

Progress in Practice

West Cumberland Hospital

An initiative with the Rural Regeneration Unit to promote the use of local food in West Cumberland Hospital

Summary

Sharron Rourke from the Rural Regeneration Unit in Cumbria has actively been working with West Cumberland Hospital at Whitehaven, part of North Cumbria Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, to promote local food procurement where possible.

Whilst significant use is made of the national NHS contracts for food negotiated by the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, there is still scope in the market to utilise local supply for certain produce. Dairy products such as milk and eggs are all locally produced, fresh meat is produced & slaughtered in Cumbria.

Suppliers are actively encouraged to utilise local supply providing they maintain their competitiveness.

Work is on going to develop this further with some of the smaller cottage hospitals within the area. These could operate differently, as they would be encouraged to buy from the local food co-operative, which would provide a regular supply of local fresh food.

The approach could be extended to involve other public sector agencies and has the potential to develop along the community enterprise model.



The Rural Regeneration Unit was established in March 2003 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation. Its purpose is to help ensure a sustainable future for local rural communities, especially those which are disadvantaged.

The RRU's longest-established project is the North Cumbria Health Action Zone community nutrition initiative, which brings together hard-pressed farmers and disadvantaged local communities to supply food at prices that benefit both parties by cutting out the distribution chain. The first such co-operative scheme was established in 2000 and has now been rolled out, to encompass 27 co-operatives, in total feeding 6,000 people every week in North Cumbria.

Links and organisations involved: West Cumberland Hospital is part of North Cumbria Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (www.northcumbriahealth.nhs.uk). More information about the Rural Regeneration Unit can be found at www.rru.org.uk.

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