

Lambeth's GP Food Co-op welcome The Duchess of Cornwall

On Thursday 7th February, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall visited the Lambeth GP Food Co-op to mark their 6th anniversary celebration, which took place at Stockwell Community Centre. Her Royal Highness' visit recognised the positive contributions that the gardens have made to the health of local people living with long term conditions as well as the sustainability of the health and social care system. And after a successful celebration, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall is now an honorary member of the Lambeth GP Food Co-op.

The Lambeth GP Food Co-op was launched in 2013 at Lambeth Walk Surgery with Brockwell Park Surgery joining very soon after, and is a community led health cooperative run by doctors, nurses and Lambeth residents, who grow food together.

It was set up to support patients with long term health conditions as part of the NHS social prescribing initiative. With help from funding from Lambeth CCG and Lambeth Council, 11 GP surgeries across the borough have turned unused outdoor space into gardens for patients to grow fruit and vegetables. GPs and nurses refer patients who are lonely and socially isolated, have a long-term condition and/or have mental health problems. The GP garden communities provide a space and a reason for people to socialise, learn about food and grow food together.

The Lambeth GP Food Co-op won awards in its opening year for Best Sustainable Food Initiative in the NHS awarded by Public Health England and NHS Sustainability.

Growing evidence shows that referrals to community services such as exercise or art classes, history groups and even ballroom dancing can boost health and wellbeing more than medication. The NHS Long Term Plan will see GPs surgeries big and small will work to support each other in around 1,400 Primary Care Networks covering the country.

Dr Ed Rosen, Project Director for the Lambeth GP Food Co-op said:

“We were delighted to welcome HRH the Duchess of Cornwall to the Lambeth GP Food Co-op and it was fantastic to see our work recognised in such a way, Our GP garden communities provide a space and a reason for people to socialise, learn and grow food together. People who participate are improving their own health and wellbeing. We hope to inspire others to replicate our model of community engagement elsewhere.”