



## Blackwood Homes and Care | Trailblazer

The combination of innovative home design and care technology is enabling older people to live healthier and more independent lives.

For many older people, being able to stay in their own home as they age is key to quality of life. Now a team at Edinburgh-based specialist housing and care provider Blackwood Homes and Care is using design and technology to help create houses and communities that support an ageing population to live healthier, more connected lives.

“People are living longer but health inequalities are growing,” said Colin Foskett, Head of Innovation at Blackwood. “The Blackwood Neighbourhoods for Independent Living project has been co-designed and co-created to rebalance inequalities, and empower, encourage and reward people to take an active role in their ageing journey.”



A partnership approach is core to this multi-disciplinary project. Using a £100,000 grant from the Healthy Ageing Challenge fund, the team collaborated with residents in three demonstrator neighbourhoods (in rural, semi-rural and urban settings), as well as local authorities, health providers, industry, and academia, to meet the challenges of designing age-friendly homes, sustaining physical activity, managing common complaints of ageing, and supporting social connections.

A ground-breaking house design – The Blackwood House & Design Guide – provides the blueprint for affordable, accessible and connected homes that adapt as people age and enable them to live independently within their neighbourhood. Co-designed with customers and architects, it features a barrier-free core to the home, allowing easy movement for any level of mobility. It also includes innovative automation through CleverCogs™, a platform that allows individuals to take control of things like lighting, as well as access platforms to communicate with carers, family and friends, and health services. Customers personalise their system picking the ‘cogs’ that support their ageing journey.

The team worked with researchers at University of Edinburgh and community workshops to co-design a value-exchange model, which encourages and rewards participation in the neighbourhood. “For example, if someone gives an elderly neighbour a lift to a hospital appointment, they may get some free credit for the electric vehicle club. Or data from wearable devices

could reward people who keep active with free classes. The model is designed to reduce social isolation through participation in activities,” explained Foskett.

“Blackwood shows that through the thoughtful, collaborative design of new homes and empowerment of residents to help self-manage health and wellbeing, we can create great places in which to grow old,” said UK Research and Innovation’s Healthy Ageing Challenge Director, George MacGinnis. “The Blackwood Neighbourhoods for Independent Living project has been co-designed and co-created to rebalance inequalities, and empower, encourage and reward people to take an active role in their ageing journey.” Colin Foskett, Head of Innovation at Blackwood.

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