

PRINCE OF WALES VISITS PROJECT TO INCREASE NHS USE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED ORGANIC FOOD

28 June 2004

On Thursday 1 July King's Fund president HRH The Prince of Wales and chief executive Niall Dickson will meet farmers, hospital staff and organisers of the Hospital Food Project, which boosts NHS hospitals' use of locally produced and/or organic food. They will be hosted at St George's Healthcare NHS Trust, Tooting, South London, one of the project's four pilot sites.

During the visit, HRH will meet the suppliers of the project's first delivery, 300 punnets of organic strawberries from Cambridgeshire, coinciding with the second week of Wimbledon. He will also tour a mini farmers' market, with stalls showing all types of produce that the project will make available to the NHS. The stalls will be staffed by food producers, suppliers and catering staff.

The two year project, which was launched in January 2004, is run by London Food Link (part of Sustain) in partnership with the Soil Association. It is funded by the King's Fund, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.

The aim of the project is to cut the time food takes to travel from farm to plate, which can affect nutritional value, for example the vitamin C content of fruit and vegetables declines immediately after harvest. Patients, staff and visitors all stand to benefit. The project also aims to build and strengthen supply chains for local farmers in London and the south east, boosting local economies and creating links within communities. According to the Sustainable Development Commission, every £10 spent on local organic food generates £25 for the local economy, but the same £10 generates only £14 if spent in a conventional retailer, which acts as a middleman between farmer and customer.

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The project is currently being piloted in four London hospitals, St George's, The Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Trust, South London and Maudesley NHS Trust and Ealing Hospital.

King's Fund chief executive Niall Dickson said: "The NHS spends £500 million on food to serve over 300 million meals each year in approximately 1,200 hospitals. This project is an excellent example of how the NHS can use its corporate spending power to boost the local economy at the same time as improving direct services to patients."

Project co-ordinator Fiona Cairncross said: "It's really good to see the results of all the hard work which has gone into this project. I look forward to the time when fresh, healthy food becomes the norm, rather than the exception."

St George's Healthcare NHS Trust chair Naaz Coker said: "We owe it to all those who come to St George's to provide fresh and healthy food as far as humanly possible. This is a really innovative project, in which everyone is a winner, and we're delighted to welcome the Prince of Wales to St George's. I think with his support and help from all those involved we can really make a difference to food quality."

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Notes to Editors

- Media access to the actual visit is limited to the Royal Rota, please contact Amanda Foster at The Prince of Wales's Press Office on 020 7024 5832. Photographs for specialist health press can be arranged through Beverley Cohen at the King's Fund on 020 7307 2632.
- Statistics on food in NHS hospitals were taken from a 2003 King's Fund summary, *Food for Health* (<http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/PDF/food4healthsummary.pdf>)
- London Hospital Food Project contact: Fiona Cairncross on 020 7837 1228.
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs contact: Jemima Broadbridge on 020 7238 6092.
- Soil Association contact: Jade Bashford on 0117 9142425.
- St George's Hospital contact: Daniel Pople on 020 8725 5151.
- Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Trust contact: Aisha Timol on 020 7351 8672.
- South London and Maudesley NHS Trust contact: Sarah Bleach on 020 7919 2830.
- Ealing Hospital contact: Lee Balch on 020 8967 5288.