

NCFI E-Bulletin November 2009



New Starter

We're delighted to introduce Linda Dalziel this month who has joined the NCFI as Assistant Coordinator.

We have been able to appoint Linda thanks to grant funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and she will be vital in helping to develop the work of NCFI in raising the profile of care farming across the UK. Linda is in the office based at Harper Adams University College in Shropshire from 9am to 2.30pm every Tuesday to Friday. Her email is Linda@ncfi.org.uk or telephone 01952 815335. She's very much looking forward to getting to know everyone!

We asked, you told.....

Early in the autumn we asked you for your thoughts on a definition of care farming and sent you a questionnaire to fill out. We got 144 replies with loads of opinions and feedback, so much so it's taken us longer than expected to get back to you with the results. Below is a flavour of what you told us and the all important outcome of the definition that the National Care Farming Initiative will use! This is only a brief summary so for a full analysis of results there will be a full report on our website at www.ncfi.org.uk shortly.

We had replies from people who identified themselves as practising care farmers (34%), prospective care farmers (24%), supporters and well wishers (32%) and possible commissioners of care farm services (10%).

We first asked you what was most essential about a care farm. 73% of you said that involvement in the work of the farm is essential and 68% said that contact with nature was essential. 71% of you felt that it was essential or quite important that the farmer engages directly with the vulnerable people on the farm. This was a view shared by both existing care farmers and commissioners

One of the things that we asked was whether you think that care farms have to be in the countryside, 61% of people responding felt that this was not the case with 20% saying it was unimportant (20%) and 41% that it is misleading.

Many comments suggested that you want a definition to explain what care farming is all about to other people and, in fact, 71% of you think it's important to pin down what defines a care farm. One respondent succinctly summed up what most of you seemed to think - "It is necessary to be able to provide a clear and concise definition but it should not be restrictive in any way". Most of you agreed!

We introduced a couple of provocative propositions and they certainly provoked you! 86% of you felt that saying, "Any farm that welcomes visitors is essentially a care farm", was unsuitable and 77% of you felt that saying, "A care farm offers its clients full engagement in its farming activities (e.g. tractor-driving; livestock handling; crop cultivation or harvesting; milking cows) and pays them for their contribution to a profitable enterprise" was over restrictive.

There's widespread agreement that it's really difficult to pin it down in one sentence. So following this exercise, the National Care Farming Initiative has agreed that we use the sentence below. This one sentence definition is then backed up by a number of supplementary remarks which best sums up what most of you feel :-

"Care farming is the therapeutic use of farming practices"

Care farms:

- Utilise the whole or part of a farm, be they commercial agricultural units, smallholdings or community farms
- Provide health, social or educational care services for one or a range of vulnerable groups of people (including people with mental health problems, people suffering from mild to moderate depression, adults and children with learning disabilities, children with autism, those with a drug or alcohol addiction history, disaffected young people, adults and people on probation).
- Provide a supervised, structured programme of farming-related activities, including animal husbandry (livestock, small animals, poultry), crop and vegetable production, woodland management etc.
- Provide services on a regular basis for participants (where clients/participants attend the farm regularly as part of a structured care, rehabilitation, therapeutic or educational programme).
- Are commissioned to provide care farming services by referral agencies such as social services, health care trusts, community mental health teams, education authorities, probation services, Connexions etc.; clients can also be self-referred as part of the direct payments scheme, or be referred by family members.

We hope you like it and can identify your understanding of care farming within it.

Insurance Issues

We're currently undertaking some work on reviewing the issues that care farms have in getting insurance, particularly farms that have a strong focus on an integrated production and care/education/rehabilitation mix. If you've had issues getting insurance and would any points raised then we'd love to hear from you.

Contact Debbie Wilcox at Debbie@ncfi.org.uk or phone 01952 815335.

New Case Study Uploaded

A new case study on Oak Park Care Farms in Cornwall has been uploaded to the NCFI website. To take a look follow this link <http://www.ncfi.org.uk/uploads/Case%20Studies/Oak%20Park%20Case%20Study.pdf>

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