

Lambeth – A case study of a borough wide approach to food growing

Lambeth Council's initial journey into the world of food growing came through their Green Community Champions programme¹. In the first year more than 40 projects were set up, mainly down to the huge interest in food growing in the borough. This was helped by a pro-active Council officer who recognised the benefits of these projects and offered advice and support to local groups and colleagues.

This gave rise to a new way of thinking when working with local people, providing a more **supportive** role rather than a **leadership** role. This **resident-led approach** to food growing projects has helped shape other Council agendas and is challenging Council officers to work more directly with local people in other areas of work. As projects developed and local people requested greater support it was decided to create the Lambeth Food Partnership with a launch in June 2012.

The Lambeth Food Partnership has ten aims:

- **Education** - Provide education and learning initiatives both in formal and informal settings across the Borough to raise awareness of sustainable food issues.
- **Networking** - Provide networking opportunities to improve the connections between the various components of the food system, to share good learning and encourage partnership working.
- **Policy** - Ensure that all policies and strategies across the Borough, for example planning, economic development, support a sustainable food system in Lambeth.
- **Food poverty / Access** - Improve access to healthy affordable food for all residents.
- **Waste** - Reduce food related waste in Lambeth – reduce, re-use and recycle
- **Land** - Increase access to land for growing and other food related activities for residents and community groups.
- **Culture/Behaviour change** - Celebrate the cultural diversity of food in the Borough, encourage positive behaviour change to support health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for community engagement in food activities.
- **Environmental sustainability** - Promote food produced in ways which conserve and enhance the environment and contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions.
- **Procurement** - Introduce procurement policies within public institutions e.g. schools, hospitals which include sustainable and nutritious food, and which support animal welfare and fair-trade.
- **Local economy** - Encourage the development of a vibrant local food economy, support food related SMEs and local food growing initiatives.

The partnership initially started by **writing a strategy** along with **mapping** the various strands of work already taking place. It was also important to **bring together the right partners** from within various Council departments, the NHS, education, food growing projects and representation from the newly formed 'Incredible Edible Lambeth'.



Incredible Edible Lambeth² is a collection of people and organisations that work together to make sure that healthy, sustainable, locally produced food is available to everyone living in Lambeth, regardless of income, both now and in the future.

Lambeth Council helped to set up Incredible Edible Lambeth as the local network to represent food growing projects. The initial support from the council consisted of **support in kind** - coordination of meetings and notes, as well as assisting with networking groups. The group now has a strong leadership, a website, Facebook and Twitter pages and organises its own events. It has an employed officer dedicated to supporting the development of the network through four **community food growing sites** or 'hubs' and the 'Growing Lambeth' project.

¹ <http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/recycling/become-a-green-champion>

² <http://www.incredibleediblelambeth.org/aboutus/>

This 'Growing Lambeth'³ project aims to:

- Develop a strong network to co-ordinate events and training throughout Lambeth
- Develop access to food growing space across public and statutory authorities (including park areas, green spaces at housing providers/registered social landlords)
- Develop access to free/low cost resources across the borough through the support and development of the growing hubs
- Disseminate an action research report to evaluate the movement in Lambeth
- Deliver 2 year training and capacity building programs for the growing hubs, groups and general public of Lambeth Borough
- Distribute funding to Lambeth Food growing groups
- Secure capital funding to develop future hub development.

Another successful approach to increasing food growing space is the Council's Freshview⁴ programme. This helps turn an unloved space into a productive and loved area. Often they are turned into food growing spaces ranging from street planters to community gardens, again resulting from the increased interest in food-growing in the borough.

Many local groups are developing their food growing projects into new businesses. This has been supported by Lambeth Council through 'Start Your Own Food Business Workshops'. These **workshops were co-produced with citizens** who wanted to start a food business. Brixton Market helped through running themed markets and allowing a market stall to be booked for one day. Further support has been provided by the Food Safety team, as well as financial training.

Key achievements so far are:

- More than 170 food growing projects started in the borough
- A strong network of very engaged positive local people has developed
- A pool of people with community development skills as well as growing skills has been established
- Support and networking has been provided by Incredible Edible Lambeth
- The project has developed to be independent from the local authority
- People have been empowered to improve their surroundings
- Jobs have been created within some of the bigger projects
- 'Champions' have obtained jobs e.g. Master Gardener coordinator, Streatham Action coordinator
- The Lambeth GP Food Coop has produced food for sale to NHS hospitals
- New successful local food businesses are emerging, e.g. Lambeth Poly won a Capital Growth Local Enterprise award

³ <http://www.incredibleediblelambeth.org/edible-lambeth/>

⁴ <http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/parking-transport-and-streets/street-and-road-maintenance/community-freshview-guide>

