



case study

environmental sustainability



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The Objective One Partnership
for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly

NHS TRUST'S FOOD FOR CORNWALL PROJECT

Cornwall Partnership Trust

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the project

The project works in partnership with local producers, suppliers and distributors to purchase and process a much greater percentage of food stocks from within Cornwall, for use in NHS meals served to patients, visitors and staff. This phase of the project concentrates on the set-up of the scheme, and the initiation of a local food supply and distribution system.

The Programme has invested £175,205 from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) in the project which has a total cost of £350,410.

The project has received the following accolades: Highly Commended in the 'Sustainable Development' category of the NHS Building Better Healthcare Awards; a Government Opportunities Award; Highly Commended in the Health Service Journal Awards.

The impetus for the project was media attention focussed on a patient's demand to know why his hospital meal (in fact a sandwich) was made many miles away rather than in Cornwall and using local produce. The reason the sandwiches were bought in was because the existing hospital kitchens were too small to provide sandwiches for the expanding patient numbers. This triggered a study on the future of catering which arrived at the following options for the future: to buy in from national suppliers or develop a new kitchen off-site. The study identified the increasing transport costs (in line with fuel price increases) associated with contracting a national food supplier, and a real desire to support Cornwall and its agriculture economically and improve the health of society. Hence the off-site kitchen using local produce option was chosen.

measures of environmental sustainability adopted

Two examples of reduced packaging initiatives are:

Local cheese producer, Cornish Country Larder, produces high quality cheeses (goat and cow) for supermarkets. Due to the nature of cheese production,

"The work of the Cornwall Food Programme has helped to bridge the gap to local producers, enabling us to use decades of skills and expertise to supply the fresh produce NHS staff and patients want."

Will Bowman, Geavas Jersey Farm, The Lizard

To find out more about the Cornwall Food Programme visit www.cornwall.nhs.uk/cpt

some cheeses are under and over weights and therefore have little commercial value (as a 70g cheese). So the project buys these out of spec cheeses for a fair price and uses them for patients' cheese and biscuits. This then prevents the cheeses from being wasted or diverts them from a less valuable market such as dog food. Also, the project has to be aware of seasonality because when the goats are kidding in spring, cows' cheese is used instead.

Callestick Farm provide their ice cream in plainer, cheaper packaging since agreeing with the project that there isn't a need to advertise on the tubs being used within the hospital. This means the hospital can afford to provide this quality product which would otherwise be too expensive to source within budget.

To promote the prudent use of natural resources

In terms of waste the project is working with the packaging industry to increase the recyclability of frozen food containers which food is supplied in, and with suppliers to minimise packaging.

The project also recycles office paper, cardboard and plastic bottles and has encouraged the use of wooden cutlery (from sustainable sources) in a coffee shop, and steel cutlery and china crockery on patient wards. With regards to local sourcing, 35% of the budget is now spent directly with local producers, and another 35% with local suppliers, a position enabled by using existing local suppliers' networks. Office furniture is also locally sourced. Food transport is reduced by using the



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"By offering this service to the NHS in Cornwall, we hope that we can help promote a more healthy way of eating and offer many more choices for those with special dietary needs"

—Graeme Forster, Wholefood.net



To find out more about the Cornwall Food Programme visit www.cornwall.nhs.uk/cft

suppliers for one product to transport another when travelling in the right direction rather than having an empty van. Also, two suppliers have become collection points for food products, doing just one drop off, rather than lots of smaller suppliers all delivering separately.

To protect and improve the environment

The project works with Organic Southwest (which funds the Sustainable Food Manager) in order to create opportunities for sourcing organic produce.

To increase awareness of residents, businesses and visitors of the value and importance of the environment

The project holds seminars to disseminate study results, releases regular press briefings to local and national media, and presents at other organisations' conferences. It is planned to have information on local sourcing on patient menus next year and there are currently posters and flyers about the project throughout the hospital and information on staff intranet webpages.

benefits of environmental sustainability

By minimising waste through the use of reusable crockery and cutlery and by reducing packaging on goods sourced, the NHS avoids landfill costs, reduces staff time spent on unwrapping packaging, can afford quality products which would otherwise be too expensive (as in the case of Callestick Farm ice-cream) and brings the long-term benefit of improved community health which will create a saving

for the NHS in the long run. Also, a nicer patient environment is created by using steel cutlery and china crockery, and staff gain a feel good factor from being environmentally friendly.

Sourcing produce from local suppliers reduces food miles considerably, while encouraging suppliers to collaborate on deliveries and collections means the NHS don't need extra vehicles or a pool of drivers, and it reduces transport on and off site. The speed of supply and response is improved when suppliers are local as orders can be increased quickly. The project has been able to achieve true partnerships with its suppliers as the geographical proximity allows a closer working relationship. This has been of great benefit when trying to take the initiative further e.g. suppliers were receptive to dieticians' suggestions of reducing salt in products such as fishcakes.

Working with local organic suppliers through Organic Southwest to secure the cost effective cuts of meat will make it possible for the NHS to provide organic food in the future. This in turn means the hospital can raise awareness amongst visitors and staff that good quality food has good flavour and also it helps to develop the organic sector.

Raising awareness of the importance of local sourcing helps give a profile to the NHS' suppliers and publicises the fact that the NHS is supporting the local economy. Education of staff on the benefits of local produce helps them become healthier (resulting in fewer days off sick) and widens the impact of the project as they also start to buy locally.



"Being selected to supply local hospitals with our cheeses is an opportunity not only to help sustain the local economy by way of increased business, but will also improve the overall hospital food experience by using our restaurant standard ingredients"

John Gayford, Cornish Country Larder, Treravian



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In summary, the economic benefits created through the adoption of environmental sustainability measures are that local producers have reduced transport costs and increased sales (the catering department spends £4m in Cornwall/yr which has a multiplier of £12m/yr) and the NHS gains cost savings.

lessons learnt

Nathan Harrow, Project Manager of the project said:

"Sourcing local produce gives no negatives; this action benefits the economy, environment and social and physical health of society. It doesn't necessarily have to cost more; we haven't had to increase the budget in order to buy locally."

"Mealtimes are some of the few moments patients can enjoy so it is important to make this as satisfying as it can be. We believe we are improving the patient environment by providing food they want to eat and can trust, which helps ensure patients are getting the nutrition they need to get better."

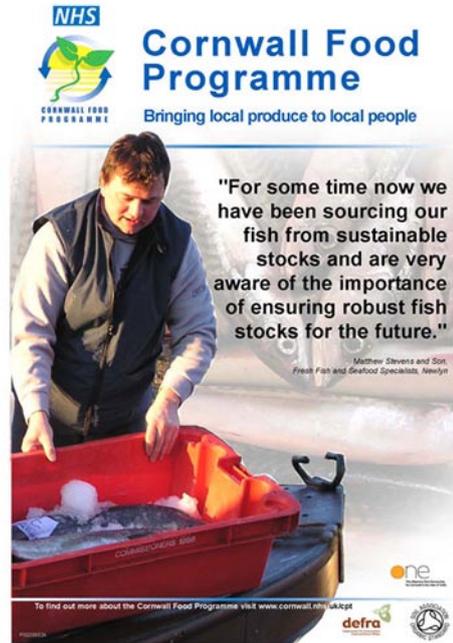
"NHS has corporate responsibility to people of Cornwall in terms of environment, society and economy and this project helps fulfil that. The benefit of local sourcing can be seen when looking to the future; we are investing in the local community now and in future generations. The NHS within Cornwall is part of the community."

Food and Farming Minister, Lord Whitty, visited Cornwall last year to hear details of the scheme. He said:

"This is a great project which could serve as an example for other areas to follow. Sourcing food locally has tremendous benefits all round. Patients get fresh, wholesome produce, the need for food to be packed and transported across the country is reduced and local farmers and producers benefit from a huge market on their doorstep."

Tony Gardner, Chief Executive of Cornwall Partnership Trust, who is leading the project for the health community, said:

"Good physical and mental health is reliant upon lots of factors, which include a good diet but there is also a great deal of evidence linking health with the environment and the economy. This project scores on all counts - as well as providing the fresh food it will also reduce pollution from long haul transport and increase local employment and the incomes for growers and producers locally."



Jonathon Porritt, Chair of the Sustainable Development Commission:

"This work is so commendable. It is exactly what is needed to support local economies, reduce the pollution from long distance transport and agricultural chemicals and develop a healthier diet."

For more information about how you can incorporate environmental sustainability into your project please contact the Objective One Partnership Office on 01872 241379 or email objectiveone@cornwall.gov.uk.