit account and Select **To Do** tab
2. Select **Confirm Your Housing Costs**
3. Input Housing Cost Figures: Please use your rent increase letter for up to date rent figures and use the Example Guidance image below as a reference.

**Please Note:** Heating/Energy Charges **SHOULD NOT** be included in Section 3: Eligible Service Charges. This is an ineligible service charge, which is not covered by Universal Credit. Section 3 is for **Staffing** and **Communal Energy Costs only**.

If you do not have an online account, please call Universal Credit to update your Housing Costs on **0800 328 5644**.

If you have any queries in relation to this, please contact our Income Advice Officers, Rebecca Summers or Scott Alexander, by calling **03000 132 162** or emailing [IncomeAdvice@bield.co.uk](mailto:IncomeAdvice@bield.co.uk)

## Example Guidance of tenant 'To Do'. **Please Note: Bield rent charges are Monthly**

1. Date of change: **01/04/25**

2. Rent: **Net Rent**

3. Eligible Service Charges: **Staffing + Communal Energy Costs**

Confirm your housing costs

### Date of change

Did your housing costs change on 3 April 2023?

Check the letter from your landlord for the date of the change.

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Continue

[Back](#)

Confirm your housing costs

### Changes to your rent

You previously told us the total rent for your property is £150.00 per week

Your landlord should have written recently with details of changes to rent or eligible service charges.

Are you still charged weekly for your rent?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

How much is your new rent per week?  
Do not include any service charges or rent arrears.

£

Continue

[Back](#)

Confirm your housing costs

### Changes to your charges

You previously told us the total charges for your property are ££

Your landlord should have written details of changes to rent or eligible charges.

Are you still charged weekly for service charges?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No



# Exciting news:

## More customers than ever are using My Bield to apply for housing!

We are delighted to share the fantastic progress of our latest initiative - enabling housing applications through our customer portal, My Bield. Since launching this new service in February, we've seen a dramatic increase in sign-ups, with more and more customers taking advantage of the convenience and accessibility My Bield offers.

This digital service has transformed the way you can apply for housing, making the process smoother and more efficient than ever before. Here's why so many customers are choosing to apply via My Bield:

- **Submit Applications Anytime, Anywhere**

Whether you're a current tenant looking for a new property or a first-time applicant, you can now complete and submit your housing application entirely online - at a time and place that suits you

- **Track Your Application Status**

No more wondering where your application stands. My Bield provides real-time updates, keeping you informed every step of the way

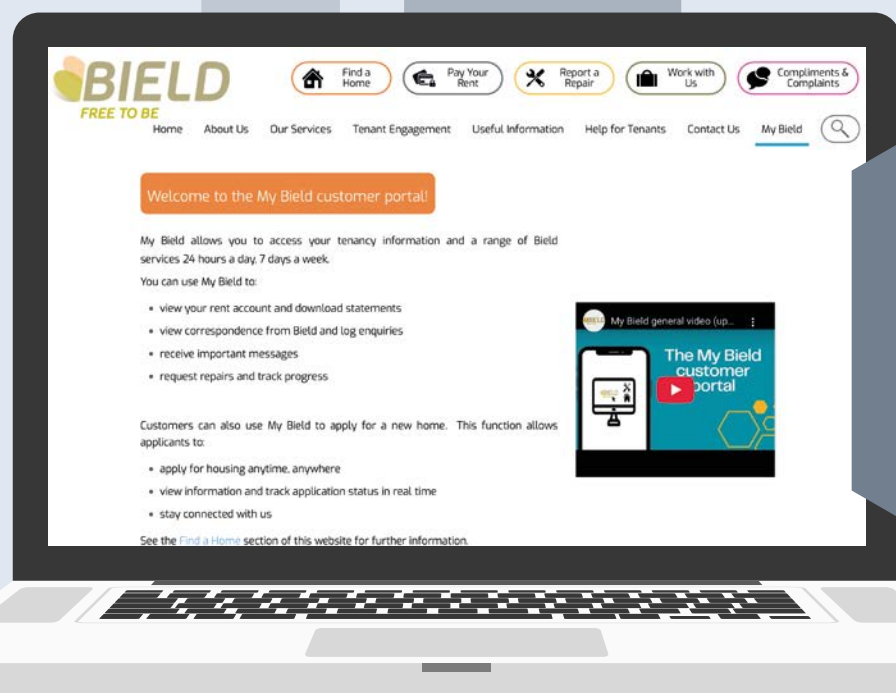
- **Stay Connected**

Need to update your application or ask a question? The portal makes it simple to contact us and provide additional details whenever needed

We are thrilled to see so many customers embracing this new way to apply for housing. If you haven't signed up for My Bield yet, now is the perfect time to do so!

As a tenant, there are added benefits to signing up for My Bield. You can:

- view your rent account and download statements at any time
- view correspondence from Bield and submit enquiries
- request non-emergency repairs and track progress



Log in or register today and experience the benefits for yourself. Visit [www.bield.co.uk/my-bield](http://www.bield.co.uk/my-bield) to get started.

Thank you for being part of this exciting journey with us - we look forward to supporting you every step of the way!

# Celebrating the success of our Customer Contact Centre

Since launching our Customer Contact Centre on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024, we have been thrilled with the incredible impact it has had on our service delivery. This dedicated team has worked tirelessly to support our customers, ensuring they receive the assistance they need efficiently and effectively.

Here's what we've achieved together so far:



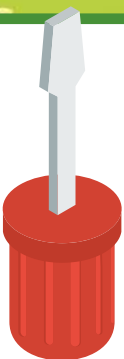
## Over 20,000 Calls Handled

Our team has been on hand to provide information, guidance, and support to thousands of customers, ensuring their queries are resolved as quickly as possible



## Over 4,000 Housing Applications Processed

With the help of some of our colleagues in the early days, our team successfully completed a full re-registration of our waiting list and has since processed thousands of housing applications, helping people find the right home for them



## 21,000+ Repair Work Orders Raised

Ensuring our tenants' homes remain safe and well-maintained is a top priority. Our team has efficiently logged and processed over 21,000 repair requests, working closely with contractors to deliver the necessary works

The success of the Customer Contact Centre is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team and the trust our customers place in us. We are committed to continuing to improve our services and making it even easier for you to get the support you need.

# Customer Satisfaction Survey Results – Customer Contact Centre



We've surveyed 624 people who have called into our Customer Contact Centre since May 2024 regarding customer satisfaction. We've had 171 responses so far - a response rate of just over 27%.

Key highlights from the surveys include:



**What was your first impression of the professionalism of the member of staff who assisted with your enquiry?**

Excellent: **92** | Good: **46** | Average: **17** | Poor: **16**



**Was the staff member equipped with the right knowledge to assist you?**

Yes: **140** | No: **31**



**Were you satisfied that your enquiry was dealt with during your call?**

Strongly agree: **75** | Agree: **59** | Disagree: **22** | Strongly disagree: **15**



**Have you had to re-contact us regarding this matter?**

Yes: **27** | No: **144**



**Overall, how satisfied were you with the service you received?**

5 stars: **94** | 4 stars: **30** | 3 stars: **16** | 2 stars: **9** | 1 star: **22**

**Average rating:**  **3.96 stars**



# What is the meals service at Bield?

Enabling independence through nutrition - helping you stay healthy at home

**At Bield, we know and understand the important part that food plays in our lives and the lives of our tenants, the benefits this can have on our health and wellbeing and the importance of being aware of how our food is produced and served.**

Eating well is one of the most important ways to maintain strength, independence and wellbeing as we grow older. Our meals service is designed to bring you freshly prepared, nutritionally balanced meals in our lovely dining rooms.

Each meal is crafted with care to support your health, boost your energy and make mealtimes something to look forward to. Whether

you're looking to stay active, manage a health condition, or simply enjoy the convenience of delicious, wholesome food, we're here to help.

Meal choices are developed through regular tenant meetings and meals consultations, taking into account local and personal preferences. We serve a variety – from traditional home comforts to the more exotic and modern – all with a focus on quality ingredients sourced from a blend of national Scottish suppliers and local producers. If you have access to the service, why not give it a try and see for yourself the many benefits that come with it? When you eat well, you live well.

## Why not try this minestrone soup which has been created using the recipes we use within our meals service?

### Ingredients

- A splash of rapeseed or sunflower oil to sweat the vegetables
- 1 medium onion
- 2 carrots
- 2 celery sticks
- 2 crushed garlic cloves
- 100g tomato puree
- 1 tin of cannellini beans (drained)
- 1 tin of chopped tomatoes (400g)
- 50g short-cut macaroni or spaghetti
- 2 x chicken, ham or vegetable stock cubes (whichever is preferred) made up as per pack instructions - usually 450ml of water per stock cube but can vary from brand to brand

### Method

1) Dice, wash and dry the celery and carrots, dice the onion, and crush the garlic, add all the vegetables to the bottom of a heavy-bottomed pan along with the cooking oil, cover with a lid and allow to sweat on a low heat for 10-20

minutes to release the flavour from the vegetables.

2) Add in the tomato puree once the vegetables have cooked out and softened, let the tomato puree cook out for a few minutes before adding the chopped tomatoes.

2) Make up the stock according to the manufacturer's instructions, add to the pot and bring to a simmer. You are looking for this to be around 900mls.

4) Cook out for 20-30 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Top up with water as necessary.

5) Add the macaroni/spaghetti and cook until the pasta is tender, making sure to stir frequently to stop the pasta clumping or getting caught on the bottom of the pan. Finish with the drained beans and cook out for a few minutes to warm the beans before serving.



# Tenant perspectives on rent setting for 2025/26

Each year, as part of our commitment to inclusivity and openness in our rent setting process, we consult with tenants about rents for the following year.

This year, we reached out to tenants through online surveys, sharing these directly through email where we hold a valid email address, our website and social media channels. We

also included a paper survey with our winter newsletter. Unfortunately, we had a few problems with the delivery of these, and we are sorry that not everyone got a copy of the paper survey.

**We received 415 responses in total which is around a 9% return rate.**

## Rent setting views

We asked which rent increase option you would be most comfortable with. These were based on maintaining existing services (4.5%) or accelerating our investment programme (5%).



**69%**

in favour of the 4.5% increase



**25%**

in favour of the 5% increase



**5%**

did not express a preference

69% were in favour of the 4.5% increase while 25% were in favour of the 5% increase, Around 5% did not express a preference.

## Tackling the cost of living crisis

Almost two-thirds of respondents (59%) said they had to strategically cut costs and 9% were struggling to make ends meet. We remain committed to reviewing and reducing costs to maintain affordable rents. Additionally, we will continue offering benefit health checks to ensure tenants receive all the support they may be entitled to.

## Tenant priorities

The consultation also gave tenants the opportunity to highlight the areas we should be prioritising. New kitchens, upgrades to communal areas and improved security features were most important, followed by improvements to heating systems and new bathrooms. This understanding will help to guide our future service enhancements.

We want to sincerely thank each tenant who participated in this consultation. Your time and input were invaluable, helping us to build a stronger, more inclusive, and dynamic community.

For more information about the results of our 2025/26 rent consultation, see page 18 or visit our website: [www.bield.co.uk/rent-setting-consultation-2025-26](http://www.bield.co.uk/rent-setting-consultation-2025-26)





# Your Rent Update: Listening, balancing and supporting you

Every year, our Board carefully reviews a range of factors before making decisions about rent levels. These include our draft budgets, the rising costs of running services, affordability, and - most importantly - what you tell us matters most.

We know this isn't an easy topic, and we always aim to strike the right balance: keeping your rent as affordable as possible while ensuring we can continue to look after your homes and provide the services you rely on. This year,

we invited you to share your views, and we're grateful to the 415 tenants who took the time to respond. Your feedback was presented to the Board and played a valuable part in their discussions.

By now, all tenants should have received a letter outlining the new rent and service charges, which came into effect on 1st April 2024. Thank you again to everyone who shared their thoughts - we really appreciate your input.

## New rent charge from 1st April 2024

The Board took all factors into account, and decided we needed to increase rents by 4.5% from 1st April 2025. Changes will also apply to the following service charges:

### Local staff costs: + 10%

The cost of providing on-site staff at our developments will increase by 10% this year. This rise is largely due to an increase in employer National Insurance contributions, which has had a significant impact on our staffing costs.

We remain committed to ensuring your developments are well supported by local staff, and this increase helps us continue delivering the day-to-day support and services you rely on.

### Meals Service (where applicable): +8%

For those contracted to our meals service, there is an 8% increase.

### Domestic energy charge (where applicable): 0%

If your rent includes heating and hot water, there will be no increase for this charge.

### Communal energy charge (where applicable): 0%

There will be no increase for this charge.



If you get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, please remember to:

- Tell your local authority about changes to your rent and service charges.
- Inform the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) about changes in your housing costs for Universal Credit.

If you're not receiving Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit, it is a good idea to check if you are eligible.

If you're struggling to pay your rent or make ends meet, our staff can help connect you with local welfare advice agencies. Our Income Advice Officers can also help with benefit health checks. Get in touch at: **[incomeadvice@bield.co.uk](mailto:incomeadvice@bield.co.uk)**

If you require advice or support with energy bills, please contact Changeworks. Bield tenants can access the Changeworks online advice library at: **<https://changeworksinfo.org/bieldhousingandcare>** or you can call them on **0800 870 8800** Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm.

For more information about the tenant responses received in our latest rent consultation, see page 17.



# Smart sensors to support independent living



**A new project is bringing cutting-edge technology to Langvout Court, one of our retirement housing developments in Biggar, helping older tenants live more safely and independently.**

With support from Bield and the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI), Glasgow-based technology company Archangel secured funding to install special sensors in 25 tenants' homes. These discreet devices will monitor things like temperature, humidity and movement - helping to ensure properties stay in good condition and that tenants are safe and well.

The sensors will alert staff if there are any unusual changes, such as a drop in temperature that could make a home too cold or a lack of movement that might indicate someone needs help. This means potential issues can be picked up early, offering extra peace of mind for both tenants and their families.

Gavin Wright, Bield's Head of Property Management, said: "This is an exciting

opportunity to explore how technology can help make our homes smarter, safer and better connected for our tenants."

Tom Morton, CEO and founder of Archangel, explained: "Data related to social housing, health, care and wellbeing is currently fragmented across multiple vendor systems... This disjointed approach creates inefficiencies and...also weakens efforts to support integrated healthy, sustainable homes initiatives.

"This project showcases a smarter more cost-efficient approach to resolve these challenges using social housing data collection and... offers a single, holistic view of individuals and their home environments, allowing for collective decision-making and timely interventions."

Janette Hughes, Director of Planning and Performance at DHI, agreed: "This is ultimately about making housing safer and more responsive to personal circumstances for communities and allowing people to live happier, longer and more secure lives in their own properties."



Bield's Head of Property Management, Gavin Wright, is pictured discussing the sensors with one of the Langvout Court tenants





# Development news and events



Our Foley Court Retirement Housing development in Rothesay were delighted to welcome Lynn and Anne from Eyeglass Opticians, who recently visited to provide on-site eye tests for tenants. The event was very well attended, and a number of tenants took the opportunity to treat themselves to some stylish new glasses!

This kind of service is especially valuable for those who find it difficult to travel, making it easier to stay on top of eye health without leaving home. Thank you to Lynn, Anne, and everyone who came along and made the day such a success.



In December, tenants, staff, families and friends gathered for a special event to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Clyde Court Retirement Housing with Meals development in Arbroath. The celebration was made even more meaningful by the attendance of the original Manager and Deputy, alongside the current team. Here's to many more years of fostering community and care at Clyde Court!



There was a busy and exciting day at our St Andrews Court Retirement Housing development in Uphall in February! The day kicked off with a Breakfast Club, where tenants enjoyed a warm cuppa, a tasty bite, and plenty of good conversation.

Then, Clothing Direct popped in to showcase some fabulous new items, giving everyone a chance to browse and treat themselves to something stylish. It's always great to see our community coming together, sharing laughs, and making the most of these fantastic opportunities! A big thank you to everyone who joined in.



Tenants and staff at our Craigengar Park Retirement Housing development in Livingston are pictured at a recent coffee morning in March as well as enjoying an afternoon tea in February.



Anne, a very talented tenant at our Foley Court Retirement Housing development in Rothesay recently showcased her musical gifts, playing piano for tenants and their loved ones at a tea and coffee afternoon. A huge thank you to Anne for sharing her gift with us – we can't wait for the next performance!





# Development news and events

In February, our Oakbank Retirement Housing development in Alexandria was filled with smiles and laughter as pupils from nearby Christie Park Primary School paid a special visit to our tenants. The afternoon was spent playing games, sharing stories and enjoying great conversations across the generations.

The visit was a wonderful way to build connections between young and old, and it was clear that both the pupils and tenants got a lot of joy from the experience. We hope to welcome the children back again soon for more fun and friendship!



In January, we said a heartfelt goodbye to Carole, our much-loved Retirement Housing Assistant at Glenview Court, one of our Retirement Housing developments in Motherwell. Carole retired after an incredible 20 years of dedicated service with Bield.

Tenants and staff came together in the lounge to celebrate Carole's remarkable contribution; sharing stories, laughter and well-wishes over tea and cake. Carole's warmth, kindness and commitment over the years have left a lasting impression, and she will be greatly missed by everyone.

We wish her all the very best for a happy and relaxing retirement!



At an inspiring 93 years young, Archie recently completed a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle on 28<sup>th</sup> February - a project he began back in October. With a little help and lots of encouragement from his friends at our Langvout Court Retirement Housing in Biggar, the final piece was proudly placed.

The puzzle holds special meaning for Archie, who moved to Langvout from his previous Bield home in Crail. Recognising its importance, his family had the finished jigsaw beautifully framed, and it now hangs proudly in the foyer for everyone to enjoy.

To mark the occasion, a special celebration was held on 10<sup>th</sup> March. Archie shared a few heartfelt words, thanking everyone who had supported him along the way. A wonderful example of friendship, perseverance and the joy of achieving something meaningful at any age!



Staff and tenants at our Bonnet Hill Gardens Retirement Housing+ development in Dundee have been coming together during social time to create a brand-new Wellbeing Board - a space dedicated to positivity, recognition and helpful information for everyone at the development.

Launched in March, the board is designed to uplift and inspire. It features healthy recipes, details of local health groups, and positive affirmations to brighten your day. One of the highlights is the Staff Shout-Out section - a friendly and informal way to recognise and celebrate the hard work and contributions of our amazing team.

It's already been a great talking point and a lovely addition to the communal space. Thanks to everyone who's been involved so far!



The sweet smell of success - and freshly baked goods - has been drifting through Castlebrae Glebe, one of our Retirement Housing+ developments in Edinburgh, thanks to a series of fun and friendly baking sessions enjoyed by tenants. The sessions have not only brought out some brilliant baking talent but have also offered a lovely opportunity for tenants to come together and enjoy each other's company.



# Development news and events



Some of the wonderful ladies from our Kintail Gardens Retirement Housing+ development in Darnley enjoyed a fantastic lunch at the Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice Café in Bellahouston Park in March!

Great food, even better company, and plenty of smiles all around. A big thank you to everyone who made this outing special!



Things got a little wild – and wonderfully wacky – at Castlebrae Glebe, one of our Retirement Housing+ developments in Edinburgh recently as tenants and staff took part in Crazy Hair Day! A big thank you to everyone who took part and made the event such a memorable one!

Some local musicians recently attended at our Foley Court Retirement Housing development in Rothesay to play for our tenants. A wonderful time was had by all!



In March, Castlebrae Glebe, one of our Retirement Housing+ developments in Edinburgh, created a special display to celebrate the women who have shaped our communities and history as part of International Women's Day. The board featured photos of each of our female service users alongside inspiring women, past and present, who have made a lasting impact on the world.



Green-fingered tenant James from our Bridge Court Retirement Housing development in Alexandria has been putting his impressive gardening skills to good use, helping to brighten up the back garden for everyone to enjoy. With spring underway, he's now getting started on this year's planting – and we can't wait to see the results!



In February, tenants at our Foley Court Retirement Housing development in Rothesay welcomed Gerry from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, along with Sarah and Eilidh from Argyll and Bute Council's Sensory Impairment Team, for an engaging and informative session.

The visit provided valuable insights into fire safety and the range of support available for those living with sensory impairments. Tenants found the session extremely helpful, learning more about the services on offer and what help is out there should they ever need it.

A big thank you to Gerry, Sarah, and Eilidh for taking the time to share their knowledge and support!



Castlebrae Glebe, one of our Retirement Housing+ developments in Edinburgh, created its very own wishing well. The 12 tenants put it to good use, wishing for day trips and other things they've dreamed of doing for some time. Some of the wishes recently ticked off the list include visits to Ibrox Stadium and Dynamic Earth.



# Development news and events

## Christmas

Take a look at some joyful moments from across our developments this Christmas – we've included a selection of photos capturing the celebrations, decorations and festive cheer!

Almondell Court



Bridge Court



Oakbank



Castlebrae Glebe



Craigengar Park



Clyde Court



Coxton Gardens



Craigengar Park



Foley Court



Strathmartine Court



A huge thank you to Ann, one of the incredible tenants at our Strathmartine Court Retirement Housing development in Dundee, for organising a fantastic charity drive in support of Tay FM's Mission Christmas!

Thanks to Ann's efforts, our tenants generously donated toys and clothes to ensure that every child in the local area woke up to a gift on Christmas Day. The outpouring of kindness was incredible and they ended up with a fantastic collection of donations!



Generous tenants from our Crosshill Gardens Retirement Housing development in Port Glasgow collected and donated over 50 selection boxes to support local charity, Children in Poverty in Inverclyde. Well done to everyone involved!





# Development news and events

## Burns Night

Tenants at our Clyde Court Retirement Housing with Meals development in Arbroath celebrated Burns Night in January with a traditional three course meal.



At our Craigengar Park Retirement Housing development in Livingston, tenants and staff enjoyed a Burns lunch complete with the Address to a Haggis!



Tenants at our Campsie Gardens Retirement Housing with Meals development in Cumbernauld also marked Burns Night in true Scottish style – with lots of laughter and a wee bit of haggis and Irn Bru to celebrate the Bard!

## Valentine's Day

Tenants at our Clyde Court Retirement Housing with Meals development in Arbroath are pictured enjoying some delicious Valentine's-themed desserts!



There were more Valentine's themed desserts on the menu at our Ashgrove Court Retirement Housing with Meals development in Blairgowrie – they went down a treat!



Tenants at Coxton Gardens, one of our Retirement Housing+ developments in Garthamloch, enjoyed a Valentine's Day filled with relaxing facials, soothing massages and manicures from the local college's trainee beauty consultants. The pampering was followed by prosecco, chocolate strawberries, sweet treats, sandwiches and cupcakes!





# Development news and events

## Lunar New Year

## St Patrick's Day



Tenants at our Langvout Court Retirement Housing development in Biggar had a fun afternoon celebrating Lunar New Year. All the food was very much appreciated and the special Chinese wine went down a treat!



Tenants at our Langvout Court Retirement Housing development in Biggar celebrated St Patrick's Day and all things Irish in March. The usual sherry was swapped for Baileys, which washed down the Irish Stew and Guinness cake. The crowd love a bit of fancy dress and Retirement Housing Manager Kirsty certainly didn't disappoint! Head Barman John also did a great job in charge of the drinks trolley!

## Birthday wishes

Derek turned 76 in February and his birthday celebrations lasted all month at our Langvout Court Retirement Housing development in Biggar! He is pictured enjoying his day in the lounge.



A special surprise 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party was held for George (known as Geordie) at our Holmes Gardens Very Sheltered development in Broxburn in March. Geordie's family and friends attended along with tenants and staff to help him celebrate in style.



Rita from our St Andrews Court Retirement Housing development in Uphall celebrated her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday back in February. Here's to many more happy and healthy years ahead, filled with laughter, friendship, and all the things that make life special!

# Engagement 25/26 at a Glance

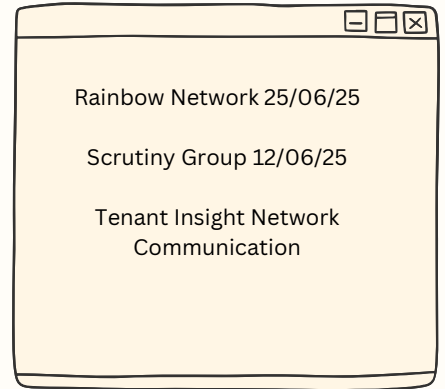
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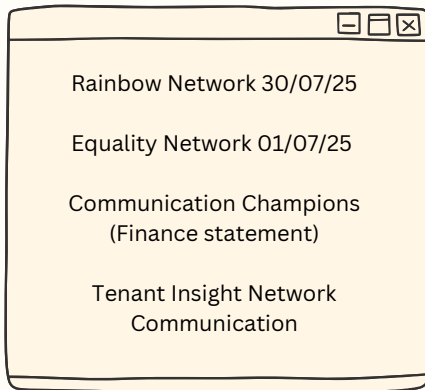
## MAY



## JUNE



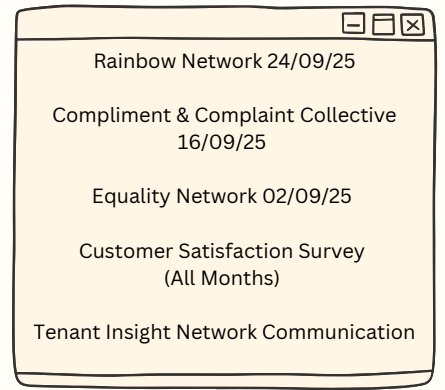
## JULY



## AUGUST



## SEPTEMBER



## OCTOBER



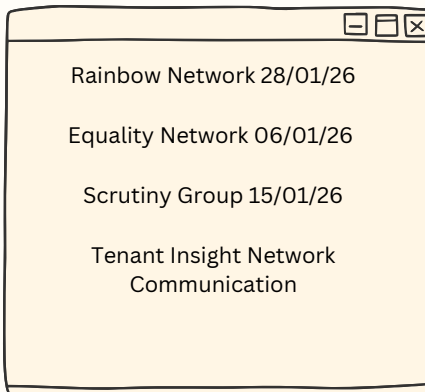
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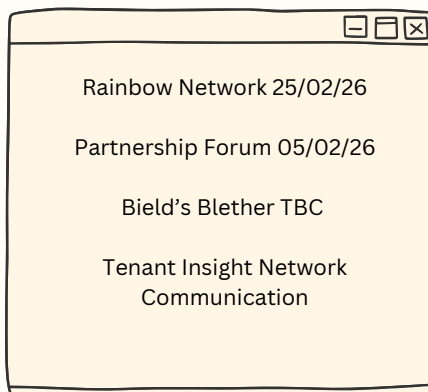
## DECEMBER



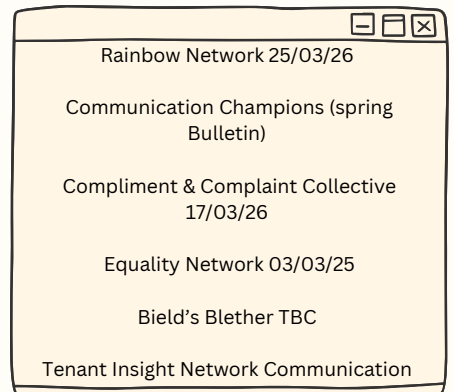
## JANUARY



## FEBRUARY



## MARCH





# SPRING & SUMMER

## Word Search



Z	E	A	A	P	R	I	L	U	J	T	I	U	G
X	A	I	M	E	W	H	Z	Z	B	T	S	V	B
Z	K	E	E	I	L	I	L	P	I	C	N	I	C
M	S	R	I	X	S	B	K	N	W	B	I	N	F
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APRIL  
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 HARMONY  
 BUDS  
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