

Farm, Work & Wellbeing

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Environment & Education Departments (2019-2022)



The Parent & Carer's

5 Minute Introductory Guide

to Social Farming
for any age from 9
into adulthood

Reduce anxieties
Build confidence
Work & Relax with animals
Improve knowledge, social & work skills

All in a Nature based supportive setting



FarmBuddies
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION & KEY MESSAGES

Social Farming (also known as Care Farming) is about spending one day or more a week on a farm doing meaningful work, according to age, choice & ability. From age 9 upwards into adulthood & by self-referral, this is for anyone with mild or moderate (& sometimes complex) additional needs. Visits will be fully supported by the farmer, with animals often an important focus of the day.

As the various ways of accessing Nature for wellbeing are expanded nationwide, it is evident from published research & every day results that **regular Social Farm visits** are able not only to provide that access but **simultaneously deliver significant additional benefits**.

nb. Throughout this Guide the term 'Parent(s)' is used but the content is being equally addressed to carers, school staff, NHS employees & other wellbeing professionals.

BENEFITS

- A Nature based setting on farmland not open to the General Public reduces anxiety levels
- Meaningful work, particularly with animals, at a pace comfortable to the individual, is fun & builds confidence
- Down to earth & genuine inclusive approach of Social Farmers builds trust
- Motivation & resilience increases through a variety of social, sensory & physical experiences
- Increased knowledge, skills & better engagement for the majority when back in school/college/employment /social life

GETTING READY

Step 1:
Read this Guide or other introductory information



Step 2:
Use a 'Farm Facilitator' (see p.8) in your region for assistance on farm selection according to interests, needs & desired outcomes

Step 3:
Enjoy a short introductory visit to check the participant likes the selected farm

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The main purpose of this Guide is to inform parents of a new opportunity. Having established efficacy, Social Farming is now widely available nationally & has new Central Government support. This Guide provides a brief introduction to the weekly farm visits involved, what parent & participant can expect & how to go about arranging them.

The content of the Guide is based principally on FarmBuddies' practical experience over 10 years (2008-2018). They met with many hundreds of parents, as well as staff in schools, Local Authorities & health professionals across the South East region. Their role has been as a facilitator to the setting up of farm programmes for over 100 individuals between the ages of 9-40 on 25 farms in 9 counties; completing in total over 2500 Individual Day Visits.

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CAVEAT — This Guide summarises the practical experience of FarmBuddies. The reader should be fully aware that it is not intended to be professional advice nor comprehensive but a brief time saving introduction to the subject matter for a specific audience, namely parents. Further research & consultations will be necessary prior to making any farm visit. Great care has been taken in preparing this Guide but the author/publisher does not assume & hereby disclaims any liability to any party for any loss howsoever caused whether directly or indirectly.

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PARTICIPANTS, THEIR INTERESTS & NEEDS



A recent estimate suggests that over 8000 individuals with mild or moderate additional needs are now visiting farms each week in the UK. *CFUK 2016/17 Survey*

Participants from age 9-90 are self-referred, introduced by schools, health professionals or through Social Prescribing channels, typically with one or more of the following:

- Autism (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Attachment/trauma issues
- Poor mental health eg depression
- Other health, social or schooling issues
- Learning Disability
- Physical Disability including wheelchair users
- Dementia

On-farm activities are wide-ranging & vary from farm to farm, commonly:

- Animal husbandry - sheep, pigs, horses, chickens
- Crop growing - vegetables/fruit
- Conservation - making a woodland path, pond renovation
- Non-farming activities – cooking, woodwork

The parent/participant advises a farmer or farm facilitator of their particular interest(s) plus support needs/concerns (eg preferred size of group) & also their desired outcomes from the visits (eg build confidence, prepare for college).

Matching individual interests & support needs to the right farm (see p.8) is key to the participant maximising the beneficial changes in their wellbeing.

Meaningful work carried out as part of the farm team is the essence of Social Farming.

Real jobs build responsibility, trust & encourage feelings of satisfaction.

Farm jobs, indoor & outdoor, vary according to the season, the day's priorities & the choice & abilities of the participant.

The pace of work is adapted to the individual's preference – some may feel more comfortable initially on the sidelines, while others will join in all types of activity straightaway.

Productivity during the day is not the goal but rather social & environmental connectivity, leaving each participant feeling valued, useful.....& smiling!

A typical day on the farm:

- 10.00: Arrive for light refreshments & discuss jobs
- 10.30: Collect eggs, feed & bed up pigs
- 12.00: Farm walk to check sheep
- 12.15: Pick vegetables for lunch
- 12.45: Lunch around the table together
- 13.30: Fencing repairs in field
- 15.00: Drinks & depart



**WORK WITH
A PURPOSE**



THE BENEFITS

A programme of regular farm visits can deliver an outstanding holistic package of social, health & educational benefits for participants; particularly a reduction in anxiety, increased confidence & improved knowledge, social & work skills.

Having a role looking after animals or just taking time out

to be with them is a popular choice & widely recognised as having therapeutic value.

The efficacy of Social Farming is backed by a large body of published research which has been carried out over the last 15 years (extract below). For examples of more personal every day results see individual endorsements on the inside back cover of this Guide.

Benefits of Care Farming

PHYSICAL	MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING	SOCIAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved physical health (84%) • Farming skills (79%) • Other skills (86%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self-esteem (91%) • Increased Well-being (88%) • Improved mood (81%) • Increased awareness (79%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed team work (88%) • Social skills (84%) • Personal responsibility (84%) • Work habit (81%) • Work success (81%) • Independence

Care Farming in the UK: "Evidence and Opportunities" Hine, Peacock, Pretty 2008

As most visits are available by self-referral, parents can start planning straightaway.

A programme of one day a week for a minimum of 12 consecutive weeks will usually produce quality outcomes. A typical day is around 5 hours (10am-3pm) with some flexibility.

When choosing 'the farm visit day', being flexible ensures a wider choice of farms as on some days of the week there may be no vacancies in your area.

Weekends may be possible if school release or other circumstances are difficult.

Take into account:

- 1 Start date: Starts for Youth in April & September (fitting into school terms) are popular, so an early application is advisable; arrangements for adults are more flexible
- 2 Accompanier: Participants may need to be accompanied - check with the farmer
- 3 Transport: The responsibility of the parent - a few farms offer a pick-up service
- 4 Lunch: Bring a packed lunch - a few farms will offer a simple hot meal
- 5 Protective clothing: Boots & waterproofs



PLANNING VISITS



FUNDING VISITS

The cost of farm visits can vary, not only in different parts of the UK but also between farms in the same region.

The average cost nationally is currently around £60 per 5 hour day or £12 per hour but the daily rate ranges anywhere between £0 (if fully subsidised) up to & sometimes over £120.

nb No charge is made for any accompanier, whose wellbeing is also enhanced from visits.

Funding comes from a variety of sources – principally parents, school, Local Authority, charities or Personal Budget. If funding is a real concern, a parent might enquire with a local charity or the farm itself about subsidising a place.

Mindful of Social Farmers' time, it is suggested that consideration of funding arrangements is made prior to contacting any farm regarding availability of places or other matters.

An appropriate farm is one that best matches the participant's interests, support needs & geographic location.

The types of farm, activities offered & other participants present will vary. The main farm type is full-time (4-7 days a week) Social Farms, usually with the most participants each day & with professionally qualified staff. There are also part-time enterprises (1-2 days a week) with a commensurate lower level of training & support based on family farms, smallholdings & Community Land; however, these holdings can still produce the

same level of benefit, sometimes more.

Where available, using a 'Farm Facilitator' who has already visited farms in your area & has a good knowledge of them can improve the outcome & save time. In the South East, FarmBuddies offer this assistance free of charge. For all UK regions, contact Social Farms & Gardens and for Ireland, Social Farming Ireland.

Lastly, make a short introductory visit to the selected farm & if all parties are happy, set a start date for weekly visits.



SELECTING A FARM

SAFETY / OTHER



Safety levels: To date, FarmBuddies are not aware of any reportable Health & Safety incidents on farms selected by them for parents in the South East. However, it is important that parents satisfy themselves that any farm visited is a safe environment for the participant through discussions with the farmer & reference to 'Parent checks' below.

Parent checks: Parents should always ask to see the farm's Safeguarding File before visits start. Recognised badges of competence are Social Farms & Gardens' Code of Practice award and CEVAS (a national visits accreditation scheme) trained certificate; other farms may have just years of practical experience. Also,

parents should expect to see Enhanced DBS certificates for the supervising farmer & any other staff working on the programme as well as a First Aid trained certificate, appropriate insurance cover, farm policies & risk assessments.

Parting shot...keeping it personal & ordinary

Working side by side whether out in the field or in the farmhouse kitchen can produce spontaneous and rare open conversation. One young lady with increasing confidence picked, prepared and cooked her first apple pie & is unlikely to forget the round of applause she received from everyone when bringing it to the lunch table!

APPENDIX

Number of Social Farming enterprises by county – 2019 South East region

Kent	13	Berkshire	3
East Sussex	8	Buckinghamshire	5
West Sussex	4	Hertfordshire	5
Surrey	5	Essex	8
Hampshire & IOW	10	Average per county	7

nb. In the South East region, wherever you live (excl. some Greater London & coastal locations), you are now likely to have access to 3 Social Farming enterprises within an average travel time of 30 minutes.

Above data provided by FarmBuddies. For more regional information in the UK visit Social Farms & Gardens www.farmgarden.org.uk & for Ireland www.socialfarmingireland.ie

About FarmBuddies:

The principal roles of the Social Enterprise FarmBuddies based in the South East region of England are:

1. To assist parents find the most appropriate Social Farming enterprise in their area
2. To assist family farmers, smallholders & others set up a Social Farming enterprise

Your contacts: Stephen Sellers or Mary Sellers

Stephen had been running a successful professional practice providing business advice to farmers for many years when back in 2007 he first heard of Social Farming. From living on a Yorkshire farm until his early 20s, the simplicity & benefits of this concept immediately resonated with him. Some research followed, resulting in the sale of his practice & the setting up of the Social Enterprise FarmBuddies in 2008. Stephen works full-time, with his wife Mary, managing this initiative to expand Social Farming in the South East, including the Channel Islands.



All enquires welcome –

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Parents, carers, school staff, NHS employees & other wellbeing professionals can obtain a free copy of this Guide by contacting FarmBuddies as above.

#SocialFarmingworks for all

'I love animals because they don't take the mickey'

'The time I have spent here has shown me that I can do anything I put my mind to...I have gained so much confidence...I will always remember my time here'

PARTICIPANTS

'I have already seen such an improvement in his confidence it is staggering'

'His mood has definitely improved and he is going to start a college course in animal care'

'J loves the farm! It has been brilliant for his self esteem, concentration levels and general enjoyment of the great outdoors'

PARENTS

'Attendance has been 100% so far and there has been a noticeable improvement in communication, social and team working skills. The students attend the programme on their day off from college and are happy to do so, so that in itself is a testimony to how well it's going.'

'One young woman has grown significantly in confidence during her time at the farm leading to her making several applications to charity organisations for part time voluntary work. She now works one afternoon a week'

'The whole experience has been fantastic – it has allowed a young man who struggles significantly in the formal learning environment of a school classroom to demonstrate and build confidence in his practical skills'

SCHOOLS

'The workers on the farm have been so impressed with this young man's work ethic that they are currently looking into apprenticeship opportunities for him'

'We have seen the impact and it's very gratifying. One of the lads we had last year went off to agricultural college, having not been able to go to school'

FARMERS



'Action we will take includes supporting a national expansion of Care Farming by 2022, trebling the number of places to 1.3m per year for children & adults in England'

Extract from HM Government
25 Year Environment Plan (2019)