

A 'paws' in the weekly routine for care home residents

Animal loving pensioners at a city centre care home have been enjoying pet therapy sessions for more than a decade, thanks to dedicated staff and resident pup, Sophie.

Staff at Belleville Lodge in Edinburgh recognised how much joy and comfort the sessions brought to their elderly residents and made the decision to ensure they could continue throughout the pandemic.

During the sessions, residents reminisce about their pets over the years, cuddle up with Sophie, the resident West Highland terrier, and look at pictures of animals and nature, while sharing stories in small groups.

The carers have found pet therapy has amazing benefits for residents with and without dementia, from increased mood and social interaction to improved nutrition and physical activity. It's also a fun activity for residents who can share their pet histories and find out interesting facts about different animals.

Margaret Russell, Matron at the home operated by [Mansfield Care](#), said: "We find the sessions are excellent for our residents wellbeing and spirits. Before the pandemic we had two other dogs who visited regularly, a black lab called Orchid and a border terrier named Ruff, who residents are

looking forward to reuniting with when it's safe to do so.

“Anyone with a pet will know just how relaxing and calming spending time with an animal can be. As well as relieving the feelings of loneliness and isolation, pets can reduce stress, lower blood pressure and promote a sense of overall wellbeing.

“With such a powerful range of physical and mental benefits, it's not surprising that pet therapy is being introduced into many care homes to improve the lives of elderly people and dementia patients across the UK.

“Even when a resident has advanced dementia, you can see the change in their face and the comfort they find when petting a dog – their faces completely light up as they stretch out their arms to welcome them.

“We've found it so important to keep activities that residents enjoy going throughout the pandemic, so we have made sure to incorporate pets and animals into our activity programme.

“When we couldn't physically welcome any pets into our lounge area, we would download pictures of our residents favourite animals for our residents to talk about.

“Everyone thoroughly enjoys hearing one another's stories and leaves the sessions feeling happy – which is the main reason why we have our extensive activity programme.”

Belleville Lodge offers space for up to 25 residents, including some twin rooms, in the heart of Edinburgh.

Mansfield Care operates 11 care homes across Edinburgh, Borders and the West of Scotland, specialising in small homes which offer bespoke, friendly care and boast state of the art facilities.

The care provider specialises in small, friendly, residential care homes across Edinburgh, Borders and West of Scotland, providing individualised care in state of the art facilities.

The Mansfield Care ethos is inspired by the kind of care many would wish for later in life – positive, empathetic, respectful and homely.

<https://www.mansfieldcare.co.uk/>



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