

# **Building a future for Blackwood customers to live life to the full**

**Leading independent living provider Blackwood has outlined its bold plans for the next five years, including building 400 homes for disabled people and developing more innovative ideas for healthy ageing.**

Julie McDowell, Blackwood's Chair, told the Edinburgh-based charity's virtual AGM that its core objective is to support more customers to live life to the full by growing stronger as a sustainable not-for-profit business.

Blackwood has over 1500 properties across 29 local authorities. The people who use Blackwood services are at the heart of shaping its future. Julie said the new 2021-26 Business Strategy and Five-Year Plan will allow Blackwood to help customers live independently, to keep innovating, while also strengthening its financial resilience.

Thanks to investment in innovation, Blackwood has developed a modern standard for highly accessible housing – combining technology, modern construction, and engagement with people who live with a disability to design and produce beautiful, easy to use homes.



Julie McDowell

Julie said: “We aim to increase our financial capacity, build 400 additional Blackwood homes for disabled people of all ages, expand our 24/7 responder care service and develop more innovative ideas for healthy ageing and independent living.

“We are committed to engaging on co-design and rent affordability and updating priorities to support increased customer satisfaction.

“As chair, I will continue to focus on ensuring that Blackwood remains a financially strong organisation.

“I want to build on our successes in providing good service with excellent customer satisfaction and creating a model of living that looks at all of people’s needs, not just housing or care needs.

“I want us to continue to innovate and use technology to support independent living and healthy ageing.”

Julie added that she wants Blackwood to continue to demonstrate thought leadership while operating in a dynamic, changing environment.

“We must be ready and able to adapt to the evolution of Scotland’s national policies on housing, the provision of care services and responding to climate change.

“We need to be a resilient organisation that is ready for these and the other challenges which no doubt lie ahead.”

Blackwood – established by Dr Margaret Blackwood in 1972, the Edinburgh campaigner for the rights and independence of disabled people – can already boast an impressive record of showcasing expertise in design and technology with its CleverCogs digital system, the Blackwood House and the 24/7 Responder Service.

The Business Strategy has three main targets: investing in opportunities for sustainable growth; ensuring excellent stewardship of Blackwood's resources and assets; and achieving consistently high customer satisfaction.

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