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## **Care Home Customers Have No Time to Paws With Therapy Pet Visit**

Customers at a Greenock care home have become the latest group to showcase the healthy benefits of pet therapy.

Bunny & Co mobile petting zoo visited Blackwood's MacLehose Court in Inverclyde with a broad range of animals for the customers to hold and experience.

From rabbits and guinea pigs, to chickens and hens, the Bunny & Co husband and wife team Stan and Laura, ensured that the customers had a day to remember as they set up in the lounge area of the care home.

From the comfort of familiar surroundings, the customers got the chance to pet and to feed the animals, while learning more about their habits and traits.

Laura Schosloff, founder of Bunny & Co, said: "It's the same everywhere we go. Everyone's eyes light up when they see a pet to cuddle or get close to. And that's the same staff as it is for residents.

"Animal-assisted therapy used to be frowned upon as its benefits were unproven and that it would only result in germs being brought it.

"But the benefits are so clear to see. When someone is petting one of the animals, they relax. It encourages communication and interaction.

"We've got rats, mice and hamsters, there's hens and cockerels, there's so many different animals that there's something for everyone.

"It's such a rewarding job. If I won the lottery, I'd still be doing this. We love seeing everyone enjoying themselves and the animals love it as well."

The use of therapy pets, or therapets, is becoming more commonplace in care homes and hospitals – and last year even Edinburgh University offered therapy sessions to help students reduce stress at exam time.

Research has demonstrated that the mere act of stroking a dog or a cat has exceptional benefits. These include slowing down heart rate, reducing blood pressure, calming nerves, regulating breathing and elevating mood. Plus, dogs love attention – so their welfare is also increased through taking part.

The customers packed out the lounge area at MacLehose Court as the pets were set out in two separate pens while others were placed on laps and allowed to roam more freely.

Samantha Harkin, a resident at MacLehose Court, said: "It's really great to have the animals here.

“It’s nice to get to touch them and it’s something I’ve been looking forward to for a while.”

The pet visit was organised by Blackwood staff to help customers experience and learn about the different animals in an environment they felt comfortable and confident in.

Dougie Reid, Care Services Manager at MacLehose Court, said: “You could really see how happy everybody was when they got to meet the animals.

“Just stroking a pet and getting the chance to interact with something out of the ordinary can boost morale and encourage further discussions and dialogue.

“Many of our residents would have had a pet of their own, or an experience of animals, so re-connecting them in this way is a hugely positive experience.

“We try and do activities every day and keep things fresh but special events like this pet therapy visit make life at our care home even better for the residents.”

Blackwood put those who use its services at the heart of how it operates and aim to give people control over their own lives through innovative care.

**ENDS**

#### **Notes to Editor**

Edinburgh-based charity, Blackwood, has more than 1500 homes throughout the country making it a leader in helping those who are disabled, elderly or with sensory impairments to live more independently.

As it works in 29 of Scotland’s 32 local authorities, it is more widely dispersed than most other care or housing providers and has embraced the challenges of taking housing and care into innovative areas at a time when funding is increasingly limited.

Blackwood is also renowned for constantly pushing the boundaries of technology to allow property adaptations which make a huge difference to people with disabilities.

**Issued on behalf of Blackwood by Holyrood PR. Further information, contact Fraser on 0131 561 2247 or [fraser@holyroodpr.co.uk](mailto:fraser@holyroodpr.co.uk)**