

Hello!

Welcome to the twenty-first 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/>



NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2020

Update from Ed

As I write this update I have the news on which confirms that Joe Biden is on course to replace the sitting incumbent as President of the United States. This is important in many ways and no more important is that this political tectonic shift occurs in the midst of a pandemic both in the USA and here in our little cluster of islands. Covid-19 is the defining issue in our daily lives at the moment and also is likely to be with us for a while longer, creating a new political environment in which health and care will be redesigned, not least to ensure that those who are suffering the most from the effects of Covid -19 are provided with the support and opportunities for improving their lives which they deserve.

In his now rediscovered masterpiece "The Plague", Albert Camus instructs us to keep doing our jobs no matter how the Plague rages and kills all around us:

"The thing was to do your job as it should be done."

Lambeth GP Food Co-op has continued to do its 'job' during the Covid-19 crisis. We have continued to keep our gardens open for patients to find a safe and supported space to grow vegetables and find some kind of peace in gardening with others. A community of people whose "work" has been to grow potatoes, beans, courgettes and in many cases themselves. This may be the meaning of our work together.

Our "job" includes sharing our learning with others who wish to join in the work of gardening for health. And more. As one Clinical Director of a local Primary Care Network said, "gardening has shot up the health agenda, and our gardens are well placed to make a bigger contribution in the future". We have been sharing learning from our experience with Hilda Castillo-Binger presenting our work at the South London Botanical Institute's zoom workshop week recently. Hilda will be presenting a further session for Age Concern Lambeth as part of Black History Month. Dr Shou Zhang referenced our work at a recent European Mental Health on-line Conference in Copenhagen. I presented our work to a pre-conference zoom meeting to colleagues from Health Care Without Harm on the theme of Food Growing in Health organisations.

On Friday 6th November we held our 7th AGM, this time via zoom, with members and supporters hearing from Francklin Evaegle from Katakata whose garden is linked to Brixton Hill surgery. Francklin described his vision for a future People's Supermarket at the restaurant and we plan to be closely involved in supporting this important initiative which will benefit the people of Brixton Hill.

I would like to end this update by thanking all our garden leads for being there during a difficult time in all our lives: Anke at Katakata/Brixton Hill surgery; Chrissy at Northwood/Crown Dale; Molly at Pulross/GSTT; Elizabeth at Gracefield Gardens; and Hilda both at Lambeth Walk and Swann Mews/Grantham surgery. Flora has continued to support Corner Surgery at Kings College Hospital/Jennie Lee garden. Thank you to you all.

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

Amber's reflections

I began working with Lambeth GP Food Co-op in October 2019 as a Project Manager and was thrilled to join a community orientated movement that shared my values and goals in improving the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people in the community. I had recently began studying an MSc in Global Public Health Nutrition at Westminster University, and felt I was able to apply my new knowledge in gardening for health.

Access to green space can have significant impact on our mental and physical health with 'green exercise' such as allotment gardening having a large potential to promote physical activity, enable stress reduction, promote healthy eating and encourage social interaction. Research has suggested that gardeners have demonstrated to be happier than non-gardeners, with greater self-esteem, less loneliness and reduced risk of breaks in normal psychological function. The foundations of LGPFC was built on this premise and that was apparent in many projects I was working on.

We had many plans for Summer 2020 however the pandemic halted those plans. In light of closing our gardens, we felt pained for the many people who have had to self-isolate. With this in mind, we launched the Seeds for Life scheme in partnership with Lambeth Council. You may have read about Seeds for Life in previous newsletters editions. I felt this gave me great insight to how community distribution schemes worked and how local councils operate in times of crisis. I was able to observe the meaning of 'co-operation' in action with communities, organisations and individuals collaborating to distribute Seed for Life kits across the borough of Lambeth. Working with Lambeth GP Food Co-op has shown me the need for collaboration across all stakeholders with the goal of improving health for all, an ethos I will carry forward into my future career. I also vastly improved my project management skills after working on multiple projects with limited time to do it which I am certainly grateful for!

I wish LGPFC all the best for the future and hope to stay in touch and watch from afar as the co-operative grows and flourishes!

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



On Zoom for our AGM on 6th November

Our Garden Buddy support scheme

In this short piece I would like to describe our thinking which developed in response to the pandemic earlier this year. We have written about the Seeds for Life initiative which began as a response to the first stage of Covid-19 in the spring. This involved the distribution of 9,000 plus packs of seeds to people in Lambeth who were being supported by Lambeth Council's Emergency Food Distribution network in which community organisations including Health Food Platform and Brixton People's Soup Kitchen were key organisers alongside Council staff. We understood that our role might be to offer support to people who might be interested in gardening at home as being involved in the many gardening initiatives in Lambeth, including our own, was not an option.

As many people might be new to gardening or did not have a garden themselves, we began thinking of ways in which we could support them in their attempts to grow vegetables either on balconies, small patches of available space or on windowsills. The aim was to help people engage in simple growing activity and to be helped to learn from these activities. In my business, education, we call this learning by doing. By June this year it was time to do a lot more learning by doing and to do this well the learner often needs personal support and help, and often this could include a coach.

Drawing on our experience with NHS coaching and mentoring schemes which were designed to support healthcare workers on their professional and personal journey's at work, we have begun to redesign this approach for a new purpose, and that is to help patients become happy home gardeners. We have also drawn down our experiences from the patient and user self-management movements over the past decade or so, and especially the Expert Patient Programmes which provided a supportive network for people managing long term conditions.

A small number of gardening buddies have been recruited to offer telephone support to a growing network of Lambeth patients who are gardening at home. They are self-isolating, having been referred to us by clinicians in the field. A gardening buddy has the skills, knowledge and understanding to support a patient with their gardening. Buddies may have previous experience of mentoring, teaching, coaching, counselling or a related support discipline. And they have a good understanding of horticulture as this is a core activity as a Buddy.

Several buddies have been recruited with support from Team Lambeth's Volunteer service which has put us in touch with new people and new networks. Other buddies have emerged from our own garden leads and we are excited with the future prospect of learning from the many people who will join us as buddies and from those people we look forward to supporting in the future.

If you would like to become a gardening buddy or would like to receive more information on the role please contact us at gpfoodcoop@gmail.com

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

Welcome to Kiu!

Hello, my name is Kiu and I recently joined Lambeth GP Food Co-Op as the new Project Manager. I am very excited to be coming back having previously interned with Ed and the team back in 2017 and spending time learning about the garden initiatives. But first and foremost, I would like to thank Amber for all her work this past year and setting up the multiple workstreams collaborating with various stakeholders in Lambeth.

By day, I am also a Doctoral Researcher in nutrition at the University of Westminster and just recently started my second year. My research predominantly focuses on Doctors' Nutrition, exploring doctors' nutrition at their workplace and its impact on their health and wellbeing. So essentially asking the question, "How healthy are doctors during their working hours?" It is exciting research, and if anyone would like to find out more, please do contact me separately.

With my interest in nutrition, and more so on doctors' nutrition, working with Lambeth GP Food Co-Op provides me with that opportunity to understand the community and the process for doctors to help patients recovering from their health implications. More than ever we are all working from home and likewise, Lambeth GP Food Co-Op continues to support patients in our community on their recovery journeys from home.

As previously mentioned by Ed in the newsletters, we have several workstreams which we support. We have, of course, our gardens which are growing from strength to strength with food grown by the patients – it is so wonderful to see how it has changed when I last saw it in 2017!

I am supporting the Gardening Buddy Scheme which aims to support patients' health and wellbeing at home, bringing together gardeners and patients together virtually. As Ed explained in this newsletter, we are also looking for volunteers with a gardening and coaching experience to support patients who might be self-isolating at home and recovering. So please do get in touch with us, if you would like to spare a bit of time supporting patients.

With the never-ending COVID tunnel we are currently experiencing, 'Supporting Long COVID Patients' is another project with which I am involved. As we are experiencing more patients with long COVID, our project aims to understand the relationship between nutrition and dietary behaviour with long COVID and how can we support this group of patients through our garden initiatives. If anyone would be interested in sharing any insights and or experiences, please do contact us.

I look forward to "meeting" you all, whether virtually or in person, when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, if you do have any queries please do drop us a message or visit our website:

<http://lambeth.gpfoodcoop.org.uk/>

Kiu Sum, Project Manager, Lambeth GP Food Co-Op



The garden at Katakata, Brixton Hill, at peace in October 2020