

Hello!

Welcome to the nineteenth 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 our website <http://lambeth.gpfoodcoop.org.uk/>



Update from Ed

Dave Lewis, Tesco's boss commenting on the coronavirus and its impact on our lives said, "We've seen some difficult things, but also humanity and acts of kindness. I don't think I have seen it before".

This newsletter contains articles that confirm Mr Lewis's observations about us coming together to express our human kindness and our sense of mutual interest at a time of crisis and danger. We focus in this issue on the delivery of the Seeds For Life project which is described by Ian Rogerson from the Co-op; Janet Baker from the Healthy Living Platform & Lambeth Emergency Food Distribution Service; and our own Amber Davey. They are all part of the Seeds for Life story and they each helped us distribute 8 750 packets of seeds to vulnerable people in Lambeth during April and May.

We received the following comments from one of those who received a seed pack in their food parcel, "As a person who is shielding and unable to leave my home, I am most grateful for your generosity and kindness".

This newsletter is their story.

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



Lambeth
GP FOOD CO-OP

SEEDS FOR LIFE

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



Co-ordinating the Seeds For Life project

In response to the Covid-19 lockdown, we closed all of our gardens to patients. We knew that many of our patients, most of whom fell into the category of vulnerable people, would miss their gardening activities. We thought they could garden at home if we could get the seeds to them.

Aware of Lambeth Council's emergency food distribution initiative, we contacted Joel De Mowbray, then coordinator, to discuss a possible partnership through which packets of seeds could be included in food parcels.

We contacted Ian at the Co-op and he worked his magic and connected us with Charmay Prout, a friend of Ian's in the farm industry, who then sourced 3,000 packs of lettuce seeds from Sutton Seeds. Charmay also managed to source 7kg of cress seeds, which were then lovingly packed into envelopes by Ian's wonderful neighbours who are based in Yorkshire!

Also, a good friend of Lambeth GP Food Co-op, Janine Nelson from the Garden Museum connected us with Paolo Arrigo from Franchi Seeds. Franchi Seeds generously donated around 600 packs of high-quality radish seeds which are being distributed in June. Along with the seed packets, there are growing instructions, recipes and tips which are included in the Seeds for Life packs. We were then put in touch with Lobke Hulzinke, a graphic designer who has wonderfully designed all three leaflets for us. Recipes and tips were donated by our gardeners, supporters and myself.

My experience with working with Lambeth GP Food Co-op has demonstrated the importance for co-operation and solidarity within our communities, especially during these challenging times.

Amber Davey, Project Manager, Lambeth GP Food Co-op



(From left, to right) Hilda, Mary and Amber clearing the garden at the Pulross Centre earlier this year.

Janet Baker, Manager at Lambeth Emergency Food Distribution Centre writes;

I manage the main Lambeth Food Distribution Hub in Brixton. We have delivered over 10,000 food parcels to vulnerable people and families across the borough as well as supplying food banks, homeless centres, and others. The Seeds For Life packs were included in many of the food parcels in April and May.

Each recipient gets a bag of fresh vegetables, fruit, dried food and, of course, loo rolls. My organisation, Healthy Living Platform, Brixton People's Kitchen, have worked in partnership with Lambeth Council as an example of collective support and mutual help across all of our communities.



Janet Baker at Brixton Recreation Centre, preparing food parcels for those in need.

Supporting Seeds for Life

I am the Technical Manager responsible for Co-op Brand alcoholic drinks. I work with producers and packaging facilities all over the world making sure the products our specialist buyers select are made and packed to the standards we require. It's a hard job but someone has to do it and I love it and the teams I work with! I live and work in West Yorkshire.

In January I learnt about Lambeth GP Food Co-op from Co-op News and I was just blown away by the idea of allowing patients to share in the pleasure of each others' company while growing stuff. So, I dropped them a line, bought the recipe books and now have enough Veg Curry frozen down to last me a while!

A week into "Lockdown" I got a phone call from Ed asking if I could help source 6,000 packets of Cress Seeds for Seeds For Life. I couldn't. However, I contacted Charmay Prout, a friend who used to work in our Farms division years ago and is still involved in the sector. She didn't have any cress seeds either but knew a man who might. Lo and behold 3,000 packets of lettuce seeds duly arrived in Lambeth. Oh yes, and she came up with 7kg of Cress Seed that needed packing. I reached out to the 'Courtyard COVID 19 WhatsApp group' where I live to see if anyone would help me pack them into wage packets. Everyone said yes!

Envelopes, seeds and instructions were duly distributed following strict social distancing. About 3 weeks later Ed received 5,715 packets (filled with varying accuracy) while we all listened to the Weaver's Court "Doing the Lambeth (Walk)" Isolation playlist.

I can't begin to express my feelings for and thanks to Charmay and my neighbours for making it happen. And the same goes for Ed and Amber for their patience while we got it together and for asking in the first place. I remain in awe of everything Lambeth GP Food Co-op are doing.

Ian Rogerson, The Co-op



One of Ian's neighbours packing the seeds ready to be sent to Lambeth, and a "cress-head" made by another neighbour.

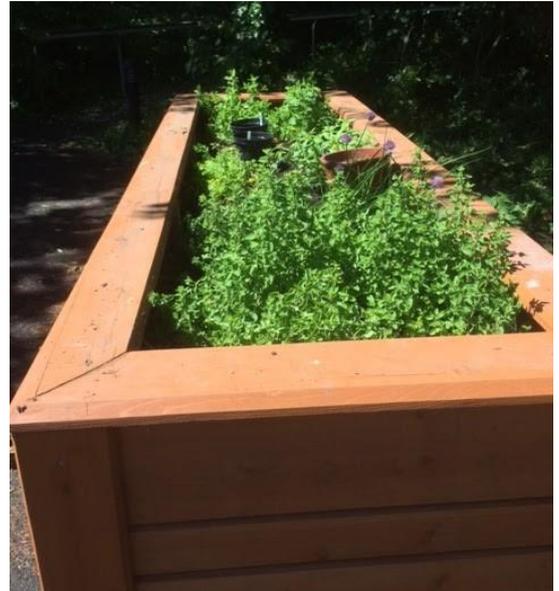
Update from Molly Lamphear, the garden lead at the Pulross Intermediate Care Centre in Brixton.

Molly, supported by Muriel Hudson, has led the gardening for health activities since the launch in July 2019. Molly writes...

"Currently our broad beans are producing heavily despite a spell of black fly, and the chard was harvested along with regular cuttings from the herb planter. The Inca berries were quite productive, so I used them to make muffins for the staff (and for Julia and me!).

The peas, courgettes and kale have been reluctant to show their shoots, but the spinach, beans and herbs are co-operating nicely. The rhubarb is growing better in some spaces than others, and the strawberries are blossoming. Next week we will plant beetroot and continue our watering regiment - volunteers are welcome!

Pulross also has an area for flower growing. The flower garden was given over 30 lovely plants from what would have been the Chelsea Flower Show. These were given to Helen Reed, Clinical Lead for Neurology, who manages the flower garden at Pulross. Another staff member at Pulross, Carly, now oversees the flower garden and was very happy for Julia and I to clear the beds and place the new flower plants. Last Tuesday, Carly and several other staff members and patients had done an excellent job planting the flowers from Chelsea. I think this will be a very productive partnership."



Planters at the Pulross Centre, thriving in the sunshine.