

Briefing: Care Farming Scotland



Picture courtesy of NCFI

"I have never come across an intervention that is so successful in helping broken and emotionally damaged individuals to rebuild their lives"

Care Farmer, quoted in NCFI research report

"Spending time with people and animals – I think it makes me feel better about myself."

Care Farm client, quoted in NCFI research report

"I've never been helped like this before. Why hasn't anyone done anything like this a long time ago to stop me committing crime and ending up back in jail every time."

Prolific and priority offender (PPO) quoted in report on West Mercia Constabulary and Probation land-based PPO Initiative

"To see others benefit from our lovely farm that we ourselves so enjoy. It is a privilege to see the progress created in others' lives, simply by sharing the farm livestock and environment with them."

Care Farmer, quoted in NCFI research report

Care farming is a growing movement throughout the UK and Europe. It aims to promote mental and physical health through giving people the opportunity to spend time working on the land. Those who can benefit include people with learning difficulties, mental health issues, work-related stress, drug and alcohol problems or employability challenges. Care farming does not just involve traditional farming – participants can also work in forestry, horticulture and other land management activities. It is always a partnership between the farmer or other land manager, the relevant health care, social care or education provider and the participant. Care farming combines care of the land with care of people and there is a growing body of evidence that it can deliver great personal, social and economic benefits for everyone involved. Care farming boosts the rural economy by helping farms to stay economically viable, and research demonstrates impressive outcomes for those who participate, including enhanced mood and self-esteem and a reduction in re-offending behaviour. The National Care Farming Initiative website at www.ncfi.org.uk provides a wealth of information about care farming, including links to recent research reports.

Care Farming Scotland is a new initiative that aims to promote and support the development of care farming in Scotland. It was initiated by a group that includes representatives from the farming community, care practitioners, academics, the voluntary sector and the Scottish Government. At the moment, Care Farming Scotland consists of an enthusiastic Steering Group who are seeking to develop the initiative with the support of a range of organisations, businesses and individuals. We are all convinced that care farming is self-evidently a very good idea, but we realise that to make it work in Scotland we need to take a strategic approach to building the evidence base and developing the organisation in a way that will be most useful to farmers, practitioners and policymakers.



Care Farming Scotland Steering Group members

Our current plan is to carry out the following activities:

- A scoping study to assess the current care farming "landscape" in Scotland and create evidence-based recommendations for next steps in policy and practice. This will be carried out by researchers from the Scottish Agricultural College, with a report due in November 2008.
- Associated with this research, the development of a database of people and organisations in Scotland with an interest in care farming.
- The development and drafting of a National Strategy for Care Farming in Scotland.
- Identification of funding and support to build an organisation and employ staff to implement the National Strategy.

Care Farming Scotland doesn't plan to be actively involved in the delivery of care farming services but once the organisation is established it will support those who are, through activities like awareness raising, provision of information and advice, developing networking opportunities, training, lobbying, advocacy and policy development. Above all, it will help to put those who are commissioning health and social care or seeking educational opportunities in touch with interested land managers, and help to build a shared understanding of the opportunities available.

Whether you are already involved in Care Farming, you think you may want to get involved or you simply want to be kept up to date with developments, we would like to hear from you. We aim to build a database of those who want to get involved or to find out more: farmers, horticulturalists and foresters; education, social care and health care professionals; voluntary organisations and community groups; public sector policymakers; and anyone else with an interest in this exciting initiative. To express your interest and support and add your name to our mailing list, please contact the Chair of the Care Farming Scotland Steering Group:

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