



Social Farming Support Service Northern Ireland Update March 2018



Update March 2018

This newsletter will bring you up to date on progress and activity within the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland during January-March 2018. This was a particularly busy period as a very significant celebration event 'Social Farming in Northern Ireland: Growth & Next Steps' was organised to highlight development to date and opportunities for the future. An overview of the event is provided with a key takeaway message being that Social Farming is about people – the farmers delivering a service and the participants benefiting from engagement.

The Social Farming Support Service continues to promote the concept and practice of Social Farming and support existing and new Social Farming initiatives within Northern Ireland.

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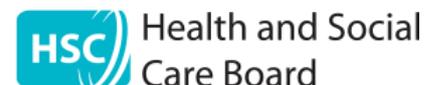
Social Farming Referral Fund Update

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 cross-departmental fund was established to increase Social Farming activity on a regional basis through providing opportunities across the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Referral Fund has been in place since October 2017 and close to 200 sessions have been delivered on 10 farms by the end of March 2018. Participants referred for this opportunity are individuals receiving support from a Learning Disability or Mental Health service who have expressed an interest in engaging in farming activity. Farmers have increased their Social Farming delivery, returned to delivering a service or had the opportunity to deliver sessions for the first time under the Referral Fund. This increased delivery and participant engagement is key to the development of Social Farming in Northern Ireland.

The Referral Fund is facilitated through the Social Farming Support Service which acts as an intermediary between the farmers and staff from each of the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts making referrals. A key element of the Referral Fund is a scoping exercise to record the impact of engagement for participants and farmers. An independent consultant with experience in the area of Social Farming is assisting the Support Service for this exercise.

In addition to more Social Farming delivery, progress under the Referral Fund will focus on promoting a sustainable funding and referral model so that service users can continue to benefit from participating in the service and farmers are supported to continue in service delivery.



Social Farming in Northern Ireland: Celebration Event March 2018



SoFarm participants receiving their achievement certificates



Event speakers: Alison McCaffrey, DoH; Iolo Eilian, HSCB; Jude McCann, Rural Support; Shane McKinney, DAERA; Aoibheann Walsh, SFSS; Roy Nelson, Independent Consultant



Event audience

A celebration event was held on Wednesday 21st March to mark the growth of Social Farming in Northern Ireland. Farmers and participants of Social Farming were joined by representatives from the farming and health and social care sectors as invited guests to this special occasion. The event was organised by the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland.

In his welcome, Jude McCann Chief Executive of Rural Support said "I am delighted to host this conference on Social Farming in Northern Ireland: Growth & Next Steps. It is great to have representatives from a wide range of sectors to inform our approach to Social Farming in the coming years".

Speakers at the event in Loughry College, Cookstown included Catherine McCallum, Director of Rural Affairs within DAERA and Iolo Eilian, Social Care Commissioning Lead within the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB).

The benefits of Social Farming were best described by two individuals who have participated on Butterlope Farm in Plumbridge. Engaging in meaningful activities and learning new skills has improved their lives and opened up new opportunities for future. The farmers from Butterlope Farm and Gortilea Social Farm in Claudy also spoke about how they and their farms have been positively impacted by providing a Social Farming service. Certificates of achievement were presented to Social Farming participants on the SoFarm project by Iolo Eilian from the Health and Social Care Board in a highlight of the event.

Training Opportunities

During January-March a number of training opportunities were offered to farmers currently delivering a Social Farming service or those farmers keen to increase their readiness to deliver a service. Courses included Emergency First Aid at Work and Keeping Adults Safe.

An Introduction to Social Farming training course will be offered in early summer 2018. This course will be open to farmers who are interested in delivering a Social Farming service and service support staff who are interested in supporting individuals to engage in Social Farming sessions. Details of this training will be made available as soon as possible and circulated through various means – please contact the Social Farming Support Service Coordinator if you are interested.

QUB Medical Students visit to Social Farm



Students visiting Wingrove Farm, Saintfield

As part of the Rural Health module offered to students studying Medicine in Queen's University Belfast two students visited a farm delivering a Social Farming service.

After an overview of the concept and practice of Social Farming in Northern Ireland, the students visited Wingrove Farm in Saintfield where they met Jayne Burgess who has been delivering Social Farming since 2016. Jayne detailed her delivery experience to date and outlined the benefits she has observed for participants engaged in sessions on her farm. The students got to hear why Social Farming is a good fit for her, her farm, and her family. A tour of the farm provided a 'real life' insight into the activities on offer to Social Farming participants.

Collaboration with Social Farming Ireland

The Social Farming Support Service in Northern Ireland continues to work closely with the equivalent government supported initiative in the Republic of Ireland. The value of shared learning and collaboration is recognised by development staff.

Social Farming Ireland held a national conference 'Growing Connections, Changing Lives' on 23rd March 2018 to highlight development to date. At this conference, representatives from DAERA and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine had the opportunity to discuss their respective support for Social Farming.

This cross-border collaboration will continue as opportunities for the growth of Social Farming are explored.



Social Farming development staff in NI and RoI with Elizabeth McIlwaine, DAERA & Annamarie McNally, DAFM at Social Farming Ireland conference, March 2018

European Project Links Update

An increasingly important element of the work of the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland is contributing to existing European projects related to Social Farming. This offers the opportunity to outline the development of Social Farming in this country and the potential for funded collaboration in the future.



The Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland continues to be involved with the ERASMUS+ CRANE project on multifunctional agriculture. This project involves Italy, Spain, Malta and Northern Ireland.

A project meeting will be held on Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th April 2018 during which the partner representatives will have the opportunity to visit two farms delivering or planning to deliver a Social Farming service.



The ERASMUS+ PROFARM project is focused on professional and personal empowerment in Social Farming. Project partners of the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Finland, Portugal, Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

The Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland have been asked to join the peer-review committee to review project outputs. This will involve a committee workshop in the Netherlands in April.

Get in Touch

The Social Farming Support Service 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 or follow Rural Support on social media (Twitter: @RuralSupport; Facebook: Rural Support) to keep up to date on developments.

If you would like further information on Social Farming, whether you are a farmer, staff member, service user or family member/supporter of a service user, you can contact the Social Farming Service Coordinator on the details below.

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