

Hello!

Welcome to the eighteenth newsletter from the Lambeth GP Food Co-operative.

Due to the coronavirus crisis, we have decided to focus on life after the pandemic by focusing on why wider issues that must be urgently addresses in the future.

We would very much welcome your comments, observations and feedback, and more importantly your active participation in helping us to contribute to a new greener agenda.

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) & Instagram [@gpfoodcoop](https://www.instagram.com/gpfoodcoop) and our website <http://lambeth.gpfoodcoop.org.uk/>



NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2020

<< NEWSFLASH >>

We are delighted to confirm that Sutton seeds have donated 3,000 packets of seeds to the Seeds for Life project. This will allow Lambeth GP Food Co-op to provide free Seeds for Life kits to many of the vulnerable people in the borough who are receiving food parcels.

Sincere and heartfelt thanks to Charmay from Flavour Fresh, Gavin from Sutton Seeds, and especially Ian from Co-op Food.

If you'd like to donate to the Seeds for Life project, please follow the link <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/seeds-for-life>

Update from Ed

This newsletter is special for so many reasons. It is special as it includes three pieces by people directly working for a sustainable NHS and wider society. It is our special 'Green' issue as we report on Lambeth GP Food Co-op's contribution to the NHS wide discussions on a Greener NHS, which is now more urgent than ever. It is also special, as we say goodbye to Ray Newell who was one of the first Brixton Hill patients to join the gardening group at Katakata cafe. Ray loved trees and when we emerge from this ordeal we will plant one in his memory.

Dr Shuo Zhang, is a Lambeth GP Food Co-op Board member who leads on sustainability and climate change. Shou shares her thoughts on these issues from her experience with the Royal College of Psychiatry, with local work at South London and Maudesley NHS Trust and as a contributor to thinking about global heating in the health service. Johnny Stormonth-Darling is a Director of the UK Urban AgriTech Collective which is a national body promoting new approaches to urban food growing www.ukuat.org. Johnny and colleagues have been working with us on helping to shape the concept of an urban NHS Farm drawing on leading edge international research and best practice in the field. Here he writes about the important work at Boston General Hospital's roof top farm which feeds the hospital and local community in so many ways.

The recent publication of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change has been a catalyst for action across the NHS. We have responded to NHS England's call for ideas (For a greener NHS www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs) earlier this year with three submissions, one of which described our work in primary, secondary and community care over the past seven years. We look forward to further opportunities to share our learning with others both within the NHS and wider public sector.

Continued overleaf...

Update from Ed (continued)...

An example of this is highlighted in Sabrina Chiaretti's piece on the improving air quality project in Stockwell. With initial funding from Lambeth Council we will re-create an enhanced vegetable garden to include a bespoke green living wall for growing all sorts of food.

We have responded to the current emergency by launching a Seeds for Life project in collaboration with Lambeth Council. We are aiming to provide a free Seeds for Life gardening kit for up to six-thousand vulnerable people in Lambeth. These kits will include a free packet of seeds, hints on how to garden at home successfully and a simple recipe written by one of our members. The Seeds for Life kits will be included in the food parcels being distributed by the Council. We are working with national seed distributors, the Co-op and other partners to make this a successful contribution to community wellbeing at a time of deep crisis.

A Crowdfunding site is now up and running to provide modest financial support for this work.

I would like to end by thanking John Bennett for putting this special newsletter together; Amber for keeping the office at home on track; and also thanks to Anke at Katakata, Molly at the Pulross Centre, Elizabeth at Gracefield Gardens and Flora at Jennie Lee, Kings College Hospital for keeping the gardens watered and cared for at a difficult time. The pandemic will pass, we will return to our gardens and our seeds will grow into new life.

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

Working together towards a more sustainable vision of the NHS

I hope this newsletter finds you well, in these strange times. Ed asked me to give an update on sustainability and the NHS, as I have been working on this locally, with colleagues at the South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS trust where I am a psychiatry trainee, and nationally through my role on the sustainability committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Sustainability and climate change issues have been rapidly moving up the political agenda. In January, NHS England made the landmark announcement of a campaign for large scale transformation across the board so that the NHS could meet targets of net zero emissions by 2030. There was a call for ideas and evidence and promises of more funding and top down level support for a broad range of initiatives within hospitals and the community.

We were hoping to carry the momentum forwards locally by marking NHS sustainability day on the 19th of March at Lambeth Hospital. This would have involved a stall in the restaurant with colleagues from SLaM to engage staff around sustainability at SLaM and continue conversations about food growing for patients at Lambeth Hospital. However due to the rapidly developing situation with COVID-19, these plans have been put on hold.

Some of the changes that we were hoping that the greener NHS campaign will bring, such as getting all aspects of the NHS, from wards and departments within trusts, to between trusts and with community and other partners to work better together are needed now more than ever. The NHS is rising to meet the unprecedented demands placed upon it; however, it has also raised questions as to why the decision-making was so slow, change so patchy and resisted, and services so fragmented.

I am heartened by the hundreds of thousands of people who have volunteered to help the NHS in its hour of need. Co-operating, sharing and kindness are the bread and butter of the Lambeth GP Food Co-op. We should draw on our shared experience and vision of cooperating together for community health and wellbeing both now and in re-building the NHS in the future.

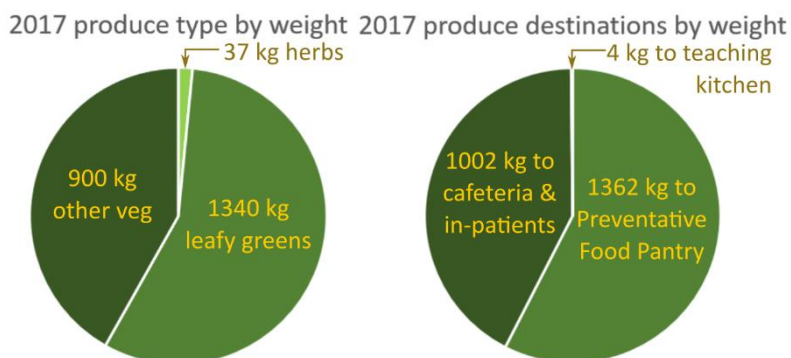
Dr Shuo Zhang, Lambeth GP Food Co-op Board Member

Up, up on the roof

Making something of unused space in the city is a core component of Lambeth GP Food Co-op's operations and one of the main positive impacts of urban farming interventions the world over. The spaces between buildings can, however, be few and far between and often subject to planning and impending development. As such it is difficult for urban farming initiatives to make much of an impact on the food system and the dream of ubiquitous locally grown sustenance remains thus for the majority.

For every building, however there exists a rooftop. And where these roofs are flat then there is potentially fertile ground to play with. Increasingly used as space for solar panels and the occasional recreational garden, there are also a growing number of flat roofs being used as productive growing space from *Brooklyn Grange Farm* in New York to the *UrbanFarmers* elaborate rooftop greenhouse in The Hague. Closer to our heart though, is the recent project at the Boston Medical Centre (BMC) in Boston, Massachusetts; a 650 m² area of flat roof which has been serving the nutritional needs of hospital staff and patients, as well as the local community, since 2017.

The BMC rooftop farm's crop range is impressive and includes kale, collard greens, bok choy, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, peppers, aubergine, beans, squash, various herbs and even honey (from 100 000 bees split between 2 hives). By design the farm embodies an integrated approach encompassing patient care, preventative nutrition and social and environmental responsibility. The annual 2200 – 3100 kg of produce ends up in the hospital's cafeteria, an educational kitchen and on the plates of in-patients where it helps to challenge the ridiculous but often accurate preconception that hospital food is generally pretty bad. In total it reaches around 7000 people per month, including low income families from the surrounding locale.



BMC rooftop farm production metrics. Adapted from Aviva et al. (2019)

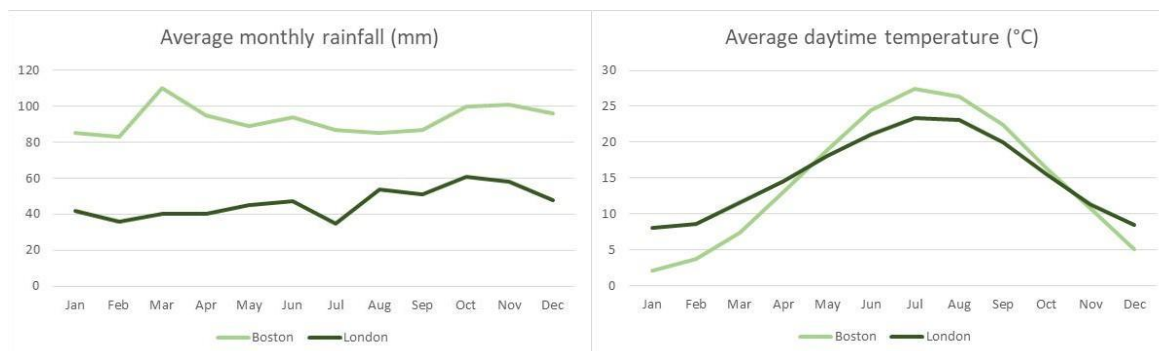
The farm is run by one full-time and one part-time employee bolstered by over 100 volunteers from the hospital community. Produce is grown in 2243 modular milk-crate-style raised beds filled with organic compost media which are watered automatically by an intelligent system that can respond to incoming weather forecasts. It is widely viewed by staff and patients as an incredibly positive addition and even serves as a social hub for those involved.

In addition to the food itself, the rooftop farm has inherent ecological credentials in the form of reduced food miles, enhanced biodiversity and even thermal insulation for the building itself, thus reducing seasonal heating and cooling costs. There is also potential to extend the use of such a space for therapeutic purposes, providing an oasis of tranquillity in the heart of the city during what is invariably a difficult time for anyone enjoying a prolonged hospital stay.

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Up, up on the roof (continued)...

At Lambeth GP Food Co-op we believe that similar projects can and should be implemented on the roofs of NHS property. A quick comparison of the key climate variables in Boston and London (see graphs below) suggest that, with perhaps a few differences in crop varieties, it should be readily possible to reproduce the success of the BMC rooftop farm in London, and indeed in much of the UK as well. To this end we have submitted a case study of the BMC roof garden to the recent *Greening the NHS* call for ideas which we hope will lodge itself firmly in the minds of the NHS's strategic decision makers.



Comparison between daytime average temperature and monthly rainfall in Boston and London. Source: <https://weather-averages.co.uk/>

Scaling up the activities of Lambeth GP Food Co-op in NHS rooftops would be a highly impactful extension of our mission to tackle urban food deserts, and supplement patient and community nutritional needs.

Johnny Stormonth-Darling, Director, UK Urban AgriTech



Recent photos from the vegetable garden at Jennie Lee House, Kings College Hospital, March 2020.

Tackling clean air at Swan Mews garden

Lambeth takes air pollution extremely seriously. The whole of Lambeth is an Air Quality Management Area, due to legal limit exceedances of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. Lambeth is committed to achieving clean air through the measures highlighted in its [Air Quality Action Plan 2017-2022](#).

Among these measures are: reducing residents' exposure to air pollution, raising awareness, and working in partnership with organisations, BIDs and TfL to address local air pollution problems.

In line with this commitment, in 2017 Lambeth Sustainability Team applied for internal funding (£45k) to implement localised solutions to improve air quality in 9 CLIP Wards: Bishops, Gipsy Hill, Knight's Hill, Larkhall, Thurlow Park, Stockwell, Princes, Oval, and Vassal.

The funding could be utilised to finance a range of air quality interventions, including: installing cycle parking, enhancing or building a new green area or green infrastructure, delivering air quality education initiatives in schools or community organisations.

In October 2019, The Lambeth GP Food Co-operative applied for £5k to enhance and extend the gardening for health at Swan Mews garden, in Larkhall. Officers from Lambeth Sustainability Team met with Councillor Tina Valcarcel and with representatives from the Lambeth GP Food Co-op and Grantham Surgery, to discuss their proposal and agree on their suggested pollution mitigation measures. The proposal focused on:

- Enhancing the garden by installing planters for small plants and vegetables alongside the fence of Swan Mews garden that faces Stockwell Road, a highly trafficked road. This helps to minimise the exposure to air pollution of those who attend the gardening sessions at Swan Mews garden. The Co-op committed to select plants which are known to absorb harmful air pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide. The additional plants and vegetables increase the Co-op's capacity to grow plants and flowers that are both health-generating and address environmental issues;
- Deliver a series of monthly workshops to the patients of Grantham Clinic that suffer from respiratory diseases, to ensure they knew how to manage their condition more effectively through improved diet and nutrition. The patients were recruited in partnership with Morley College, Stockwell Campus.

The Lambeth GP Food Co-operative has been awarded the funding, and will start working on delivering their proposal, with the support of Lambeth Sustainability Team.

Find out more about Lambeth's commitment to clean air:

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/better-fairer-lambeth/air-quality>

If you have any questions around Lambeth's air quality projects, please contact:

sustainability@lambeth.gov.uk

Sabrina Chiaretti, Sustainability Officer, Lambeth Council



Lambeth
GP FOOD CO-OP

SEEDS FOR LIFE

Enabling vulnerable people in Lambeth
to grow food at home during COVID-19

