

Clever tech roll-out helps vulnerable during pandemic

Vulnerable customers of a Scottish housing and care provider are being able to keep in constant contact with friends and family – and where necessary their carers – during the coronavirus lockdown thanks to its pioneering technology.

Blackwood has provided its customers with tablets complete with accessible care technology and wifi access to help keep them more digitally connected at all times, despite most being currently 'shielded' in their homes.

There has been an 800% increase in the function that allows customers to contact friends and family.

And with visits from care staff being impacted because of social distancing and virus protection measures, the technology is ensuring customers do not feel isolated as they can also keep in touch with carers via video calls, even those who use Blackwood's night-time support service.

Each tablet gives customers access to CleverCogs™, Blackwood's own bespoke care system, which enables people to stay in touch with friends and family through video chat, while also allowing them to catch up on their

favourite tv shows,
access information and receive calendar reminders of care visits and medication.

The system allows customers to attend GP appointments through the NHS service, Near Me, which is linked with more than 30 GPs across Scotland.

Blackwood customer Scott Robb was delighted to mark his 40th birthday through CleverCogs™. Despite physical distancing, the Blackwood team in Ayr facilitated Scott's birthday party, enabling him to celebrate the day with his family.

CleverCogs™ is personalised to each customer meaning they will be able to easily access their interests, whether it's music, sports or movies. The system is designed to only take users maximum three taps of the tablet to access any of its features.

Blackwood – which operates across 29 local authorities, providing housing and care support to people with a wide range of care needs – is also fronting a new campaign #ImInAwe to showcase the work of front-line social care workers during the pandemic crisis.

Anne Jenkins, Blackwood's Innovation Delivery Manager, said: "As an organisation we understand and appreciate how uneasy and stressful the current lockdown situation is for many of our customers and their families.

"CleverCogs™ gives our customers and families some peace of mind in that they can stay fully connected throughout this, so reducing feelings of loneliness, anxiety or isolation.

"In fact where previous there was a reluctance to use CleverCogs™ as a communication tool, now customers are freely using it to keep in contact with friends and families.

“We personalise every CleverCogs™ device, which has had huge impacts on our customers’ lives. Being digitally connected really has the opportunity to change people’s lives – it opens their horizons to a whole new online world.

“In the current circumstances, it’s even more important that we facilitate every measure possible to ensure our customers have access to the required care and communication to allow them to continue living a fulfilled life as independently as possible.”

Currently the system features include information about Care, Safety, Housing, Home Automation, Information, Digital Inclusion as well as Health & Wellbeing.

CleverCogs™ has also been implemented across all of Blackwood’s care services, as well as being the ‘hub’ for each of its Blackwood Houses. Within the Blackwood Houses, CleverCogs™ enables customers to control lights, heating, doors and blinds.

Blackwood’s #ImInAwe campaign aims to shine a light on the important front-line role care employees are playing, to encourage businesses and individuals to look at ways they can show gratitude.

It’s estimated up to 150,000 staff work in the social care sector, providing care to people in care homes and retirement developments as well as care-at-home services. The social campaign is spreading online with the hashtag #ImInAwe to show collective support.

Blackwood customers are at the heart of shaping its future. With over 1500 properties across 29 local authorities, it is the largest provider in Scotland and helps the transform customers’ lives on a daily basis – at a time when funding is becoming increasingly tighter.

<https://www.blackwoodgroup.org.uk>