



For our latest groups and events see <https://www.facebook.com/PiltonCommunityHealthProject> and on Twitter: @PiltonComHealth

Background information about PCHP

Our base is at the heart of the North Edinburgh community. We are Scotland's oldest health project, and we have served the people of North Edinburgh since 1984. The global pandemic has exacerbated health inequalities, and those most affected are the people that were already most disadvantaged in our city.

We have 10 Directors on our Board and they meet monthly. We currently have 10 members of staff, and 35 volunteers. We are a small, dedicated, flexible and creative team of community development workers, sessional workers and volunteers who work closely with local people, families, and our partners in the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Since 2020, our organisation has been working through a change process to take stock, renew our commitments to making the best use of our resources, and to ensure our work is truly aligned with our values, our vision, and our mission. We want to acknowledge our roots in the community, the reasons PCHP was set up over 38 years ago, and to honour the incredible amount of unpaid work done by local people to make this happen.



Our vision

Equality, Wellbeing and Belonging for all in our communities

Our mission

PCHP supports and enables local people to improve their own health and create a healthy community and environment

The following principles and VALUES underpin our work:

Relationships built on trust, respect and honesty - Welcoming and inclusive behaviour that ensures everyone is treated with dignity - Work that actively supports and empowers people, enabling them to take control of their own lives, and that **protects their rights**

Positivity, enthusiasm and a **commitment** to work flexibly and creatively to achieve our vision

Our strengths based approach

We work with a strengths based approach: supporting and developing the strengths inside someone - like knowledge and experience. This way of working can empower people to take control of their own health and avoids doing things to people, not with them.

Impact of the pandemic on PCHP and how we are working right now

The pandemic has meant many local people and families needed crisis support in the last year. Like many local organisations, we are currently shaped by the emerging and enduring impacts of the pandemic on people's lives, and we are working in a hybrid model of virtual and in person support influenced by the public health legislation and guidance for good practice.

For those struggling to get by on a low income there are significant additional pressures to life in lockdown and the current crisis is exacerbating difficulties. While those comfortably off save money staying at home, the cost of living has risen significantly for those in poverty as they are unable to shop around for affordable food and they need heating on for longer. Loneliness and isolation, loss of independence, impact of furlough, reduced hours and unemployment, the stigma of claiming benefits and using foodbanks and managing conflict in relationships all contribute to the significant distress witnessed by organisations providing support in our communities. The measures put in place to mitigate the worst effects of economic hardship. **Poverty and Coronavirus in Edinburgh Interim Report – Summary**

<https://edinburghpovertycommission.org.uk/2020/05/19/poverty-and-coronavirus-in-edinburgh-interim-report/>



Our Community Wellbeing Programme

In March 2021 we launched our Community Wellbeing Programme in response to the compounding effects of the global pandemic on local people already affected by health inequalities. The New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Wellbeing, underpins and drives our work, helping identify ways we can rebuild individual and community capacity. The Five Ways are key actions to improve wellbeing: **connect** with people, **be active**, **take notice**, **keep learning** and **give back**. See more at neweconomics.org

Our work streams within the Community Wellbeing Programme work closely together, often interweaving to increase the impact of our work with local people, and to ensure the best use of our resources. To support this, we use matrix working.

Women Supporting Women

This is a trauma informed, community based programme of work with women, and with women with children. Our work with mothers and carers of children aged 0-5 improves resilience in young children and increases the confidence of the mums and carers with regard to attachment, positive parenting and literacy. Using the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework, we co-produce and deliver health, wellbeing, arts and learning initiatives and increase resilience through self-care and increasing confidence. Women gain skills and strengthen connections between diverse groups of local women.

Living in Harmony Project

This project promotes community cohesion, connections and learning. Our weekly Chat Café and Language Exchange offers a warm welcome to new and settled migrant experienced women living locally.

Women share experiences, skills and many friendships develop. This project has an Action Research Group leading on reducing barriers to health and wellbeing. Their most recent work includes a report on the Impacts of Lockdown on Mental Health and Wellbeing (2021).

Community Link Workers

Our three Community Link Workers are based in local medical centres and work alongside GPs to ensure local people can navigate and access the help, services and opportunities in their local areas to improve their lives.

Men's Together Project

A new project to meet the growing needs of men's mental health and wellbeing, this project works closely with our Community Wellbeing Partners and Community Link Workers.

Food insecurity, social connections and wellbeing

We support and deliver regular, sustained and consistent initiatives to reduce food insecurity in dignified ways, with a focus on how to prevent it. The pandemic and the rising costs of living is increasing food insecurity in North Edinburgh. Working closely with our partners, Granton Community Gardeners, we provide barrier free access to food through sharing tables and shelves, and weekly community meals. We offer cook and share groups, and food-led learning (nutrition, reducing waste and fully funded food related qualifications). We facilitate the North Edinburgh Food for Thought Forum, formed in 2013, with 21 local member organisations who believe food is a human right and everyone should have access to affordable, nutritious food. Our work is underpinned by the Dignity Principles.

Digital Inclusion and Mental Health

Two consecutive projects throughout lockdown and beyond have focussed on overcoming the digital divide specifically for two sectors of our community most affected by the pandemic - women and people in the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

Taking Steps to Better Health

Based on the links between mental health, moving more and being outside in green spaces, we are encouraging people to be outdoors more often, create a sense of belonging to the area, raise awareness of local green spaces, share food, and increase social connections. Alongside local people and GPs we are developing North Edinburgh Nature Prescriptions, accessible and fun outdoor activities, walks and community events. Active Buddies is a volunteering opportunity to help people take the first step to better health.

Student placements

We benefit from our links with the vibrant education sector in our city. We partner with universities and colleges to offer placements including community development, social work, medicine and nutrition. We are currently working with University of Edinburgh, Queen Margaret University and we enjoy a long standing learning link with University of Stirling.

Volunteering opportunities

Our organisation owes its existence to years of unpaid hard work by local people. Our roots are in the women's health movement in the 1960s and 70s with the movement reframing the meaning of health to include social and political dimensions. Our volunteer positions offer meaningful roles, with supporting training and qualifications.

Our Community Wellbeing Partners – we use an early intervention/prevention model to improve wellbeing, support community cohesion and tackle isolation. Our drive to listen, then create local wellbeing initiatives are supported through our partnerships with organisations who work alongside people with a strengths based approach and share their knowledge and resources with us to achieve a collaborative advantage. Listening and wellbeing are inextricably linked and all our workers and volunteers have access to training in these essential and powerful life skills and we fully fund the **Listen Well Scotland Let's Get Listening** course for North Edinburgh residents and volunteers. We have a developing wellbeing partnership with the **Civil Service Strollers Football Club** based in Muirhouse, and **AshScotland** provides us with in-depth training and information to support anyone that wants to quit as smoking exacerbates health inequalities.

A little bit about the roots of PCHP

An overview by Jane Jones, a community catalyst and a founder of the original *Pilton Health Project* and author of *Private Troubles and Public Issues : A Community Development Approach to Health*



The roots of the PCHP lie in the women's health movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's.

This movement challenged the nature and priorities of the health service and re-framed the meaning of health to include social and political dimensions. At about the same time, the nature of health services and their relation to poverty were being investigated by a high level committee of the Scottish Health Education Group, and suddenly there was a chance to present these issues to them. Luckily for us, this committee was chaired by Sir John Crofton, a distinguished physician who had no difficulty taking the women's comments on board and to his credit, saw the potential of community development work in this field. He worked hard to get funding for a pilot project in Pilton from the Scottish Office Research Group which was highly unusual as they had never funded anything to do with community development before. This was entirely due to his high status and professional regard in Scotland.

The project started in a tiny disused kitchenette in the local general practice. During these early years, the project was breaking new ground. There was no room in the tiny office to have more than two people at a time, so it was completely reliant on the good will of local community centres, churches, schools and people's houses to hold meetings. Local people gave loads of their time and support. There was no blueprint to follow, People's own common sense told them, for example, that damp housing was bad for their children's health, and now they found a louder voice. Without this energy, the project would have failed at the first hurdle.

The amount of time and commitment, and good humour from people in Pilton cannot be overestimated - they supported the work, created local services and sustained it. Individuals spoke at national conferences, were invited to seminars and meetings throughout the UK, helped other groups to form, and produced various publications and videos. Overall the Pilton Health Project has had a tremendous influence on the national debate in Scotland and beyond about the social and political aspects of health inequality and the importance of people themselves leading the changes that are needed. The gains for Pilton have been truly impressive and are the result of years of hard unpaid work by local people.

Employee and Volunteer Wellbeing

All workers and volunteers have access to the **PCHP Assistance Programme** including a Wellbeing Portal and a 24 hour helpline. We are a real Living Wage Employer.

For more information: Dawn Anderson, Director, dawnanderson@pchp.org.uk
www.pchp.org.uk (content under review), <https://www.facebook.com/PiltonCommunityHealthProject> and on
Twitter: [@PiltonComHealth](https://twitter.com/PiltonComHealth) Updated 3 June 22