

Blackwood House opens its doors to independent living

The Edinburgh based charity Blackwood opened a model showhome at the Edinburgh Community Rehabilitation and Support Service centre in Longstone today. The home is packed full of gadgets which will allow people with disabilities to test the technology in a realistic setting.

The charity which already has more than 1500 homes across Scotland then hopes to roll out a number of specialist properties in the city.

This is real 21st century tech with sliding doors on bathrooms operated by an electrical switch, worktops and sinks in the kitchen which rise and fall on voice command or by command from a phone or tablet.

One of the most innovative was the bathroom which has moveable components allowing high levels of accessibility.

Even the lights can be turned on by voice command and things like the entry system and heating can be controlled by Blackwood's bespoke digital care system CleverCogs.

Simon Fitzpatrick, Strategic Development Director at Blackwood, said: "The Blackwood House is designed to be solution to this national crisis – it's all about independent living.

"For many people with disabilities, it's not that they can't look after themselves; it's simply that their current home set-up doesn't allow them to.

"Technology can do just about anything these days so we're making it our business to ensure that people living with a disability really gain from its advances.

“With invitations being send out far and wide we really hope that this event changes attitudes and gets people to recognise that this sort of housing provision is needed in Scotland’s towns and cities.

“In particular, we’re very pleased to be speaking with the Edinburgh JIB about the best solutions to the housing issues in the care sector in the capital.

“Our Chair, Max Brown, is delighted that this is going ahead, and is especially pleased that it is a great example of partnership in action with the Health and Social Care Partnership.

“He’s interested in the feedback, and really hopes we will see the complete Blackwood House in Edinburgh soon.”



Blackwood House Opens Doors to Independent Living For the Future

Pictured Customer Mary Guild, Blackwood CEO Fanchea Kelly and Cllr Ricky Henderson Photo Ian Georgeson

Councillor Ricky Henderson Chair of the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board told us that he liked the ideas he saw. He said :
“The council will work with our housing association partners to deliver new accessible homes over the next ten years. I think we need to build in some of the technology that suits people’s needs ahead of time before they take over a new tenancy so that homes can be adapted when they move in.

“We know that the people are living longer with more complex health conditions, which is a good thing and people with disabilities live longer which again is a good thing but we need to be able to support them to live as independently as possible.

“The numbers will continue to increase and that demand is going to be there for some time to come.

“Of the 20,000 new homes planned for Edinburgh over the next 10 years, we want to see 4500 of them built to address health and social care needs.

“The Blackwood House is a fabulous example of how innovation in housing design can transform quality of life and we are excited at the prospect of working with Blackwood to bring these homes to Edinburgh.”



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Pictured Doorbell videocom Photo Ian Georgeson

Clr Henderson loved the functional aspects like the kitchen units which come down to a better height for a wheelchair user and Simon Fitzpatrick of Blackwood was also very keen on those, explaining to us that the charity has already built a flagship development in Dundee where some these elements are incorporated in bespoke Blackwood homes that were built there. But he said they also fit them retrospectively to more of their homes.

Pressalit, Geberit, Angus Engineering and Nicholls & Clarke who have donated components and helped to construct the final mock-up.

These companies also refurbished the kitchen at the Longstone centre so that its users can benefit from the technology too.



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Pictured Simon Fitzpatrick, Strategic Development Director at Blackwood Photo Ian Georgeson