

# Progress in Practice

## Royal Brompton Hospital Food Project

As part of the London Hospital Food Project, the Royal Brompton Hospital has successfully increased the amount of local and organic food served in staff restaurants, retail outlets and wards.

### Summary

The Royal Brompton Hospital (RBH) has been working with Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming, as one of 4 hospitals associated with the London Hospital Food Project aiming to procure 10% of its food from local/organic sources. The Royal Brompton Hospital has exceeded this target and now 14% of the food it serves is local and/or organic.

The Hospital Food Project is part of a holistic approach to food procurement and eating. Providing nutritional (often organic) food will enable patients to recover more quickly and help staff and visitors maintain a good diet. Setting a good example in hospital can also influence people's dietary choices when at home.

Being able to offer appetizing meals made with fresh ingredients not only has numerous health benefits, but also helps to minimise waste (because people enjoy eating it!) and tackle climate change by cutting down on the transportation of food, as well as contributing to the local economy.

Buying and eating food that is in season means it will be fresher, retain more of its natural nutrients and taste better. Also, if it has been organically grown, it will contain less pesticides, which is not only better for health, but also maintains the quality of the soil in which it was grown.

The manager of the Catering Department, Mike Duckett, has stopped working with some of the hospital's large scale suppliers because they could not make any changes in favour of buying local and/or organic produce. Instead, the Hospital now buys from smaller suppliers; for example, free range eggs from Kent; bread from Kilburn, London; and mushrooms that are grown under the North Circular Road. Buying from local suppliers helps to generate and maintain local jobs and contributes to the local economy.



### Mike Duckett, Catering Manager, Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust, commented:

"We want to serve food that is not only healthier for our patients but that is also purchased in a more responsible way, such as Fairtrade coffee and free-range eggs. Also, by increasing our use of local suppliers we can help to promote health by providing fresher, seasonal foods for our patients."

**Links and organisations involved:** Royal Brompton & Harefield Trust: <http://www.rbht.nhs.uk/>; Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming <http://www.sustainweb.org>; The Hospital Food Project: [http://www.sustainweb.org/hospital\\_index.asp](http://www.sustainweb.org/hospital_index.asp)

### Contact:

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## Challenges overcome

Success hasn't been easy, and there have been challenges along the way: resources and time. Although it is sometimes initially more expensive to buy local/organic food, the money is being invested in patient and staff health and in the long-term will pay back in quicker patient recovery times and a healthier workforce and local population.

RBH negotiated directly with local suppliers and organic buyers regarding prices. They found that certain companies were already supplying local schools (for example) with organic food, so RBH negotiated with them on behalf of the NHS to get a good price. At RBH, £3.50 is spent on food per adult patient per day, and £3.20 per child patient per day. The national average is £2.90. Mike Duckett said that it is important to remember that the quality of their food is high and is all prepared on site, including cakes for afternoon tea!

Another concern was that it would take too much time to re-train catering staff, re-write menus and find new suppliers. However, the menus are regularly changed anyway, so RBH devoted one week purely to writing up a new menu with new ideas that would maximise all the new produce they were using. They also got everybody involved (dieticians, catering staff etc.) which greatly reduced the work load.



## The Royal Brompton Hospital's sustainable food procurement initiatives include:

- serving organic meat to patients one day per week,
- buying Fairtrade goods,
- making soups on-site with locally grown organic vegetables (soup consumption is now up 40%!),
- including healthier options in vending machines,
- using organic coffee in coffee machines, and
- serving organic milk served to patients, staff and visitors.

## Future actions include:

- using organic detergents and sanitizing products,
- recycling cups/ serviettes/ paper,
- making organic sandwiches packaged in biodegradable containers, and
- working with their usual vegetable oil supplier to arrange collection of the used oil so it can be converted into bio-diesel.

## Key Learning Points:

- By involving all catering staff directly in the project, e.g. visiting farms and suppliers, you can create an enthusiastic and passionate team to work with and ensure that the food you buy is of the highest quality.
- Work with your suppliers to explore more sustainable sourcing and waste opportunities.
- Be adventurous when looking for avenues through which to ensure your Trust is following sustainable development practices.

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