

Decision to Withdraw from Care Home Provision



It is with considerable regret that Bield Housing & Care announces the plan to withdraw all of its care homes across Scotland. This involves twelve care homes in seven Health and Social Care Partnership areas. The care homes affected are; Craighall Road, Finavon Court, Gillie Court, Grants Bank, Haugh Street, Langvout Court, Lochar Lodge, Milfield Gardens, St Andrews Court, Thornton Gardens, West Port and Woodlands. This follows on from the closures of Carntyne Gardens and Munro Court that Bield had to instigate in 2015/16.

Although a very difficult decision, and a position of last resort, it is necessary to make these changes now, to ensure the future of Bield, both for its staff and for the thousands of people who use Bield's services. These changes are necessary to secure the long-term future of Bield, as the financial, operating and regulatory environments consistently shift and create new pressures and challenges for the organisation. These demands are not unique to Bield. These pressures are a sector-wide problem and have been well documented across the UK through the national media. It is important to tackle these challenges now if Bield is to continue to provide quality housing and associated services for older people in Scotland.

Reasons for Closure

As mentioned above, Bield's withdrawal from the care home market is a result of a number of factors. Bield care homes have been loss-making for a number of years, and despite many attempts to research and consider alternative models to address the challenges, we have not been able to find one that ensures the financial viability of the services, whilst maintaining our high standards for the delivery of care. Additionally Bield questioned its future position in providing care homes services, as the market Bield entered in to over 30 years ago is now very different to the market of today, in a variety of ways.

The contributory factors for withdrawal include:

- Our costs in some instances exceed some of our competitor's costs. This is mainly due to the changes in how care home services are provided now, compared to when Bield started to provide care home services almost 30 years ago. Required changes to the service have led to increased costs for Bield.
- At the time, Bield considered its care home model was a natural progression for many of its tenants, who required more support. However, many years later this is not a reality, and the linkage between a Bield housing development and a care home has greatly changed. We, therefore, try to seek referrals mostly from Local Authority/Health and Social Care partners.
- Bield Care home buildings, although still very much desired, were built as small domestic scale intimate care homes. Most of the Care Homes range from 10 - 14 places and offer no economies of scale when compared to most modern care homes, across Scotland, which average 60 places.
- The care homes were designed to promote independence, be more homely, more personal with residents having 'flat-lets' - our approach is based on an individual living within their own home. These flat-lets have approximately double the space standards required by care home regulation and have their own front door and small kitchen area. Again, unfortunately, the larger space is good for our service users but reduces our ability to increase our income from more potential care home service

users. To re-design many of these spaces would be extremely costly and beyond the affordability of Bield.

- As people live longer more referrals are being received for older people who have complex needs; more dementia-related illnesses and/or increased levels of medical support and our model of promoting independence is not appropriate or suitable.
- At the time of development, many years ago, Bield's approach was very much supported by Local Authorities, and this largely continues. Historically the funding of these care homes was viewed differently, and Local Authorities had the flexibility to increase our income because of the small and bespoke nature of these services. However, the pressures on public spend is well documented in the national news, and Local Authorities can no longer afford to provide us with additional income. Across all Local Authorities, a new national care home contract was agreed in 2006, which effectively sets a maximum flat rate, which Local Authorities pay all Scottish care home providers.
- The National Care Home Contract Rate which determines the cost of residential care placements. Despite being paid the rate, which includes a 2.8% uplift for 2017/18 to all care home providers, we continue to experience financial deficits and anticipate that this will continue in future years.
- Medical support needs are now higher and more complex. This means that to meet the needs of people currently being referred for our services we would need to increase staffing levels from what we currently have. The staff to service user ratios we established some years ago for small units, is also no longer fit for purpose and struggles to meet the needs of the people in the care homes. If we were to continue to increase staff levels this would increase the underfunded position for services already run at a financial loss.
- Regulation and staff training for care homes has changed beyond all recognition. While this is in no doubt a good measure, it also comes at a financial cost. With some of our buildings being built over 30 years ago, we can often be exposed to some unexpected and costly upgrades; particularly in around fire regulations.

In short, there is not one reason why Bield has chosen to withdraw from the care home market. There are many, as highlighted above. Bield have tried for many years to make these care homes financially and operationally viable over the longer term however, Bield have come to a conclusion, this is not possible and that perhaps older people who require more support to meet their needs may be best cared for by other care home providers.

As a result, Bield have taken a strategic decision to withdraw from the care home market. We do this as a position of last resort. Bield are very much aware of the serious impact these changes will make to people who live in the care homes, their families, and to Bield staff and these decisions are not made lightly.

Timescales for the Closure

We wanted to provide significant lead in times for Local Authorities/Health and Social Care Partnerships and service users and their families (double our contractually required notice period). In addition, we needed to consider our internal staffing resources to assist with the closure and therefore have a two-phased approach.

All services will continue in the short term while alternative arrangements are identified. We will support service users throughout this process. We cannot predict how long it will take and residents may take up alternative arrangements at different times. However, it is expected (unless there are any serious unexpected and or significant changes) that withdrawal will take place on the following dates:

Service withdrawal - 31 st March 2018	Service withdrawal - 31 st July 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Craighall Road• Finavon Court• Haugh Street• Lochar Lodge• St Andrews Court• Thornton Gardens• West Port• Woodlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gillie Court• Grants Bank• Langvout Court• Milfield Gardens

Impact on Service Users

We will support all residents, their families, and advocates to find alternative arrangements that best suit their requirements. We remain committed to maintaining the current level of care and support, in all services, to each and every one of our residents until alternative arrangements are identified.

The proposal to phase the closure dates is based on providing sufficient time for residents and their families to be supported to find alternative provision with their Local Authority/Health and Social Care Partnership and reflects our internal staff resources which will be available to help transition during the changes. We have negotiated with some Local Authorities to allow for a longer change timescale due to local shortages of care home places.

Communications & Support

We have put together a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that will help provide further information and answer some of the immediate queries.

Any additional queries can be raised with:

Service Manager	Care Home
Robert Keightley Service Manager - Care Services Email: r.keightley@bield.co.uk	Grants Bank Finavon Court Craighall Road

<p>Shirley Coll Service Manager - Care Services Direct Dial: 0141 270 7204 Email: s.coll@bield.co.uk</p>	<p>Gillie Court Haugh Street Woodlands Thornton Gardens</p>
<p>Andy Magee Service Manager - Care Services Direct Dial: 0141 270 7279 Email: a.magee@bield.co.uk</p>	<p>Langvout Court Milfield Gardens St Andrews Court Westport Lochar Lodge</p>
<p>Moira Goldie, Assistant Director of Care Services, Direct Dial: 0141 270 7210 Email:m.goldie@bield.co.uk</p>	<p>All care home services</p>

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Frequently asked questions

1. What are the factors that have increased the cost of running the Services?

The factors that have increased the cost of running the services include, but are not limited to:

- The cost to operate our care homes exceeds the income generated by their respective Local Authorities. Last year our combined deficit across all of the twelve care homes was £375,000.
- Our small care home services are, largely, 30 years old and are very person centred and as a consequence, we have insufficient volumes of service users to reduce our costs effectively.
- Our care homes are small, there are no economies of scale, and most new build care homes, across Scotland, are 60 bedded care homes for this very reason.
- The age and layout of our buildings have some disadvantages; they offer larger spaces and additional services to our service users (front doors, kitchens) but in some instances, these are not desirable or needed, and it reduces the number of service users we can accommodate. Physical changes to our buildings would be significant and unaffordable to Bield.
- The dependency levels of the service user being admitted have changed, and they require more medical support and/or they have high dementia needs. These changes require a different staffing structure which Bield are unable to sustain financially.
- Other costs have slowly risen over the years and have not been mirrored by funding from Local Authorities. Local Authorities previously had the discretion to increase some bespoke services, but this has been withdrawn since the introduction of the national care home contract, in 2006, which sets a national rate for a care home place. Bield can no longer keep operating with severe deficits in funding. To do so would jeopardise the stability of the entire organisation.
- The volume and cost of regulation has significantly increased, and because we have some older buildings, the costs can be unexpected and costly.

2. Who was involved in the decision to close both services?

Bield 's Senior Management Team and the Board of Management made the final decision to close the services. Every available option was considered before this very difficult decision was taken.

3. What involvement have Local Authorities / Health and Social Care Partnerships had in the decision?

Local Authorities are the principal purchaser of services for our care home services. They have been party to ongoing discussions and are very understanding of our position and decision. All Local Authorities have indicated that they are disappointed by our decision but equally recognise that they are not in a position to increase our income. Additionally, they have indicated that they value our services but respect our strategic decision to withdraw.

4. Why can't Local Authorities/ Health and Social Care Partnerships increase funding levels to cover the costs of the service?

Local Authorities/Health and Social Care Partnerships have their own financial pressures and are unable to increase the rates they pay to reflect the cost of delivering a care home service. They are also committed to providing an agreed rate set by a national care home contract which is universally used across the country by all Local Authorities as a national rate for a care home place.

The national care home contract was uplifted by 2.8% for 2017/18, based on the recommendation from the National Care Home Contract Settlement Group which helps to agree on the national rates. However, this increase does not cover the full cost for Bield to deliver the care home services, and our costs continue to increase.

5. What options were considered as an alternative to closing the services?

We have carefully considered a number of options to try and continue services including subsidising them, adding units, reviewing staffing rotas and negotiating with Local Authorities/Health and Social Care Partnerships. However we are unable to find a solution that will be financially viable, given the external environmental pressures and the future strategic direction of care services across the country.

Alternative solutions, in some exceptional circumstances, may emerge in a minority of Health and Social Care Partnership areas; with Local Authorities and/or alternative providers. We don't envision this is likely for most areas but we have few negotiations and discussions which are on-going. We will update, as soon possible, if the position at your care home changes.

6. The quality of care and support in the services is high, why are Bield closing quality services?

Quality is only one aspect of a service. We are exceptionally proud of the standards we provide for all of our care home services. Unfortunately, the environmental pressures coupled with our older properties and less flexible funding arrangements result in services which generate significant deficits and which are not financially viable. Bield can no longer keep operating with severe deficits in funding.

7. Why has Bield waited so long before addressing the deficit problems in their care home services?

We have been exploring alternative options for more than 6 years including numerous meetings with the Senior Management Team and the Board. The unfortunate conclusion is that we have not been able to find alternative models that can work or find sufficient efficiencies to make the service financially viable.

8. Has Bield done anything like this before?

Yes, but not on this scale. In 2015 and 2016, we respectively closed Carntyne Court and Munro Court Care Homes, both in Glasgow. We had been in discussions with Glasgow City Council who had identified that their longer term strategy was for larger homes and that the future was very uncertain for our care homes and our buildings were not fit for future purpose. Bield will take the same successful approach that we adopted for these care homes. Bield has a strong record of being open and transparent, and we expect these and any future communications will be helpful to explain the reason for our decisions which directly impact on you.

9. Who is affected by the closure of the care home services?

We currently have 159 service users and their families across all Care Homes. 137 employees, 57 casual workers and 9 volunteers, are equally affected.

10. What will happen to current service users?

Local Authorities/Health and Social Care Partnerships, with our support, will make every effort to ensure a smooth transition to new arrangements. We will support service users, their families and/or representatives to find suitable alternative options.

11. How and when will service users and their families be advised?

We will begin to inform service users and appropriate Family / Carers in the Care Home on the 10th October 2017. We will write to all family members who have power of attorney (both welfare and guardian) or those who are recognised as a person's welfare guardian.

Where a family or carer has indicated that they are the main contact, for the service users, and this has been formally agreed with the care home, we will also write to these contacts.

12. When do you intend to close the service?

All services will continue in the short term while alternative arrangements are identified. We will support service users throughout the process. We cannot predict how long it will take and service users may take up alternative arrangements at different time. However, it is expected (unless there any serious unexpected or significant changes) that closure will take place no later than the following dates:

31st March 2018	Craighall Road, Finavon Court, Haugh Street, Lochar Lodge, St Andrews Court, Thornton Gardens, West Port, Woodlands.
31st July 2018	Gillie Court, Grants Bank, Langvout Court, Milfield Gardens

13. Who else has been advised of the closure of the care home services?

The Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Housing Regulator have been informed of the proposal in addition to all of the affected Local Authorities/Health and Social Care Partnership and the Scottish Government.

14. What are the next steps?

We will work with Local Authorities/Health and Social Care partnerships to enable them to identify alternative options for services users and make any transition as smooth as possible.

We will support employees throughout this exceptionally difficult period to help them continue to provide care and support to service users and their families over the coming weeks and months which will be very unsettling and difficult for everyone.

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