

'My Experience of the Lambeth GP Food Co-op'

By **Carine Ndive**, receptionist at The Corner Surgery, Coldharbour Lane

My Name is Carine Ndive and I am a receptionist at the Corner Surgery and the link person for the Lambeth GP Food Co-op, which has been fun, interesting and a profound learning experience for me.

I get involved with the food co-op by contacting patients and accompanying them to the Jennie Lee Garden in Kings College Hospital on a weekly basis. We have a session once a week every Wednesday. Patients with an interest in gardening meet up at the Garden to participate in the activities. I also generate awareness in other staff members at the surgery, encouraging everyone to get more patients involved.

The garden project is a great tool for keeping patients in touch with the community. It is an opportunity for them to be around other people, make new friends and learn new gardening skills which they can use in their daily lives. Frequenting the garden has enabled me to pick up valuable skills. Every so often I help out at the garden with tasks such as watering, pruning and harvesting. It is exciting to be a part of the group. We have had an amazing summer this year; this made our experience at the garden even more pleasant.

The produce from the garden is collected and sold once every month at Kings College Hospital. This is a great way to invest back into the project whilst providing the community with fresh locally grown produce. Seeing the seeds grow into herbs and vegetables brings a sense of achievement among the patients. I also help out with selling the produce from the various gardens at the stall, which gives me the opportunity to interact with some of the Doctors and students at the hospital.

The Lambeth GP Food Co-op participated in the Lambeth Country Show in the summer of 2017. I was a part of the team handing out leaflets, speaking to the general public about Lambeth GP Food Co-op and explaining what the aim and purpose of the cooperative is and what the benefits are for the patients. The Corner Surgery prides itself in being a part of the Lambeth GP Food Co-op and it aims to use the avenue to improve the general health and wellbeing of patients through alternative methods such as gardening. It has proven to be very effective with some patients who do not generally go out to meet new people within the community. It is a calming and relaxing activity for others.

There are a lot of people out there who could benefit from the co-operative. The support and collaborative effort from everyone involved makes it all the better and continued support from the NHS is very much needed to keep the work going!