

# Growing Care Farming

Transforming people's lives



# What is care farming?

Care farming is the therapeutic use of farming practices. Service users regularly attend the care farm as part of a structured care, rehabilitation, or special educational programme.

Care farms offer a range of farming-related activities including care of livestock, growing crops and vegetables, horticulture and land management. Care farming is increasingly recognised by health, specialist education and social care commissioners for delivering a professional, quality service to a range of service user groups. Care farms can be found all around the UK and are as diverse as the people they support.



Around  
**250**  
care farms provide an estimated total of approximately 9,000 places per week across the UK.

**75%**  
of care farms support people with mental ill-health

## Who benefits?

**Put simply, anyone with a defined need can benefit from time on a care farm!**

Care farms most frequently provide services for people with mental ill-health or dementia, adults and children with learning disabilities or with ASD, those with a drug or alcohol addiction history, children excluded from school or on Alternative Provision and ex-service personnel with PTSD.

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

**Commissioner, Norfolk**

All sorts of different organisations refer people to care farms, from social services to GPs and families; Pupil Referral Units to Community Mental Health Teams.

Care farms deliver structured therapeutic, rehabilitation, care or specialist educational programmes on a regular basis for service users. Payment for places comes from a variety of sources.

Care farming provides health and social care and specialist education providers with an innovative and effective care option whilst reducing the strain on statutory services and the NHS. Farmers have an alternative way to use their farm, to provide care farming services in addition to or instead of commercial production.

# Why does it work?

It is the powerful mix of being in nature, being part of a group and taking part in meaningful farming activities that makes care farming so successful.

Service users benefit from improvements to mental and physical health, increased self-confidence and self-worth, reduced social isolation and for many, care farming changes their lives.

“I like looking at the animals, and the surroundings... meeting and talking with people helps me with getting back into work, to gear myself up again. Feeling stronger and physically fitter because of it - especially after my breakdown”

---

Care farm service user

“Farm work and animals in particular are a great way to break down barriers and outdoor work can be of particular therapeutic benefit.”

---

Care Farmer, Cornwall

Care farming is an  
**ideal option**  
for Social Prescribing



## Growing care farming

The Growing Care Farming project is part of the Government's Children and Nature Programme

The programme is funded by the Department of Education, supported by Defra and managed by Natural England.

Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive, are working together to support and expand care farming services across England through a programme comprising:

- Central support and resources
- Regional engagement programme
- Training
- Quality Assurance (through the care farming Code of Practice).

Growing Care Farming is a wonderful opportunity to transform the scale of the care farming sector across England; creating more opportunities for both children and adults with a defined need, to benefit from health, social and specialist educational care services delivered on care farms.

“Care farming is special for us because we see the benefits to individuals who sometimes come to us with a long history of social exclusion, complex mental health issues and learning disabilities. To see these people thrive and develop within our project and sometimes move on to employment is very gratifying”

Care Farmer, Yorkshire



**Website**

[www.farmgarden.org.uk/GCF](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/GCF)

**Email**

[carefarming@farmgarden.org.uk](mailto:carefarming@farmgarden.org.uk)

**Tel**

0117 923 1800

**Twitter**

[@GrowCareFarming](https://twitter.com/GrowCareFarming)

Social Farms & Gardens is a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together.

[www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

Thrive is a charity using gardening to bring about positive changes in the lives of people living with disabilities or ill health, or who are isolated, disadvantaged or vulnerable.

[www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk)



Department  
for Education



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Social Farms  
& Gardens 



Thrive  
using gardening to change lives