**Background information on the Health Agency**

 We have been working in South West Edinburgh since 1989.

The Health Agency is a community led organisation and a registered charity. We address local health inequalities by working to improve the life circumstances that cause poor health in the community. We try to reduce the severity of health and social consequences of inequalities, help individuals and communities resist the effects of inequality on health and wellbeing and encourage collective action that will strengthen local democracy in Wester Hailes.

Our approach depends upon gaining a good understanding and comprehensive knowledge of local people’s experiences, perspectives and expectations. The methods we use seek to build a sense of value into peoples’ lives so that good health becomes achievable. Our co-production and community development approach provides a route for service users to become active participants in their care and their community, and not just passive recipients of services.

**Our Vision is:**  to make a more equal society for all.

**Our Purpose is**: to seek to enable local people to take action that makes a positive impact on their own and their community’s physical, mental and emotional well-being.

In pursuit of this purpose, the agency will be guided by three operating principles.

**A Holistic Approach**

The Agency recognises that real health improvement can best be achieved through a holistic approach. This acknowledges that individual well-being depends on physical, emotional, social and environmental factors.

**Community development**

The Agency uses this approach that is consistent with the principles of community development in terms of empowering people, both individually and collectively, to identify and address the issues that confront their lives. We promote learning, knowledge, skills, confidence and the ability to act collectively. We work towards change through increased local democracy, participation and involvement in public affairs. This in turn strengthens organisations, networking and leadership between communities.

**Working in Partnership**

The Agency acknowledges the importance of working collaboratively with both voluntary and statutory services to ensure that awareness of health issues and psycho/social issues are integral to their activities.

**Services on offer at the Health Agency:**

**Counselling Service** –Person Centred Counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

**Alcohol Service** – massage and counselling

**Coping with Anxiety**- support group for people with anxiety

**Complementary Therapies** – therapeutic massage, sports massage and reflexology

**Active Steps** – we have developed a co-ordinated approach to physical activity across South West Edinburgh in partnership with Health All Round. We are now running clinics in 3 GP practices, health information sessions, diabetes/high blood pressure courses with physical activity element. We also run exercise programmes for people with various long term conditions.

**Group Work Programme**

**Women’s group** – support group for women

**Carers group** – support group for carers

**Taking care of yourself group**

**Art therapy group**

**Community Food shop** – fresh fruit and vegetables sold at cheaper prices than the local shops.

**Willow Garden** – conservation and therapeutic gardening in our beautiful garden by the canal. This is primarily for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties. We now have an outdoor classroom for school children to learn more about the environment.

**Gamblers Anonymous** - a group for men and women to join together to change habits of compulsive gambling.

 **Health Agency Individual Projects**

**Westerhaven** – Support service for people affected by cancer, their families and carers. We Offer benefits advice, information and support, complementary therapies, dietetic advice and counselling.

**Edible estates** – Supports households in Wester Hailes to grow their own fruit and vegetables, cook affordable healthy meals, learn new skills and be more connected in their community.

**Growing Youth**

This project evolved with the Wester Hailes Job Centre for young people. Work experience for unemployed young people interested in doing horticultural/landscaping work in Wester Hailes and surrounding area.

**Herbal Medicine Clinic** – We offer a clinic 1 day per week for people who want to use an alternative to mainstream medicine. Majority of referrals come through the GP’s.

**Volunteering**

We aim to work towards lifting people out of poverty and setting them on a positive course by offering a variety of volunteering opportunities such as admin duties, counsellors, complimentary therapists, gardeners who will also learn to build fences and sheds. They are very much seen as part of the Health Agency team.

Since moving into the healthy Living Centre in August 2013 we have gone from strength to strength. Co-location has allowed proper integration of services, working closely with the GP practice and children and Families has especially encouraged meaningful partnership work that benefits the local community.

 **Local people are always at the heart of all our work.**

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