

Social Farming Thematic Initiative Case Studies

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| 1. Case study title: | Future Roots, Dorset |
| 2. Member State: | United Kingdom |
| 3. Contact details (if agreed to publish): | E-mail: info@futureroots.net
Website: www.futureroots.net |

4. Short description of the case study (please insert a photograph if you have one):

30acre livestock farm (including Simmental cattle, sheep, goats, chickens and pigs) - which also has horticulture and other features - used by disadvantaged groups and other members of the community.



5. Some key words to describe the case study:

Dorset – care farm - livestock – horticulture – community – challenged/disadvantaged young people – access to countryside – age, disability and opportunity -

6. Practical details of the social farming project/activity:

Main target group:	Primarily young people who are challenged or disadvantaged, but also provides opportunities for those not able to access the countryside through their age, disability or opportunity.
Purpose:	Julie and her team use the care farm to provide people with a better understanding of the countryside and greater self-awareness. Also, to help people enjoy themselves, and teach them practical skills and team-working. Says Julie: “They may not want to be a farmer, but they all learn employability and life skills that farmers have to have to survive.”
What activities are involved?	All the care farm’s programmes are designed around what people need – and the farm is adapted for this. For example, both the small and large animals have been halter trained - even the cows - so that children can work with them. And the horticulture provides children with the chance to know how food is

	produced, and to feel what it is like to nurture something – they love eating the tomatoes and peas from the greenhouse. The farm also has a river and small lake ... everything is used.
Who started the project/activity?	Julie Plumley
What was the inspiration or motivation?	<p>Julie has a farming background and is convinced of what it can offer others. “Farming was such a fantastic life for me,” she says. And when her father died she felt a big hole in her heart – and she therefore went into farming.</p> <p>She also wanted to address something she witnessed as a social worker. “People were totally disconnected from the countryside and found it boring,” she says. “Nobody had climbed a tree or walked through rivers, or experienced being hot, cold or tired – it wasn’t just the children, it was whole families. Nobody teaches them about the countryside, farming, or anything – they stay on computers all day. I wanted them to experience what I was lucky enough to have, and give them the opportunity to see if they liked it.”</p>
Does anyone else support the initiative?	A few other staff and several volunteers
When was the initiative first started?	2008
What is the current status?	On-going
Number of clients:	??
Number of days per client per week:	Around 50-80 attend each week
Working/care hours for each client per day:	??
Geographical coverage:	Dorset / South West
Other relevant details:	Julie has a background in mental health and social work. In 2007-08 she ran ‘Farming 4 Life’, a social enterprise that ran as a pilot for Future Roots. Other staff are experienced youth workers.

7. Details of any agricultural/horticultural resources used:

See Activities, above.

8. Financial aspects of the project/activity:

What is the main source of funding?	After two years without any financial support, the care farm now attracts funding from three main sources: education grants, Social Services and Natural England's Let Nature Feed Your Senses. (The latter is a stepping-stone to securing HLS money for educational visits, and is available to a limited number of care farms in England.)
What is the size of the budget?	??
Has funding been applied for and <i>not</i> received?	Julie applied for RDP funding, under farm diversification, but was unsuccessful.

9. Other important aspects of the project/activity:

Julie and her colleague's background in social work and youth work influence the care farm's approach – respecting people's differences, offering equal opportunities, and believing that everyone can learn in the right environment. She describes the approach as 'person-centered', ie flexible for whoever wants to come. She says: "We have developed programs for those who are anxious, angry, scared, want to learn ... whatever their level, age and ability, we cater for them."

10. Results of the project/activity:

Direct Results:	<p>The benefits of the care farm are evident from several different perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of children with Asperger's have written to say things like: 'This is fantastic – I have seen by children happy for the first time', and 'All that they talk about is going back to the farm.' • Teachers attribute the positive changes in the young people's behaviour and attitude to the care farm • Young people say they enjoy coming, even if they did not look forward to it at the start. They have gain qualifications and talk of difference the care farm has made to them. • Members of the wider community deliver training in rural crafts, and other farmers do demonstrations at their farms.
Strengths:	Julie's farming, mental health and social work background – plus her motivation - undoubtedly help. In addition, all the care farm's programmes are designed around what people need – and the farm is adapted for this.
Weaknesses:	Like other UK care farms, finance has also been a major challenge. "The money side of things has been awful," says Julie. But it has also been a learning point. Says Julie: "A care farm was my dream for over 10 years, so we didn't want to wait any longer – we pushed the boat out and went ahead on our own, building up the farm and the project. We would have been better off if we had waited and looked for help from grants."

	<p>Julie has also found it hard to trust other people to do things on the care farm, some of who may possess skills she lacks. She says that in the beginning she took on all aspects of the care farm – everything from farmer, project co-ordinator and promoter to admin worker and cleaner. “I wanted to do everything myself. It got so big so quickly that it was really tiring,” she says.</p> <p>Planning has also not been easy – it took a year to get planning permission to convert a barn.</p>
Wider Benefits:	<p>Julie believes most young people do not know what being part of a community is, or how to work together – unless they are sportsman. However, she says that when they leave the care farm they will have developed qualities and skills that they will need in work or at home - even basic skills like using a hammer safely, and not losing their temper.</p> <p>She also says that the farm provides somewhere where a 15-year old stropky lad can nurture an animal, ie express their gentle side without being made fun of.</p>

11. Future prospects and sustainability:

At the time of writing, the care farm was starting an enterprise for young people, ‘Soups and Smoothies for Schools’ – products that the children will grow, produce and sell themselves.

The current priorities are securing funding to convert a building, and training in social enterprise development. These would help build on recent training staff have taken in areas such as food hygiene, health & safety, and first aid. (The CEVAS course – described below - will be taken soon.)

12. RDP Links:

Julie’s unsuccessful application for RDP funding has given her negative views of the programme. She feels there was a lack of face-to-face support, and that the application process was time-consuming. She also felt contact organisations lacked knowledge of socially-orientated projects such as hers, and that as a result she was passed between different contacts/organisations.

Despite this experience, she then applied for Leader funding - of which she has more positive views, in particular its local level operation.

13. In conclusion - lessons to pass on:

Julie offers three tips to other care farmers/potential care farmers:

Don’t rush in without first checking if any help is available. In her view, the bureaucracy of grants puts people off, but there are lots of opportunities out there and people that will help - you just need to have time and patience.

Second, don’t have all your eggs in one basket. Have your eyes open to new opportunities, and talk with other farmers so that you can work together.



And finally, she recommends people consider doing the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS), which she says can provide help in preparing farm visits and working with children and schools.