



# Social Farming Support Service Northern Ireland Update December 2017



## Update December 2017

This newsletter marks the end of a busy year for the for the Social Farming Support Service (SFSS) Northern Ireland. 2017 signalled further growth in the number of opportunities for individuals in need of support to engage in Social Farming – more farmers have expressed an interested in delivering a service and regional cross-departmental funding is available to enable this.

This update will outline the key developments during October-December 2017 and look to further progress in 2018. The Social Farming Support Service operates to be a central point of contact for those interested in the concept and service delivery.

**Aoibheann Walsh, Social Farming Service Coordinator**

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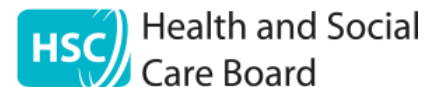
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## Social Farming Referral Fund

The Social Farming Referral Fund is a partnership fund between the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Public Health Agency (PHA). The fund was established to increase Social Farming activity on a regional basis through providing opportunities across the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts.

Social Farming sessions funded under the Referral Fund commenced in October 2017 and have been ongoing since. The Social Farming participants are individuals receiving support from a Learning Disability or Mental Health service who have expressed an interest in engaging in farming activity. Up to March 2018, farmers will be delivering Social Farming sessions – for some this will be an increase to their current activity and for others this will be a return to delivery or a first opportunity to deliver sessions. Increasing the number of farmers with experience in delivering Social Farming sessions is key to the development of the concept in Northern Ireland. A scoping exercise will be completed as part of the Referral Fund to record impact of engagement for participants and farmers.

Within the Referral Fund timeframe, a key focus will be promoting a sustainable funding and referral model for Social Farming so that service users can continue to benefit from participating in the service and farmers are supported to continue in service delivery. The SFSS will liaise with the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts to support referrals to the farms with availability to deliver. Ongoing support will be provided to the farmers delivering a service and monitoring of engagement will take place.



## CRANE Project Seminar – Bologna, Italy



*SFSS Coordinator presenting to CRANE partners*

In mid-December a meeting of the CRANE project was held in Bologna, Italy. CRANE is an Erasmus+ funded project focused on multifunctional agriculture to develop training for farmers interested in developing the services they provide. The SFSS Coordinator attended the project meeting to outline the Northern Ireland experience of Social Farming and multifunctionality in general. As part of the project seminar, there was an opportunity to visit an educational farm and a Social farm – these visits reflected the Northern Ireland experience of Social Farming whereby the focus is on the participants. The training under development for farmers will be further progressed in 2018 and should offer a valuable service to farmers in Northern Ireland in the future.



*Educational farm*



*Social farm*

### Get in Touch

The Social Farming Support Service (SFSS) is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and operates within the charity Rural Support. Please visit the Social Farming section of the Rural Support website: [www.ruralsupport.org.uk](http://www.ruralsupport.org.uk) or follow Rural Support on social media (Twitter: @RuralSupport; Facebook: Rural Support) to keep up to date on developments.

If you have a query about Social Farming or its development in Northern Ireland please contact the Social Farming Service Coordinator on the details below.

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