

Progress in Practice

London Hospital Food Project

A project led by London Food Link, working with the Soil Association, to increase the amount of local and organic food served in four London hospitals

Summary

The aim of the London Hospital Food Project is to increase the amount of local and organic food served in four London hospitals. It is hoped that the project will not only result in healthier and better quality meals for hospital patients, staff and visitors, but will also benefit local communities, through supporting farming and food businesses in London and the South East.

It is funded by the King's Fund, Defra and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, and focuses on the food served in the canteens at Ealing and St George's hospitals, and both canteen and ward catering at the Royal Brompton and Lambeth hospitals. The aim is to ensure that 10% of the food served is locally produced – and ideally organic as well.

London Food Link works closely with catering managers to help them develop menus and supply tenders that favour organic, seasonal food that can be supplied locally. A number of events have taken place to help both suppliers and catering staff to reconnect and build understanding of the tendering process, including organic certification training, farm visits, and training from public procurement experts. The Soil Association is running a Public Procurement Helpline – on 0117 914 2424 – for enquiries from food suppliers who are interested in taking part in the project.

Research is being carried out to assess the economic and health benefits of sustainable food procurement, as well as a study on the distribution barriers, and the development of local food infrastructure within London. A nationwide replication network has been established to share good practice and advice.



King's Fund Chief Executive Niall Dickson said:
"The NHS spends £500 million on food to serve over 300 million meals each year in approximately 1,200 hospitals. This project is an excellent example of how the NHS can use its corporate spending power to boost the local economy at the same time as improving direct services to patients."

Peter Melchett, Policy Director at the Soil Association, said:

"There is now a real enthusiasm to change the food served in schools and hospitals with a drive from the Government. With poor diets and the resulting serious ill-health epidemic now firmly on the political agenda, we have opportunities to make meals nutritious, healthy, popular and enjoyable."



Links and organisations involved: London Food Link (www.londonfoodlink.org) is part of Sustain (www.sustainweb.org) and the project is in partnership with the Soil Association (www.soilassociation.org.uk). The four hospitals involved in the project are: Ealing Hospital (www.ealinghospital.org.uk), St George's Hospital (www.st-georges.org.uk), the Royal Brompton Hospital (www.rbh.nthames.nhs.uk) and Royal Bethlem Hospital (www.slam.nhs.uk). The project is funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (www.defra.gov.uk), the King's Fund (www.kingsfund.org.uk), and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.

Contact:

Emma Hockridge, Hospital Food Project Officer, London Food Link c/o Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, 94 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PF, 020 7837 1228, emma@sustainweb.org