

Health Secretary visits Wester Hailes amid funding concerns

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Neil Gray, visited The Health Agency, based in Wester Hailes during a time of financial crisis for the healthcare body.

During his visit, Mr Gray engaged in discussions with a multi-disciplinary team, including local GPs, a Practice Nurse, a Mental Health Nurse, management from the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership, a community link worker, and representatives from The Health Agency.

Many vital community health charities, including [The Health Agency](#), are at risk due to the impending withdrawal of core funding by the Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board (EIJB) at the end of June this year. The Edinburgh Integration Joint Board, a partnership between the council and NHS Lothian had threatened cuts of £4.5 million to the funding of third sector bodies such as The Health Agency, [Portobello Older People's Project](#) and [Pilmeny Development Project](#). In a budget of £900 million (and with a deficit of around £51 million) this funding is a paltry sum – but absolutely crucial core funding on which these bodies attract grant funding in order to exist.

There is a glimmer of hope as The City of Edinburgh Council prepares to set its 2025-26 budget at an all-council meeting on Thursday, 20 February.

A proposal has been put forward to allocate at least £2 million to mitigate the impact of the EIJB cuts on local charities. The Health Agency, alongside other Edinburgh charities, is calling on cross-party support by urging local councillors to vote and secure this vital funding on Thursday.

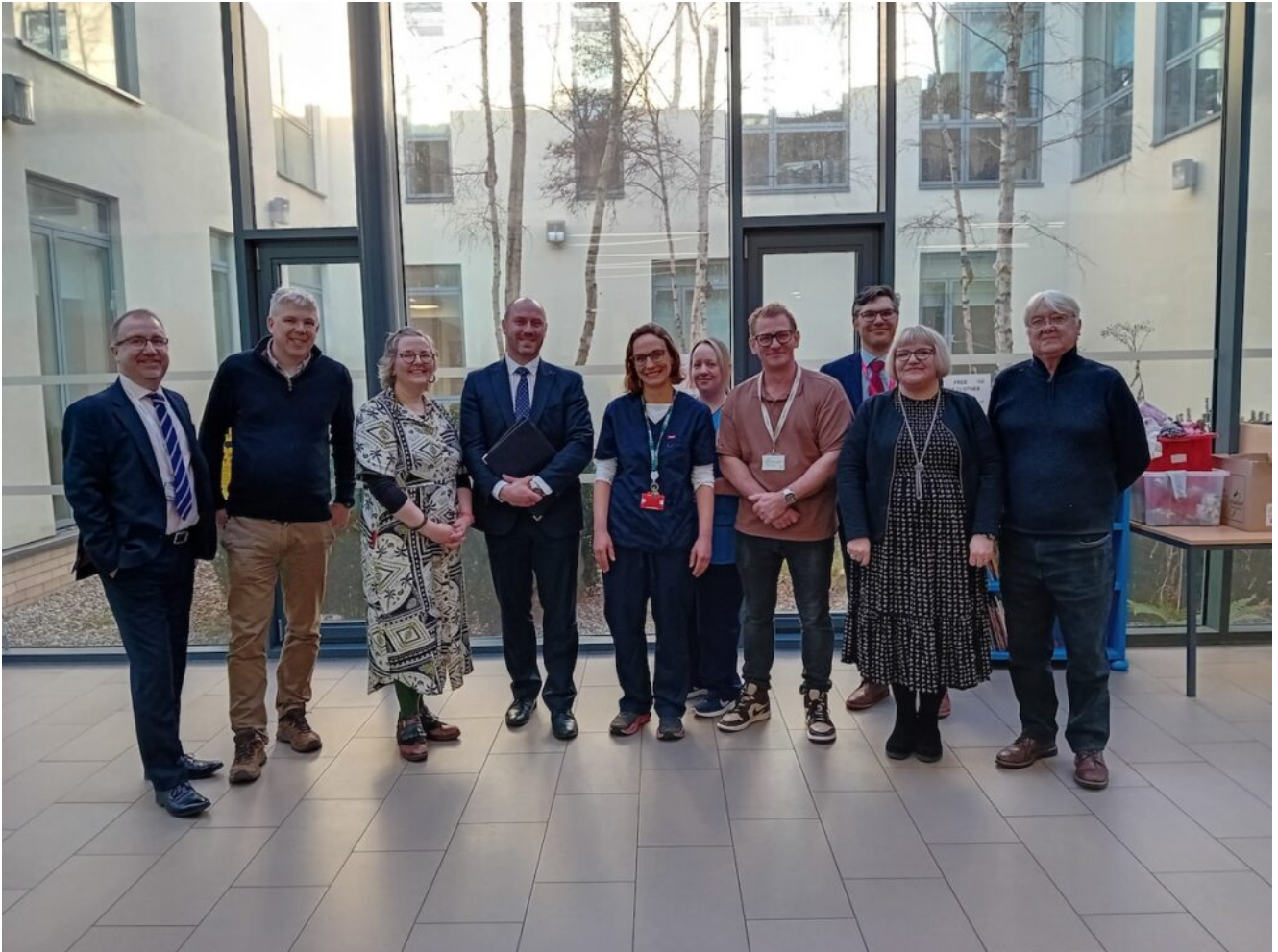
The conversation centred on the pressing health and social care needs of the Wester Hailes community and the importance of collaborative efforts between the health, social care, and third sector to tackle the challenges of deep poverty, inequality, social isolation, and food insecurity. These critical issues continue to have a profound impact on the community's health, wellbeing, and overall life opportunities.

While the meeting reinforced the effectiveness of a partnership-led approach in fostering a healthier and more resilient community, it also highlighted a significant concern: the looming funding crisis facing Edinburgh's third sector. (See our video reports below)

The Health Agency is one of 64 charities facing financial uncertainty, with the potential of severe service reductions or even permanent closure from July onwards. Zoé Mobey, Chief Executive of The Health Agency, stressed the necessity of sustainable public funding, stating, "We can't survive without long-term public funding investment. Much of what we do supports Health and Social Care. Investing in preventative and early intervention services like ours keeps people well for longer and reduces the burden on NHS and statutory services."

Zoé concluded, "This is an incredibly worrying time for our charity. While our team remains dedicated to supporting the people who rely on us, we fear the consequences if we are forced to close. Without our services, GP visits will increase, prescription costs will rise and waiting lists will grow. Perhaps more worryingly, a large proportion of people won't seek help and will fall through the gaps – meaning more people will reach crisis, more people will live with major

illness for longer and some will inevitably die younger due to lack of early support. We know money is tight, but investing in preventative health care is essential. We can only hope for a positive outcome at the council budget meeting.”



left to right:

Mike Massaro-Mallinson, Service Director – Operations with Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership

Dr Peter Cairns, GP

Dr Nora Murray-Cavanagh, Clinical Lead GP at Wester Hailes Medical Practice and NHS Lothian’s GP Lead for Health Inequalities

Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Dr Anna Noble, GP, Practice Quality Improvement Lead

Dawn Carmichael, General Practice Nurse

Paul Novak, Practice Mental Health Nurse

Dr Sam Abushal, Clinical Lead for the South West of Edinburgh

Zoé Mobey, Chief Executive of The Health Agency

Eoghan Howard, Chair of The Health Agency

