

Royal Edinburgh Community Gardens **Briefing document**

Introduction

1. NHS Lothian has indicated an intention to allocate some of its unused land to temporary community gardening. Most of this land will be needed in due course for future NHS development or commercial disposal, but short term garden usage will be feasible for community groups who accept this short-term use. The intention is therefore for NHS Lothian to contract with gardening groups using 12 month rolling leases. NHS Lothian has a number of suitable sites, but the largest and most available is at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. This site is the subject of this briefing, and it is hoped that garden use can commence in 2010.

The community garden

2. Central to the NHS Lothian philosophy is the community garden, which differs from the notion of private allotments. Community gardens feature allocated growing plots for individuals or groups for vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers but may also have common areas of grass and other cultivation for the amenity of the whole group. Community gardens aim to address health inequalities through ensuring that everybody is both welcome and can become involved. The promotion of mental and physical health, and building inclusive communities, are core aspects of the approach. Environmental sustainability is also central, through the production of locally grown food and the use of techniques such as composting. The general public will have regulated access to the gardens during agreed times of day.

Participation

3. Participation in community gardening activities meets many of NHS Lothian's strategic health goals for the community, providing benefits that include physical activity, mental health, and dietary improvement. The project also sits well with national and local government objectives for productive land use and public sector responses to climate change.

4. It is desirable that garden group membership be as diverse as possible, and as part of this it is anticipated that Royal Edinburgh patients will be encouraged to participate as appropriate, including joining other members of the community in the garden groups. There are already plots in development through the contracted work with arts organizer Artlink, which are being cultivated by patients and staff, and it will be important to ensure that the two are complementary.

5. Although the local Morningside community is likely to find the Royal Edinburgh site convenient, they will not be offered any form of exclusivity of use. If existing groups (such as health projects) elsewhere want to take on a

garden or if other Edinburgh residents wish to form a community group, their applications will be considered.

Site infrastructure and layout

6. The site will be provided with basic infrastructure including access to secure tool storage, water, and toilets. The cost of such items will be reflected in a modest rent that will be charged to garden groups.

7. It is intended to facilitate the conversion of up to 15 acres of Royal Edinburgh grounds to community gardens over the next few years. It is anticipated that each community garden will be some 0.5 acres in area, providing up to 30 community gardens on the site. One option currently under exploration is the inclusion of a new orchard area, to be planted and maintained by the grower.

Governance

8. The Community Gardens will be run by an independent governing body, which will in turn contract with NHS Lothian. This governing body will create a set of regulations and subsequently create and supervise the community garden groups. The gardens in turn will need to have simple organisational structures to enable them to design, establish, and maintain their gardens in a format that is agreeable to the group and the Community Gardens governing body..

9. An interim steering group has been set up, pending the creation of the governing body. This comprises:

Dr Charles Winstanley Chair (Chair of NHS Lothian)

Mr Peter Wright MBE (Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotments and Gardens Associations)

Ms Helen Pank (Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens)

Ms Monica VanRietvelde (or Estates Dept representative)

Ms Antonia Ineson (or Public Health representative)

Management and funding arrangements

10. A management organization is now sought to assist with the design and implementation of the project, and this outline briefing document is intended to encourage expressions of interest. A summary of the task of the management body is set out at Appendix A. It is required that contract bidders will seek funding that will cover their own fees and project costs since NHS funds beyond support in kind are unlikely to be available.

11. Expressions of interest should be sent by post or email to Dr Charles Winstanley, Chair of Royal Edinburgh Community Gardens Steering Group, c/o NHS Lothian Deaconess House, 48 Pleasance, Edinburgh EH8 9RS

(Charles.Winstanley@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk) no later than midday on 6th November 2009.

12. After shortlisting by the steering group, detailed proposals and presentations will then be sought from candidate organizations by the end of November 2009. A detailed brief will be provided to the shortlist to enable them to understand the thinking and priorities of the steering group.

Dr Charles Winstanley
Chair, Community Gardens Steering Group
16th October 2009

Appendix A

Tasks for contracted Management Organisation

Sourcing of funding
Survey and layout of garden allocation
Community liaison
Liaison with, and establishment of, garden groups
Infrastructure creation
Liaison with NHS Lothian and governing body
Drafting of site and grower regulations
Liaison with Royal Edinburgh staff to integrate patient involvement
Liaison with grounds maintenance staff
Liaison with Artlink
Liaison with schools
Archive of progress and external communications