

WELCOME to the first 2010 National Care Farming Initiative newsletter. We hope that you'll find it interesting and informative and will pass it on to spread the word about care farming.

Interest in care farming (or social farming as it's called in some countries) is growing all across Europe as more and more people recognise the value of farms as a base for social inclusion, education, rehabilitation or therapy for a wide range of dis-advantaged or marginalised people.

There is no formal, recognised code of best practice or registration system for care farms in the UK. They are generally unique and independent, working in collaboration with public bodies at local level such as education authorities, police and probation or social services.

MEET THE NCFI TEAM

Debbie Wilcox and Linda Dalziel act as National Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator respectively for NCFI. Both are based at Harper Adams University College in Shropshire. Debbie has been involved in care farming in the UK since before the first conference in 2005 and has since undertaken a Nuffield Farming Scholarship looking at Farming and Care across Europe. Her post is funded by Harper Adams for whom she has worked since 2003.



DEBBIE WILCOX

Linda is a recent addition to the office and has worked part-time with Debbie since November 2009. Her post is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Debbie and Linda both love to hear from people involved in care farming round the UK and can be contacted either at the office on 01952 815335 or via email at debbie@ncfi.org.uk or linda@ncfi.org.uk.



LINDA DALZIEL

NCFI

National Care Farming Initiative

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2010

Are you making the most of the NCFI web site?

- **News/Events** – Keep up to date with NCFI activities and e-bulletins, and the latest developments and media coverage of care farming.
- **Resources** – There is a host of information to read here: case studies of care farms, NCFI research, and reports & journals on care farming. You can also find links to useful web sites.
- **FAQs** – We try and answer the common questions about care farming, and hope to guide you to relevant documents and organisations, including details of care farming in mainland Europe.
- **Find a care farm** – Use the UK map to search for care farms by region and county. You will find contact and summary details for all care farms we know about.



During 2010 we will be uploading indepth interviews with care farmers and others in the sector, just like the one on the back page of this newsletter.

IN THIS ISSUE:

The background of the NCFI

The ins and out of care farming

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Interview with a care farmer

www.ncfi.org.uk

Background to NCFI

The first national care farming conference in the UK was held at Harper Adams University College in Shropshire on a snowy day in November 2005. The NCFI was born out of energy from people in that room and since that point we've run other national conferences and events for existing and prospective care farms, worked with different European countries, raised awareness of care farming with organisations all round the country, developed a website and conducted the first survey into people's perceptions of this sector, leading to a much needed definition.

The National Care Farming Initiative is a partnership of four organisations that work together to raise the profile of care farming in the UK. They are Harper Adams University College, The Arthur Rank Centre, The Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens and the University of Essex.

We've been fortunate to receive funding from The Bulmer Foundation, Scottish & Newcastle PLC, Natural England, the Cumberland Trust, the Manydown Trust and more recently Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to all of whom everybody involved in care farming owes a huge vote of thanks.

THE CARE FARMING SECTOR

Care farming statistics

For those who know little about care farming, a study of the sector, undertaken by the University of Essex, and published in 2008, provides a profile of its characteristics:

Clients

Most care farms cater for more than one client group, but most commonly they work with people with learning difficulties (83% of care farms), disaffected young people (51%) and people with mental health needs (49%). Together, care farms cater for nearly 20 different client groups. Referrals are made by organisations in education and skills, health and social care, and criminal justice.

Size

The size of care farms varies considerably. Some city farms receive more than 200 people per week, whereas many privately run farms cater for around one-tenth of this. Likewise, some are based on traditional farms with several hundred acres, whereas others are smallholdings some as small as one acre.

Finance

The most common source of funding for care farms is from charitable trusts (nearly 50% of care farms) and local authorities (33%). Thirty-eight percent receive funding from other sources such as the NHS, National Lottery, Learning and Skills Councils, or public donations. Care farms charge a range of fees for their services – usually around £30 per day per client, but varying between £25 and £100 per day.

Staffing

The average number of staff on the 76 care farms surveyed was: 4.7 full-time staff, 3.9 part-time, and 9.8 volunteers.

Survey details

A questionnaire was distributed through the NCFI database and elsewhere. These results are based on returns by 76 care farms, broken down as follows: 41 charities/linked to another organisation, 16 independent farms, and 19 city farms.

For more information: www.ncfi.org.uk/resources.aspx

What makes us special?

How do we define care farming, and what are its essential components – is it being among animals, being in the countryside, or the mentoring and support of staff? We thought it time to investigate, and in a recent survey of NCFI members we got some really useful and interesting results. Many thanks for all your comments.

The definition below of care farming is the one which best reflected what you told us, but it was impossible to sum it up in one line so it is supported by some supplementary remarks. We hope you like it!

“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 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.

The key components of care farms, you told us, are that vulnerable people get involved in the work of the farm (73% thought this essential) and that they encounter growing plants and animals (68%). Many of you also thought farmers must engage directly with the clients (41%). But being in a commercial environment and in the countryside (20% and 18% respectively) you considered far less important – the latter may be a surprise for some.

Your views will really help us represent the movement and its view, and guide those thinking of going into care farming – so that they know the essential components of a successful care farm.

You can find the full report with a breakdown of what was asked and what was told at our website at www.ncfi.org.uk under Resources.

NCFI IN ACTION

Personal Budgets

9th February 2010, Heeley City Farm, Sheffield

Personal budgets to meet individual care needs are gradually being mainstreamed. What is a Resource Allocation System (RAS), Individual Service Fund (ISF), what do commissioners want, what is a viable charge for you to make for services? These and many more questions will be addressed through a detailed analysis of Heeley City Farm's care provisions by the farm and its commissioners. Wider care farming developments will be reported on by NCFI, and you will have the opportunity to share experiences and debate with peers what you want to achieve.

To book email ian@ncfi.org.uk

Advice on setting up a care farm

If you are thinking of setting up a care farm, make use of the advice and prompt questions available on the NCFI web site. For example, think about which client group you would work with, and whether you have activities for them to do all year round. Check you have the right facilities – are they accessible or do you need to invest? What does your family think, and can you use the local community in any way? And do you have the right skills, or do you need to employ anyone? Most important of all, have you got the commitment for when times are tough?

For more information and help: www.ncfi.org.uk/settingup.aspx

New funding for care farms

Under the government's Higher Level Stewardship scheme, farmers can get funding for providing educational visits for schools – and now it seems that care farms might qualify for the same support if they are in the same scheme. We are grateful to Stephen Sellers of New Farm Horizons, Hampshire, who says the scheme is definitely available to care farmers and some are already claiming, but it is early days and the precise eligibility is still being explored.

For more information contact your regional office of Natural England. www.naturalengland.org.uk (Head Office Tel. 0845 600 3078)

Feedback required An online survey

Recently we have been contacted by Sarah Vaughan, a student of bio-dynamic agriculture at Emerson College, in East Sussex who is interested in the therapeutic healing potential of land based work. Sarah would value your feedback through a short questionnaire – see the link below (only nine questions, so it shouldn't take long!).

Sarah wrote: "I am deeply interested in this social question and whether working on the land is indeed of therapeutic value for the individual and for wider society. I have been drawn to this line of investigation through my own biography – having had a healing experience myself through land work and my work as a teacher. I noticed that children can move into harmonious work as a class more easily when working outside rather than in the classroom.

This questionnaire aims to gather a wider set of data to discover whether I imagined these beneficial changes or whether it really is so that work on the land has the capacity to transform physical and emotional health on an individual or societal level – something which has far reaching potential".

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For a link to the survey, go to www.ncfi.org.uk



A CARE FARMER SPEAKS OUT

INTERVIEW – Gareth Gaunt.
Carlshead Farm, North Yorkshire.



“It teaches them life skills and it broadens their horizons so that they have a bigger view of what they could do in life”

IT'S not the usual type of farm diversification. But five years ago Gareth Gaunt and his family took out a large bank loan to convert some run-down buildings into a fully equipped care farm, Carlshead, for 14-16 year olds with learning and/or behavioural difficulties (see Fact Box, to the right).

Parts of the main farm, such as the woodlands, were never used before, but now they are used all the time, says Gareth. And there are now lots of staff around the place, rather than just one farmer. “The whole place is buzzing,” he says.

But motivation for the care farm was not just to help diversify the family's 500 acre mixed farm. Gareth has a strong social conscience, and is confident how Carlshead helps his clients. “It teaches them life skills and it broadens their horizons, so that they have a bigger view of what they could do in life,” he says. “They come out much more rounded and confident.”

Keeping the care farming going isn't easy, and Gareth is critical of what he sees as the government's narrow-minded approach. He says: “Young people don't just have problems with their education, they have problems with health and the law. Support for them should be split three ways – but we seem incapable of functioning like that in this country.”

Like others, Gareth was inspired by what he read of care farming in mainland Europe. He particularly praises the

approach taken in Scandinavia, where he says it's common practice for children with problems to be sent to care farms. “They don't criminalize children as we do,” he says. “It's not the answer – we are going down completely the wrong track.” Worse, he thinks the government don't know how to, or doesn't want to, tackle disaffected kids. “I think they are just sweeping them under the carpet, saying ‘let the young offender institutions and jails deal with them later.’”

Gareth's other frustration is increasing bureaucracy – but not health and safety. “There is more and more paperwork, and more and more qualifications to justify what we do,” he says. His current worry is government proposals to require anyone giving instruction, such as his staff, to have a teacher training qualification. “It's a bit of an insult, after all the work they do, to be told that they are not good enough and need training,” he says.

Despite his frustrations, Gareth is determined to continue. His plans for the future include looking to new client groups and setting up a regional network of care farms – as has been done in the West Midlands – in order to access regional funding programmes. “As a society we have a lot of problems, and there are a lot of people out there who would benefit from being in the countryside,” he concludes.

...it's a fact

- **Summary** – The care farm was set up in 2004, as part of the Gaunt family's attempt to diversify their 500 acre mixed farm
- **Clients** – The students attend the farm between one and five days a week, for five hours a day work. They are offered a broad range of alternative education and work towards courses accredited with the Open College Network, that provide GCSE equivalent points
- **Staff** – Gareth does not use formal teachers, but people he describes as ‘highly motivated self-starters’, who he says have the energy to cope with the students and can inspire them
- **Funding** – Entirely from the Local Education Authority (£20 per hour per student), but Gareth would like to diversify to new clients.



Disclaimer

The views represented in this interview are the farmer's own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the National Care Farming Initiative.

Contact Debbie or Linda in the office on 01952 815335 or email enquiries@ncfi.org.uk