

## Hello!

Welcome to the eighth 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](mailto: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](http://www.lgpfc.co.uk)



## NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2016

In his book "The Gift Relationship", Richard Titmuss describes the relationships of giving to one another that exist beyond the marketplace in which goods are bought and sold. He explores in the book why and how we give to each other freely, not expecting to receive monetary payment. Sound familiar? The NHS was created on the economic and moral basis that the service is a gift from ourselves to ourselves. Free at the point of need.

Having read Titmuss's book many years ago, its central idea of a gift came back to me last Tuesday when I saw Julia's wonderful birthday cake made to celebrate Lambeth GP Food Co-op's 3rd Birthday.

It was a gift from Julia to us. I do not know Julia, I have never met her nor do I know any more about her other than she is a friend of the glorious Hilda. I'd like to think that she is now my friend. Her gift of a specially designed and baked cake for a bunch of people she might not know is an example of giving to each other that happens every day in our community, and the giving makes us more human and humane with each other. So I want to say thank you to Julia for your gift, and the feeling of goodwill and love which is expressed in it.

More than thirty of us came together to celebrate working and dreaming together. The dream is really simple, to build life affirming gardens in every GP surgery. We are not quite there yet, but we are on the way to realise this practical contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of our communities. The recent launch of the Lambeth GP Food Co-op in Stockwell in partnership with Grantham and Beckett House surgeries, is a further step along this path. But more about that in the next newsletter.

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



Baked and decorated by Julia, this fabulous and delicious cake became the centre piece of our third anniversary celebration!



Lambeth GP Food Co-op at BMA Mind Garden Event on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June



Left: With the help of Goodgym volunteers we finished building the garden at Grantham surgery on 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Thanks to a great team!

Right: Hilda, Ivor and Diane – three founding members of LGPFC. Without their dedication we would not be flourishing now!



## Forging strong links

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Dr Katty Mayre-Chilton, a specialist research dietician based in London and I met Ed Rosen nearly three years ago through the Lambeth and Southwark Action on Malnutrition Project (LAMP).

I have more than a decade experience in pure bone and joint research (osteoporosis), the field in which I obtained my PhD. I retrained in dietetics, qualifying in 2009, and began my dietetic career in the NHS, working in acute general medicine, clinics and research, where I supported patients through diet advice for diabetes, weight management, malnutrition, hypertension, cardiovascular, IBS, etc.

In my progression I specialised in Haematology, HIV, Epidermolysis bullosa, older person care and Malnutrition. I also had the opportunity to work as a catering dietician for a whole year.

I was actively involved as a specialist research dietician for the Lambeth and Southwark Action on Malnutrition Project (LAMP) Team which was a pilot site for the Malnutrition task force in collaboration with Lambeth Age UK. During my work with LAMP I was lead on 3 projects, one of which was working more closely with community and voluntary groups who were supporting older adults, vulnerable adults and patient groups diagnosed with dementia. As my post allowed for networking I was able to facilitate links to groups to help them find resources or support as we considered their work invaluable for reducing malnutrition, isolation and enhancing quality of life for these patient groups.

It was through these projects I was able to interview Dr Raj Mitra, who first spoke of this new Lambeth GP Food Coop (LGPFC) and who had won a prestigious award. I have always felt strongly that working in the local hospitals should also encourage staff to understand what is happening around the local community which could help our patients as they are discharged. With great eagerness I contacted Ed and got invitations for LGPFC to present their work at events we held across Lambeth and Southwark. Some of the many links we have been able to share included Bruno Lacey from the Urban Growth and King's College London (KCL) to help with student volunteers at the LGPFC sites (through their end of year health promotion projects). The students gained, and will pass on, knowledge and experience of such a worthwhile project and they also produced a questionnaire for the LGPFC which can be used in the future to audit and evaluate the project.

Currently I am helping build links to KCL to help with the evaluation of public health and community projects in nutrition such as the LGPFC. In future work together I hope to use my experience from dietetics and hospital catering with regards to help the LGPFC meet their objectives of creating and engaging patients in productive activity focusing on the distribution and links to the local public sector NHS partners as well as help develop and encourage the relationship of the LGPFC to the general practice and primary care.

Dr Katty Mayre-Chilton, specialist research dietician



Left: Members, friends and supporters enjoy a lovely afternoon doing the Lambeth Walk (in the surgery garden!) at our third anniversary celebration on 26th July.

Right: Hilda and Ed cut the cake that Julia had kindly baked and decorated for our special day.



## **We Need Your Help!**

NHS Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group and Lambeth Council provided developmental funding for our work which has now ended. There is more work to do and we want to do it. We are passionately committed to improving people's lives through gardening and social support.

We believe there are many people who would like us to succeed in doing more over the coming years. We are preparing to launch a Community Share Issue aimed at raising money that will be invested in expanding our work across the Borough and beyond. Community Shares enable people of good will to invest in one of the first community led health co-operatives working in and for the NHS.

We've been working with David Boyle from the Community Shares Company since the beginning of the year to help prepare for our launch in the Autumn. David has extensive experience in the field of community finance having worked with over twenty community projects including Hastings Pier, media and football clubs who have all launched community shares. With David's help and support, we will be inviting investments in the Lambeth GP Food Co-op to enable us to raise working capital which will be used to grow the Lambeth GP Food Co-op and secure our future. We will be using [Crowdfunder.co.uk](http://Crowdfunder.co.uk) to run the community share offer from September onwards. Anyone interested in finding out more on how they can invest in a community share to support the Lambeth GP Food Co-op should contact us on [gpfoodcoop@gmail.com](mailto:gpfoodcoop@gmail.com) or register your interest on our website: [www.lgpfc.co.uk](http://www.lgpfc.co.uk).

For more information about community shares and how they work, you may like to look at the website: [www.communityshares.org.uk](http://www.communityshares.org.uk)

## **A visit from Down Under!**

My visit to the Lambeth garden was such a wonderful experience. I started off meeting Hilda and being introduced to two of the participants, Mary and Bernadette, who had prepared a special tea party to celebrate the Queen's birthday, being very patriotic with flags and hats. The sandwiches were lovingly made by Mary, and Bernadette organised the delicious cakes, with staff coming to join in.

This in itself showed the unity, friendship, confidence and love for all concerned - how therapeutic; socially, mentally and emotionally.

Then it was time to be shown the garden. I couldn't believe in such a limited space with raised garden boxes, what could be achieved. It was flourishing with vegetables, herbs, and apple and avocado trees.

I loved the recycling system. Absolutely not one bit of waste. The large plastic mesh bags that the soil came in was transformed into a garden plot for potatoes, another for pumpkins. And plastic string bags we get our oranges in were used to tie plants and twig stacks to promote the insects and wildlife in the garden.

The herbs grown were freshly cut and left for all to enjoy - true community spirit. The visit was the most wonderful experience, finished off with Bernadette singing and dancing the Lambeth Walk for me. What a memory to take back to Sydney, Australia.

I practice as a yoga teacher in Australia, but have many years of nursing background so truly appreciate the healing power of the work you are doing. In our classes we practice mindfulness, meditation and a holistic approach to wellbeing. It was wonderful to be alongside the Lambeth Food Coop team at the British Medical Association Mind Garden event, where we promoted health through gardens and mindfulness in the tranquil garden of the British Medical Association.

I will leave London, truly inspired to explore how the wonderful work and mission of your group can be spread in Australia.

Carol Stuart, Yoga and Wellbeing Teacher, Australia

## Dr Richard Lehman: Is gardening good for your health?



At the rear of the grand London buildings which house the BMA and the BMJ offices, there is a tranquil garden, sheltered by tall buildings and lovingly tended by Daniella Sikora. Over the last two weeks it has provided the backdrop to two early evening lecture sessions on gardening and health, forming part of the Chelsea Fringe programme.

I admit that I set out with mixed feelings. Although I've been a member of the Royal Horticultural Society on and off for years, I've never been to the Chelsea Flower Show. To me gardening means putting down roots, building a unique shared space over many years of trial and error, and exchanging plants with friends. Gardens as competitive showy things that appear one day and are gone a week later are not gardens at all in my book.

And the health aspect bothers me too. Gardens aren't a means to an end: they are a part of the meaning of life. Health matters because it allows you to garden, not the other way round. And if you are wealthy enough and settled enough to own a garden that needs regular attention, then you are already more likely to live a longer and healthier life than most of your fellow citizens.

But my forebodings about lectures preaching a privileged activity to the masses were totally unfounded. Fiona Godlee started off by pointing out that the current BMA House garden (pictured) is in the same place that Charles Dickens had his garden when he wrote his great mid-period novels. Dickens was no gardener but he was a fanatical walker. The first lecture, by William Bird, a GP and director of Intelligent Health, was more about walking than gardening. Its main theme was connectedness with Nature and with other people as a source of wholeness and fun, and in his ceaseless promotion of these activities over two decades, he has come to use the H word less and less.

Of course, when trying to persuade health commissioners to fund such activities as forest walks for patients, or walking activity competitions among primary schools, a persuasive scientific pretext can come in handy. William has a large collection of studies of connectedness with Nature in relation to various surrogates such as inflammatory markers, myokines, and visceral fat distribution. But when it comes to actual people, the pull is the fun and connectedness, not the years of added life or lowered cardiovascular risk.

And that got me thinking about the statin debate. The most brilliant contribution this year is a paper by Judith Finegold et al in which the distribution of actual mortality benefit is all clustered at the far end of a blank area.

I once tried to design a simple Option Grid comparing the benefits of statins with those of increased activity or dietary change. This is almost a category error, because these belong to entirely different domains. Physical activity in natural spaces with other people (or a dog) is as unlike remembering to take a pill each night as anything can be. The first is a joy that makes you feel better at once. The other is a nightly reminder of mortality before you try to sleep.

In the second lecture, Ed Rosen and two of his team presented the achievements of the Lambeth GP Food Cooperative. The majority of people in Lambeth today live in small apartments. No use extolling the joys of gardening to them, it would seem. But Ed had the idea that most of the 45 GP surgeries in Lambeth have some spare space, indoors or out. And where there is space and light, you can grow food. And when people come together to grow food, they feel better and eat fresh produce, ran the argument. People came and it worked, and it's a great model for others; but as ever, funding is precarious.

Can we really make our cities into playgrounds for people to enjoy interacting with Nature, as William hopes? Can everybody join in gardening for fun or for food? It's a great vision, and one that Lambeth's greatest resident would approve of. When William Blake lived at 13 Hercules Buildings in 1793, a caller found him in the garden. He was reading Paradise Lost with his wife, both of them appropriately naked.

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