

EILDON HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Living Wage Employer Case Study



Eildon Housing Association, in the Scottish Borders, was formed in 1973 by a steering group of a few individual employees at Dingleton Hospital, Melrose, who wanted to create a housing association with the aim of purchasing existing houses and converting them into independent homes in the community for people ready to leave institutional care.

From modest beginnings, Eildon has steadily grown and diversified and is now regarded as one of Scotland's leading and most innovative housing and care organisations. Always striving to modernise and deliver in a changing climate, Eildon has remained true to its core values and consistently provides excellent services to the individuals and communities they serve. Eildon's people are advocates for housing and care services, playing a significant role in these sectors at a regional and national scale, influencing politicians and policy makers.

Eildon are committed to delivering services across a large rural region and continue to expand the range of local communities that they offer services within. They are now present in nearly 50 different communities across the Borders.

Whilst always focussing on continual improvement in core business sectors of building and maintaining homes, managing tenancies, and delivering quality care services, Eildon have also diversified into other related areas of activity. Key amongst these is the highly successful and award-winning Borders Care & Repair service, which they have delivered for more than a decade.

Eildon Housing Association have also won numerous local and national awards for the quality of the new homes they have built over the years, and they continue to deliver new and innovative forms of housing.



Eildon's Values

Eildon's purpose is to deliver excellence in the provision of housing, support, and care services for the people and communities they support. Their people are committed, highly skilled and trained to deliver an ambitious growth agenda and continual improvement programme.

In 2010, a cross section of people from throughout the organisation worked in focus groups to articulate the organisation's Values. The Values describe who Eildon are and what they stand for. These values remain as true today as they did when they were written - and they are validated every 3 years.



Caring: We care about what we do, the people we work with and the customers we serve

Committed: We work together to provide affordable, high-quality homes, care and support services

Connected: We are part of the communities we serve and believe we can make a real difference

Creative: We are ready to meet the challenges of the future with enthusiasm and new ideas

As a 'not for profit' charitable organisation delivering affordable services, being efficient and effective is essential to the success of Eildon. However, in order to deliver their ambitious strategy they need to recruit and retain high quality talent who share Eildon's values. Critical to this approach to workforce development is a commitment to having the real Living Wage as the basis of their salary structure.

"As well as the dignity that the real Living Wage provides to all of our colleagues, it also signals a commitment that each of our job roles is valued and important to what we are striving to achieve. This commitment extends to our younger workforce also, and we retain the real Living Wage as the rate that we pay all of our apprentices and trainees as well."

Deborah Taggart, HR Manager

The Process

After modelling the cost implications of implementing the real Living Wage, Eildon gained approval from their Remuneration Committee and Board to go ahead and implement the real Living Wage from April 2015. They then started on the journey to become accredited and succeeded in achieving this in September 2016.

"The application process was very straight forward. We communicated with all the sub-contractors we used to deliver repair services to our tenants and they confirmed that they paid everyone they employed above the real Living Wage."

Deborah Taggart, HR Manager

The Process cont...

Implementation of the real Living Wage impacted 30 staff, 25 part-time and 5 full-time employees and meant a 35.1% increase to Eildon's payroll that year. The majority of those employees worked in the social care services delivered to people with learning disabilities in supported housing service in Duns and the elderly in 5 sheltered housing developments in Peebles, Galashiels, Melrose and Hawick.

In 2017 Eildon's external remuneration consultants stated in their report, "the decision (to implement the rLW) was bold and sends a powerful underpinning cultural message in support of the organisation's operating values."

The Benefits

On speaking with their people following the implementation, Eildon found that the change was well received and had had a positive impact on their work and personal life.



"Being paid the real Living Wage made a huge difference to my standard of living. For the first time I was able to take my two children aged 10 and 6 on an overseas summer holiday to Cyprus in 2017. I've also now been able to buy my own home and upgrade the bathrooms!"

Annemarie, Support Worker

As an accredited Living Wage employer, Eildon is an active member of the Scottish Borders Living Wage action group, working alongside several local employers including Scottish Borders Council to raise awareness of the benefits of paying the real Living Wage and becoming accredited. In 2021, Nile Istephan, CEO of Eildon, spoke to local businesses at a business breakfast during Living Wage Week, highlighting the positive impact being a real Living Wage organisation had on the organisation and on its reputation.

"The commitment to the real Living Wage has given us the opportunity to make a real and valuable statement that our people are valued and do an important and socially valuable job for our customers and communities. Colleagues have been fantastic in responding to this statement and have shown huge commitment and engagement to our work in return. Our partners and contractors have also seen the value in this commitment and have been supportive of the fair work principles. This results in a real and lasting impact on the local economy."

Nile Istephan, Chief Executive Officer

Eildon's People

Eildon have invested an increasing amount of time and resources to enable people to take part in training and development activities. They have developed their own, bespoke Learning Management System in collaboration with Borders College to deliver mandatory refresher training, regulatory requirements and business and personal development covering a wide range of topics in health and safety, equality and diversity, corporate social responsibility, management development, personal development, and wellbeing.

"We work hard to encourage employee engagement and use an interactive survey tool called 'Peachy Mondays'. We listen to what our people have to say and undertake activities on the back of that. You can see the improvement we've made on the 4 key drivers of employee engagement over the past 5 years."

Deborah Taggart, HR Manager

➤ **Understanding the Strategic Narrative:**

our people understand how they contribute to the delivery of the organisation's strategic goals. This is often referred to as the 'golden thread' because it runs through from an individual's objectives to the delivery or departmental objectives, which in turn deliver Eildon's strategic goals.

"I am clear about what is expected from me in my role" (from 81% to 92%)

➤ **Engaging Managers:**

through a programme of leadership and management development we are improving the relationship between employee and manager, which in turn delivers higher productivity and levels of job satisfaction

"My line manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively" (from 75% to 90%)

➤ **Employee Voice:**

we engage with all our people through quarterly FORUM meetings and have improved communications even further through the use of Microsoft Teams, the use of which has become more fully developed during the recent Covid Lockdowns and the restrictions placed on meeting together face to face.

"I feel I have a voice in the organisation" (from 52% to 79%)

➤ **Integrity:**

Eildon is also committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of its people by providing membership of a Health Cash Plan which assists with the cost of everyday medical expenses and provides discounts on retail purchases. We also provide advice and signposting to a wide range of support services on our internal 'Wellbeing' SharePoint site.

Employee satisfaction with Eildon has risen from 86% to 94%



Eildon have been an 'Investors in People' organisation since 1999 achieving GOLD level accreditation in 2019. They also achieved EFQM (European Foundation Quality Management) 'Recognised for Excellence' 5* accreditation in June 2021.

"The commitment to fair work has served us well to date and has provided a solid platform for us to progress our largest and most ambitious growth programme, delivering a range of new services to support our growing older population as well as innovative work in testing and delivering a range of sustainable housing technologies."

Deborah Taggart, HR Manager

Join Eildon Housing Association and the real Living Wage movement today

The real Living Wage makes a real and immediate difference to the lives of workers and at the same time, has proven social and business benefits. Living Wage accreditation is widely recognised as a mark of a responsible employer. The accreditation process is straightforward and there is a team of trained accreditation officers who can provide support and guidance. The real Living Wage is calculated annually according to the real cost of living in the UK and London.

Get in touch

accreditation@povertyalliance.org
0141 353 0440

livingwagescotland.org
 LivingWageScot

