



# JOURNEY TO DIGITAL

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## THE HISTORY

- Bield Housing and Care are a Housing Association that specialise in the housing of older people. It is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday this year.
- Stock of over 4,500 rented properties and manage 1,200 owned properties throughout 22 Local Authorities in Scotland.
- Grouped living developments with communal areas
- Almost all of its properties have a warden call system connected to BR24.
- BR24 is a department of Bield Housing and Care.
- Started in 1988 as an Out of Hours service to Bield's own tenant group.
- Now including Bield's portfolio of approximately 5,700 connected properties, BR24 have in the region of 30,000 other people linked to the ARC.

# THE EQUIPMENT

## DEVELOPMENTS

- 150 fully wired warden call systems
- Monitoring Fire Alarms, Lifts, Alarm units and door entry systems
- On / Off site facility for our development staff to be point of contact when they are on site and BR24 when they are not
- Varying manufacturers and varying ages.
- 30 non staffed developments with individual Personal Alarms Units

# THE EQUIPMENT

## Alarm Receiving Centre

- Jontek Database with Answerlink call handling software.
- New state of the Art facilities in our Glasgow Office.
- Laptops with softphones for each call handler.
- Disaster Recovery site in one of our Glasgow Developments.
- 57 employees operating a 24hr, 365 day rota.
- New SIP servers.

## DIGITAL TELECARE

Scottish Local Government

### CERTIFICATE OF AWARD

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

*Bield Housing & Care*

HAS SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED

**SILVER ACCREDITATION**

*Mary Wallace*

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER,  
DIGITAL TELE CARE FOR SCOTTISH  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT



25-01-2021

DATE

## THE MOTIVATION

- Prior to our ARC upgrade in 2019, Bield recognised that the industry was being left behind. The message from communication providers and Regulators was clear. The analogue switch off was going to happen in 2025.
- Some development of digital PAUs had taken place but over 150 of Bield's grouped living properties were equipped with warden call systems. We began to explore Analogue to Digital technology in grouped living environments. Successful work was done to develop and test a convertor box with a leading manufacturer.
- A communication outage in 2019 (in the West of Scotland only) highlighted the weakening infrastructure.
- Supply and demand. 14,000 alarms linked to BR24 and only 300 using a digital signal.

# Decision Making





# Warden Call Systems



- Numerous on the market.
- £20,000 to £30,000 straight replacement
- £50,000 for a whole new system

# Connector Box



- Retro fit onto existing warden call systems
- Converts analogue signals leaving the existing warden call system using NOW IP protocol
- Analogue or GSM backup
- £1,500 to £2,000 for a straight plug and play device

# Dispersed Units



- Development of these are significantly advanced
- Can connect through broadband or GSM using a SCAIP protocol (Some still have analogue and GSM voice call backup)
- Device management portal (for remote programming and power / battery warnings)
- Cost approximate £250 plus ongoing sim charges



- Lifestyle Monitoring products
- Home management devices

## More Decisions

- Do we proceed with the desire to have 100% of our tenants contacting us through a digital media by 2022?
- Do we replace our existing, end of life, warden call system with systems currently on the market?
- Do we swap all warden call systems with Personal Alarm Units?
- Do we roll out the XT connector box to more of our developments?
- Do we hold off until Amazon and Google devices offer a suitable alternative?

## JUST NOW

- COVID-19 has brought many challenges. Our Glasgow Office allowed us the space to embed safe working. Our IT team were able design and roll out remote working to 100% of its staff through CITRIX and iGel connections. Idea to roll out was achieved within in the space of two weeks from.
- The advantages we are seeing just now with remote working gives us decisions to make for the future.
- We are rolling out the installation of the XT connector boxes to over 90 of our developments giving digital connection to over 3,000 of our tenants.
- We are replacing a number of end of life warden call systems with currently available products.
- The findings from the recent TOC will be published on the model, challenges and successes of using GSM digital PAUs.

## GOING FORWARD

- Incorporate the advantages of remote working into the future of Bield
- Accelerate everyone's move to digital
  - Develop an ARC capable of receiving digital signals from any alarm manufacturer.
  - Assist existing and new clients to move away from analogue.
  - Allow Organisations to invest in alarm sending technology.
  - Monitor information on new device management portals.
- Further investigate a cloud based solutions.
- Promote other digital services. (Outbound calling, Lifestyle monitoring, Device management)
- Further investigation, development and testing of smart and wearable healthcare technology.

