



**Equality and Diversity Strategy
2017 - 2020**

Approved: 23 March 2017

Board of Management



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

BIELD HOUSING & CARE

Registered Office: 79 Hopetoun Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4QF, Scottish Charity No. SC006878

1. Introduction

The aim of the Equality and Diversity Strategy is to ensure that Bield promotes equality, tackles discrimination, values diversity and continues to provide the highest standards of customer care, making sure our services are tailored to meet the needs of our customers.

Everyone at Bield has a role to ensure we deliver excellent services to all our customers, and that everyone is treated fairly, and respected for who they are.

This strategy is to be used as a “living” document that can be adapted in line with the changing needs of our customers, employees and volunteers.

2. Organisational Culture

We have become more and more aware of how our success depends on creating an organisational culture that understands and responds to the different needs and expectations of all our employees, customers, our partners and everyone who uses our services. We want to embed equality and diversity into all aspects of our business and enjoy the rewards this brings.

We want Bield to be:

- A great place to work, with a clear sense of direction, shared by all, and ambitious to succeed on behalf of our customers;
- A place where people work as one team, where people believe in the values of the organisation and go the extra mile to deliver homes and places where our customers want to live;
- A place where colleagues are kept well informed, are listened to and whose views are respected; where colleagues are encouraged to learn and develop; where talent is nurtured; a place which has the courage to try things differently; where people are empowered to perform and individual performance is well managed; where success is celebrated and where we are proud to let others know about our success.
- Widely respected as an efficient, professional organisation, demonstrably fair and honest, which respects the individual and reflects the diverse communities we serve, with a strong, confident external image.

3. Our Corporate Vision and Mission

Bield’s Vision is a Scotland where people of all ages are respected, can make their own choices and are able to lead independent and fulfilling lives. This is achieved through our mission to improve the quality of life for older people by offering a diverse range of housing, care and other services.

We are committed to advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations between all people. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day-to-day working practices with all customers, colleagues and partners.

In doing so Bield will ensure that no person working with us, seeking employment with us, or any member, volunteer, or customer will receive less favourable treatment because of a

protected characteristic, or be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be justified.

In our approach Bield will help to break down the barriers that hold people back and provide opportunities to succeed. To this end we seek to create a culture and environment that allows every individual to flourish and respects, values and rewards their contribution, encouraging each to be 'Free to Be'.

4. Our Strategic Objectives

There are four main themes within the Corporate Business Strategy. However the core of our Strategy focuses around putting our customers at the heart of everything we do and the delivery of our four objectives and associated outcomes will ensure that we will always aim to put the customer first in our decision making.

We aim to "Put our Customers First".

Our goal is to increase our customer satisfaction levels across a number of key areas and to do this we will put our customer first in all the decisions we make and for that reason our Strategy starts with the customer.

We will:

- Provide good quality homes and cost effective services that recognise customers' individual needs, produce positive outcomes and represent value for money.
- Ensure that our customers drive our service improvements through their involvement and scrutiny.
- Increase our customer satisfaction levels across our customer base and sustain this at 90% or above.
- Continue to develop mechanisms to ensure that we know what our customers want and how we can meet their expectations.
- Develop services that provide good value and are financially competitive.

Our equality objectives are aligned to our corporate vision, mission and objectives. This is to make sure that equality and diversity is embedded into all aspects of our work and services. We will focus on delivering equality outcomes and evaluating the impact of what we do.

A copy of the Bield Business Strategy is available on request.

5. Values

Bield is committed to mainstreaming equalities and going beyond our legal responsibility not to unfairly discriminate as an employer or in the way services are delivered as set within the Equality Act 2010 and set out within our own values of:

Caring	We have a passion for supporting and caring for each other
Equality and Diversity	We advance equality and celebrate diversity
Honesty	We are open, fair, just and act with integrity
Dignity	We treat individuals with respect
Inclusion	We involve our people in what we do because their opinion

	matters
Ambition	We want to be the best at what we do and we want our people to realise their potential

6. Why Equality and Diversity Matters

At Bield we are firmly committed to the principles of Equality and Diversity. We believe that it really does matter for the following reasons.

Moral responsibilities

The principles of equality and diversity are about social justice and fairness and, as such, are the right thing to do.

Business responsibilities

These can be summarised as follows:

- Customer care - equality and diversity is all about customer care. It is about knowing customers and tailoring services to meet their diverse needs.
- Changing society - the world in which we live is changing and a forward-thinking organisation must recognise and respond to these changes to remain successful.
- Recruitment and retention - a workplace embracing equality and diversity becomes an employer of choice in competitive markets, attracting and retaining the best talent and reducing employee turnover.
- Competitive edge - diverse teams bring different talents and can recognise the diverse requirements of new customers and new markets.
- Reputation - inclusive work environments encourage loyalty, teamwork and maximise personal contributions.
- Risk management - we recognise there are certain risks associated with non-compliance. These risks include the effect on our reputation, financial cost implications and the impact on those involved.

Legislative and regulatory responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 has introduced new equality strands and replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act that simplifies the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand.

At present, Bield is subject to the general public sector 'equality duty' because we carry out public functions. This means that we must, as a minimum, have due regard to the following when we are carrying out our functions:

- The need to eliminate discrimination and harassment
- The need to advance equality of opportunity
- The need to promote good relations and positive attitudes

The Act explains that having due regard for promoting equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

As a provider of social housing, Bield works in a regulated sector. Our Regulator specifies the requirements on Housing Associations through the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Under these standards social landlords must perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.
- Demonstrate that they understand the differing needs of their tenants.

7. Equality and Diversity Objectives

Embedding equality and diversity across Bield is the key aim of this strategy. To achieve this we have set the following specific objectives.

1. Provide an excellent service that is responsive, non-discriminatory and seeks to deliver continuous improvement.

How?

- Providing accessible services, which do not discriminate.
- Understanding our communities so that we can improve and tailor our services more appropriately to meet customer requirements.
- Using customer profiling to drive service improvements.
- Involving a wide range of tenants and other customers in shaping services.
- Collecting, analysing and reviewing information to make sure we meet our standards.

2. Establish clear Diversity Standards for monitoring and Improving Services.

How?

- We will deliver our services fairly and honestly.
- We will ask residents about themselves and their households, to understand their needs, tailor our services and help us comply with equality law.
- If their situation changes, we will talk to residents about what other services would be of help to them.
- We will act responsibly with the information we hold, and comply with data protection law.

3. Establish effective leadership and governance arrangements to scrutinise performance on diversity and to make sure that this strategy is delivered.

How?

- By effectively communicating this strategy across Bield making sure that key actions are coordinated and delivered effectively.
- By ensuring that equality and diversity awareness is a key aspect of Board, Committee, Volunteer and Employee training.
- By implementing and reviewing our equality and diversity reporting structure.

4. Be an employer of choice by recruiting, supporting and retaining an effective, talented and motivated workforce that broadly reflects the communities we serve.

How?

- We will recruit from the widest talent pool to make sure we get the best candidate for a job.
- By recognising that everyone is different and brings different ideas - and that this can improve innovation and creativity.
- By treating everyone fairly, making sure that people can be themselves at work so they can be more productive and have less absence.
- By being aware of risk. Getting equality and diversity wrong can be costly in a challenging market. Organisations need to have a competitive edge: equality and diversity can give this added value.

5. Doing our bit to promote and encourage equality and diversity in all areas of our work.

How?

- By making sure that our values are reflected in our procurement processes and outcomes.
- By working with partners to learn and share good practice.
- By promoting the values of equality and diversity to the widest possible audience.
- By challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours from anyone involved with Bield.

8. Key Actions

We have an Equality and Diversity Action Plan. This focuses on the key actions that we want to take to continue developing the way in which we deliver services fairly and equitably to tenants, other customers and our employees.

This action plan is shaped around the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics, and applies to all parts of our organisation: from customer services to staff recruitment and our Board and governance arrangement. This will be supported by the continued development, monitoring and reporting of Key Performance Measures.

We recognise that developing and improving access to our services is a journey, which will be continued over time. Good progress is being made on key areas of work, such as collecting information about our customers who live in Bield properties and the employees who work for us, and how we use this information to tailor our services.

9. Responsibilities and Monitoring

Whilst everyone at Bield has a responsibility for delivering this Strategy, the key inputs are as follows.

- The Board of Management is responsible for making sure that this Strategy is delivered and will monitor performance annually. Regular progress against the action plan will be provided to the Board of Management.
- The Senior Management Team has overall responsibility for delivering the key actions that flow from this strategy and if required will be incorporated within departmental action plans.
- Managers and other employees are responsible for actively championing and promoting equality and diversity in all areas of their work, and for delivering the action plan.
- The Strategy will operate within a three-year time frame.
- Employees and Board members will be regularly updated through the Corporate Intranet and via the Bield Employee Newsletter.
- Customers will be updated through the Bield magazines and website and relevant forums.
- Successes will be communicated and celebrated.

10. Review

This strategy will be subject to a full review every three years. Bield will make any necessary alterations to this Strategy in advance of a three year review in the event of any significant legislative or statutory changes or practices which require to be incorporated.

Progress will be reported annually to the Board of Management and will be reviewed in line with business planning cycles.

Following the three-year period, a full review of the strategy will be undertaken.