

Hello!

Welcome to the tenth newsletter from the Lambeth GP Food Co-operative. There's plenty of exciting news and updates from our latest activities, as well as some personal reflections and a chance to get to know our team.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. If you have any ideas for future stories or want any more information please get in touch with us by email gpfoodcoop@gmail.com, and don't forget to keep up-to-date with our activities through Twitter [@gpfoodcoop](https://twitter.com/gpfoodcoop) and website www.lgpfc.co.uk



NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2017

For those of our readers who have been with us for some times you may remember that each year we launch a new garden as our contribution to the national NHS Sustainability Day which takes places annually across the health service.

We launched at Brockwell Park surgery in March 2013, followed by Corner Surgery at Kings College Hospital in 2014. Last year we were back at the lovely Jennie Lee Garden to launch our important partnership with Medirest. This year we will be launching our newest food growing garden in Stockwell at the Grantham Practice along with Beckett House Surgery.

These events offer us an opportunity to meet new people, have an opportunity to share experiences with old friends and to reaffirm our contribution to community health and well-being in this exciting part of Lambeth. The article written by Dr Sharma which appears in this newsletter describes how the gardening activity fits into a wider vision for a community practice in the area.

We are planning further development of the new garden site in partnership with Hyde Housing who own and manage the site and who share an interest in supporting health generating activities for their residents.

The launch event on 23rd March will start at 12.30pm and finish by 2.00pm. A big thank you to David and Lisa at Medirest who are generously providing refreshments for the launch. If you would like to join us on the day you are very welcome. We will have a people carrier for collecting people from the other garden sites on the day.

If you are planning on joining us, it would be great if you could let us know by email as that will help us with the catering - gpfoodcoop@gmail.com We look forward to seeing you on the 23rd!

Ed Rosen, Project Director, Lambeth GP Food Co-op

Upcoming Events

March 1st: Launch of "A Healthier King's" where we will be hosting a stall on the day to raise awareness of our work at King's College Hospital

March 6th: Launch of the new Lambeth GP Food Co-op video, part funded by NHS England

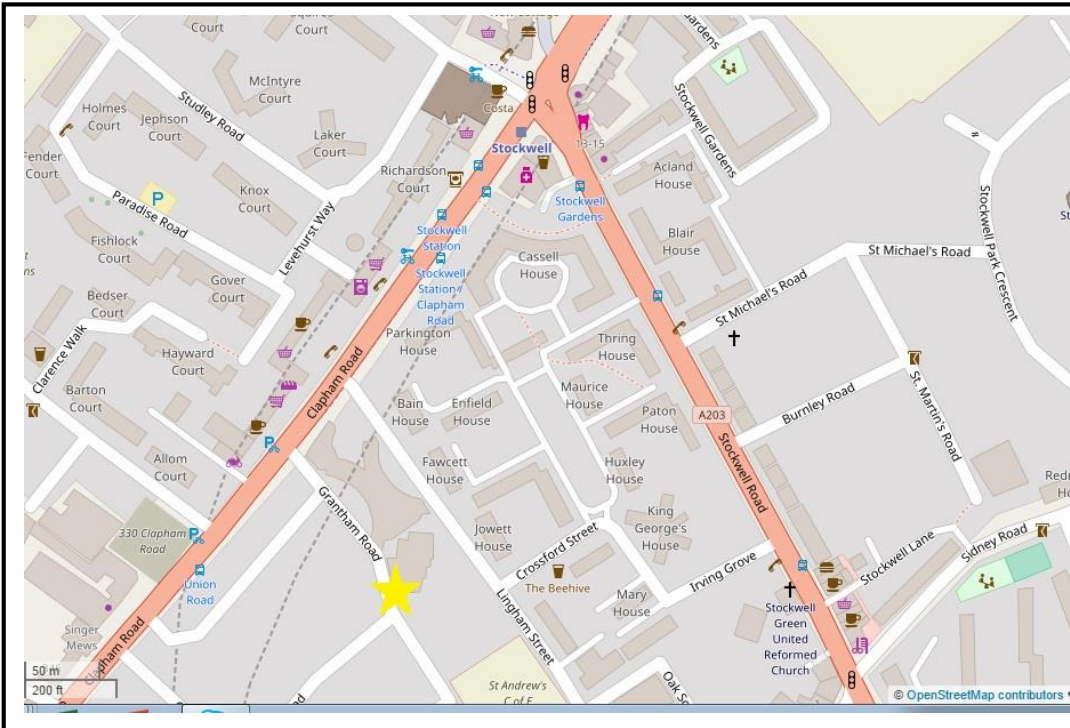
March 9th: 2nd Health & Hunger/ Feeding Lambeth workshop

March 15th: Nutrition & Hydration Week at King's College Hospital where we will have a stall

March 23rd: Launch of food growing garden at the Grantham Practice & Beckett House Surgery, Stockwell

April 27th: Monthly market stall at King's College Hospital

For more details, email gpfoodcoop@gmail.com



For those joining us on 23rd March at the launch of our garden at Grantham Practice and Beckett House Surgery – head south down Clapham Road from Stockwell tube station and take a left on to Grantham Road

Recent blooms at Gracefield Gardens



Growing gracefully

The food growing garden at the Health & Social Care Centre, Gracefield Gardens in Streatham was one of the first Gardens which we build in early 2013. It has been going since then with Elizabeth being gardener in chief where she grows a variety of produce from fruit trees, fruit bushes and several planters full of peas, beans and root vegetables.

The garden was set up by Gill Judson and Brenda Connolly, both nurses with deep experience of setting up gardens in GP surgeries. Each Tuesday and Friday, Elizabeth will welcome you to the garden in the Atrium from 10 am, when she is on site. If you want to help grow potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower and strawberries, then drop in and a brilliant gardener will show you how it's done.

Gardening for Health in Stockwell

The Grantham Practice is a 7,000-patient practice in Stockwell serving a very diverse population. We have over 66 nationalities on our patient list and a third of our patients speak Portuguese. We have a strong focus on community engagement and are always looking for ways to build upon our relationships within the local area. We run education sessions at the local Methodist church women's group and also developed a project trying to address the health inequalities faced by the Portuguese speaking community in Lambeth. Ultimately, as a practice, we are very interested in how we can re-imagine the GP surgery as a source of health and wellbeing in the community.

It was on this background, two years ago, that I saw a presentation from the GP food co-op at an event attended by all GPs in Lambeth. After making initial contact with Ed things progressed rapidly. The idea was discussed with the practice staff who were very enthusiastic. Furthermore we developed the idea with our neighbouring practice, Beckett House Surgery, who share the building and outside space. We had just at the time appointed a new salaried GP who had a particular interest in the interaction between environment and health and so she was a natural candidate to take lead on this.

We now run the session every Wednesday afternoon. A nurse, who is a skilled gardener, leads a session for any interested patients, teaching them how to grow vegetables in the three planters we have (this will increase to eight from March this year). At the same time there are opportunities for discussion on healthy eating, such as what can help keep your cardiovascular risk low or help with diabetes.

Patients get to eat everything they produce and the wider food co-op has started selling fruit and vegetables grown by patients at Kings College, with the money going back into the co-operative.

For patients who are particularly isolated, have lost confidence in leaving their house or those suffering from anxiety or low mood the sessions provide a safe environment to rebuild their confidence. As a clinician these sessions provide an alternative option for me to offer to my patients, one that is close at hand, and very simple to 'refer' into. Fundamentally whether we are approaching this from a healthy eating, social isolation or mental health perspective, what we hope the garden provides is an opportunity for the patient to build their personal reserve, it provides self-empowerment to improve one's health and feeling of wellness.

It's too early for us to assess the positive impact on these patients in terms of hard data (e.g. diabetes control) but I suspect it will improve mood levels and reduce the number of appointments they require with a GP.

The challenge of recruiting patients also requires us as a practice to normalise the concept as it's such a novel idea currently. People come to GP surgeries and expect to be referred down certain pathways and it requires a change of mindset to consider the gardening club as a viable option.

An additional benefit has been how the project has been able to connect us with other services. As well as the surgery we share the building with, we have now got a closer relationship with Hyde Housing, who run all the estates around the local area. Indeed we are hatching a grander vision that will hopefully see one day multiple planters in amongst the blocks of flats on our road creating in effect a garden village where community members can drop in and do vegetable growing.

Dr Vikesh Sharma is a GP at the Grantham Practice in Stockwell, Lambeth

Feeding Lambeth

As I write these words a growing number of people in Lambeth are going hungry. With over 12,000 people accessing food banks last year, and perhaps thousands existing under the radar and not approaching food banks or other sources of community support, we think we have a real and growing health challenge in 2017.

On 24 January, 25 of us met at Lambeth Council offices to discuss the kinds of action we could take to reduce hunger in our community. The meeting was jointly organised by Feeding Britain, which is supporting 12 national pilot projects to actively address the underlying causes of hunger in our communities. Feeding Britain was established by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger, with whom we have been in touch with recently to try and identify ways in which our links to the health community in Lambeth could be put to good use in a collaborative project.

Working with the newly appointed National Director, Rosie Oglesby, the Lambeth GP Food Coop co-convoked a first meeting which brought together colleagues from the Malnutrition Project at Kings College Hospital, NHS Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group, London Ambulance Service, Lambeth Food Partnership, and other colleagues to begin thinking about a future pilot project in Lambeth which would draw on the borough's expertise and knowledge developed over several years and across many diverse food initiatives generated by our Food Borough status.

One of our key aims is to improve communication and relationships between local general practice and local food support organisations, including food banks, which are actively engaged in helping local people who are either at risk from hunger or are experiencing food insecurity. These numbers are growing annually with serious implications for health and well-being, especially amongst people who may be experiencing one or more long term health conditions.

General practice as a local community organisation could play an important role in a local Feeding Lambeth initiative which could go far beyond a role in handing out food vouchers to hungry patients. And often this is as far as it goes. We could do more to address the nutritional needs of people who are struggling to feed themselves and their families, using existing resources but using these resources differently and more imaginatively. For example, could our gardens located in GP surgeries become places for providing fresh vegetable for patients who are hungry? And people in need of nutritional support whether or not they are food bank users?

Early discussions with Lambeth GP's suggest interest and potential active involvement in the future shaping of an innovative Feeding Lambeth pilot project. A further meeting is planned for Thursday March 9th at Portcullis House. If you would like to join us or to find out more about the pilot project we would like to hear from you.

Ed Rosen, Project Director, Lambeth GP Food Co-op

