Social Farming Support Service Update June 2021

Update June 2021

This bulletin covers the April-June period of 2021, and this update will detail how the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland is continuing to support farmers and promote Social Farming. 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. You can also contact the Social Farming Service Coordinator on the details below.

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Social Farming visits





June brought an opportunity for Aoibeann to return to visits out to Social Farming sessions. The first visit was to Annagh Social Farm in Derrylin, Co. Fermanagh who were celebrating a project delivered for students from Willowbridge School in Enniskillen. During their sessions on the farm the students were involved in animal care, conservation, and nature-based art activities.

These sessions were funded through a Seed Grant opportunity offered by Rural Support and allowed the students to sample Social Farming as a potential future service that could participate in.

The second visit was to Muckamore Abbey Hospital where Robert Davis from Laurelview Equestrian Centre and Farm in Templepatrick, Co. Antrim has been delivering two sessions of Social Farming per week. This arrangement allows participants who are unable to travel to Robert's farm due to the COVID-19 restrictions to benefit from engaging with the farm animals.

Robert's sessions on-site have proved very popular and were marked as part of Learning Disability Week 2021. Feedback from staff, participants, and Robert has been very positive.

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Training Support

As part of the Social Farming Support Service's support to farmers delivering or preparing to deliver a Social Farming service, safeguarding training was offered to this group within April. Volunteer Now delivered Keeping Children and Adults Safe training online due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. The training was tailored to Social Farming delivery and is a requirement for all involved in service provision.

SoEngage Plus Project



Development work continued on the Erasmus+ SoEngage Plus project which is focused on producing training for farmers on video production to promote their Social Farming services. Northern Ireland will be represented by four case study farms within the project who will each be tasked with using the training to produce their own video. Butterlope Farm in Plumbridge, Co. Tyrone were the first farm to test the training and produce their video which can be viewed on the project website: www.soengage.eu/portfolios/butterlope-farm-uk/. In the coming months farmers delivering or preparing to deliver a Social Farming service here in Northern Ireland will be supported by Rural Support to use this training and make videos to tell their farm story. Videos produced will feature on the project website and updates on the project will be included in further 2021 newsletters.

Social Farming Capital Grant Scheme 2021

In June 2021, DAERA opened another Social Farming Capital Grant Scheme through its Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TPRSI) Framework. The Scheme was open to farmers delivering or interesting in delivering Social Farming and connected to Rural Support's Social Farming Support Service to support capital improvements on their farm. Each applicant could apply for 50% match funding up to a maximum of £4,999 to help them achieve Social Farming Standards. The Social Farming Standards enable Social Farmers to provide clear evidence of service quality excellence and practically demonstrate their professionalism in delivering Social Farming. This opportunity was a further welcome support for the development of Social Farming in Northern Ireland.

Please get in touch with Rural Support to learn more about Social Farming