

Care Farming in the UK and Ireland: State of Play 2015



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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the care farmers who spared the time to complete the online survey or to update their care farm details on the website. We would also like to thank staff at the SoFAB project in Ireland for providing information on Irish social farms and Care Farming Scotland for information about care farms in Scotland.

Key Findings

- There are an estimated 240 care farms in the UK and 138 care farms provided data for this State of Play by updating their details on the Care Farming UK website or responding to the short online survey
- Of the 240 known care farms in the UK, 8 are in Wales, 12 are in Scotland, 15 in Northern Ireland and 205 in England.
- There are also currently estimated to be 20 additional care farms in the Republic of Ireland, in various stages of development.
- The majority of Care Farms in the UK provide services for a range of client groups, including people with learning difficulties (95% of care farms), autism spectrum disorders (85%), people with mental illness (71%) and excluded young people (63%)
- The number of different client groups that a care farm caters for varied between 1 and 12, with the average care farm providing services for 5 different client groups.
- At most care farms (78%), a session lasts a full day (typically between 10am -3pm). Approximately half of farms also provide sessions lasting for half a day (51%), and 33% provide a mixture of both.
- The majority of care farms offer care farming services for 5 days a week for up to 50 clients a week and most care farm service users (88%) attend care farms between 1 and 3 times a week
- The length varies, but on average care farm programmes last for 8-12 months. However, the length of time a client attends a care farm for varies from person to person and the emphasis is on determining the appropriate duration for each client on an individual basis.
- The cost per care farm session will obviously vary, but on average for an unsupported client the charge is around £49; and for supported clients (i.e. those who attend with a carer) the charge is around £50 per session. With more intensive provision, charges will be higher to ensure the most effective intervention for the client.
- The majority of care farms (75%) are not currently running at full capacity with the average operating capacity of UK care farms in this research being at 57%.
- Funding is identified as the most significant challenge to care farming services, in addition to securing contracts and recognition of the value of care farms and care farming services.
- Given that the care farms in this study provide services for a mean number of 35 clients each a week, 240 care farms currently provide services for an estimated total of 8,400 vulnerable people per week in across the UK.
- Care farming also makes a considerable contribution to the rural economy. The average cost of a care farming session is £50 and given that at the current 57% capacity level, an estimated 8,400 people attend care farms in a week. Over 40 weeks per year, this is equivalent to a sector spend of approximately £17m.
- This review improves our understanding of current care farming services provided in the UK, and the care farming 'offer' to relevant health, probation and education commissioning bodies. Through the annual 'State of play' from Care Farming UK¹, Commissioners and local authorities will have access to new and up to date information regarding the provision of care farming services in their area.

¹ For more information contact: coordinator@carefarminguk.org

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. What is care farming and who is it for?

What is care farming?

- Care farming² is the therapeutic use of farming practices³.
- On care farms, components of either the whole or part of the farm are used to provide health, social or educational care through a supervised, structured programme of farming-related activities.
- All care farms offer some elements of *farming* (involving crops, horticulture, livestock husbandry, use of machinery or woodland management etc.); but there is much variety across care farms in terms of the context, the client group and the type of farm⁴.
- Many care farms offer therapeutic contact with farm livestock, some provide specific animal assisted therapies and others also offer social and therapeutic horticulture and environmental conservation activities.

Who is care farming for?

- Care farms provide services for a wide range of people, including those with defined medical or social needs (e.g. psychiatric patients, those experiencing from mild to moderate depression, people with learning disabilities, people with ASDs, those with a drug history, disaffected youth or elderly people) as well as those experiencing from the effects of work-related stress or ill-health⁵.

1.1.2. Care farming as green care

- Green care is a collective term used to describe a variety of nature-based treatment interventions⁶ and is defined as: *"Green care: nature-based therapy or treatment interventions - specifically designed, structured and facilitated for individuals with a defined need"*.
- Green care interventions take place in a number of different natural contexts and consequently involve various landscape types, all of which allow slightly different approaches. This results in a wide range of interventions which enables the choice of the most appropriate treatment option for a specific individual as 'bespoke' care. There are now numerous local and national organisations offering a range of these nature-based interventions as specifically-designed and structured health or social care treatment interventions for particular vulnerable groups in society.
- Green care initiatives usually consist of a facilitated, regular and specific intervention, for a particular participant (or group of service users), rather than simply a 'natural' experience for the general public⁷.
- Care farming is a type of green care⁸

² also called social farming or green care farming

³ Hassink, 2003; Haubenhofner et al., 2010; Care Farming UK, 2015

⁴ Relf, 2006; Hine et al., 2008a; Sempik et al., 2010; Bragg, 2013

⁵ Hine et al., 2008a; Pederson et al., 2011; Iancu et al., 2013; Bragg, 2013

⁶ Pretty, 2006; Hine et al., 2008a, b; Sempik et al., 2010; Sempik and Bragg, 2013; Bragg and Atkins 2016

⁷ Sempik et al 2010; Sempik and Bragg, 2013; Bragg and Atkins, 2016

⁸ See Bragg and Atkins, 2016

1.1.3. Care Farming UK

Care Farming UK is a professional charitable company accountable to its members; and a network which provides a voice and supportive services for care farmers, to inspire decision makers and to develop policies and actions that will support care farming in the UK.

Care Farming UK is led by care farmers and care farming experts, and has four strategic objectives to:

- Support care farmers - improvement in the quality and provision of services provided by Care Farms and to support the development of a community of practitioners;
- Develop networks - enabling care farming networks to develop across the UK that will support the practice and capacity of individual care farms and facilitate relationships with local commissioners;
- Raise the profile - increasing the profile and awareness of the impact of care farming at both a UK and national level; and
- Expand the evidence - developing the evidence-base for the effectiveness of care farming, and to disseminate this evidence.

More information on the work of Care Farming UK, including case studies and the care farming Code of Practice are available on the [Care Farming UK](#) website, alongside details of care farms, country and regional networks, and research evidence.

Care Farming UK provides supporting services to individual care farmers all over the UK but also works to support regional and national networks of care farmers. We have strong links with Care Farming Scotland, which is a registered charity that aims to offer guidance, information and support to care farmers and to promote the development of care farming across Scotland. More information can be found at the Care Farming Scotland [website](#).

Although there is not currently a Welsh care farming network, Care Farming UK is proactively seeking to offer support for development of such a group and with a care farmer from Wales recently appointed to the Board of Trustees, it is hoped that this will progress in the future.

Care Farming UK also works closely with the SoFab (Social Farming Across Borders) team in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland who provide help, advice and supporting services to care farmers in Ireland through two support offices. More information about care farming in Ireland can be found at the [SoFab](#) website.

1.1.4. Care farming in the UK – the need for a ‘State of Play’

In order to make data on the scale of the care farming sector available to commissioners and policy makers alike for analysis, Care Farming UK has recognised the need to collate evidence on many aspects of care farming (such as the number of farms, types of clients currently using care farms, the length of programmes, frequency and duration of visits, and charges).

In 2008 the National Care Farming Initiative undertook the first scoping study of care farms in the UK and since then two further surveys have been undertaken in 2012 and in 2014. After the 2014 survey, Care Farming UK undertook to i) categorise and map data for the current provision of care

farming services across the UK annually and ii) to make accessible all non-commercially sensitive data and evidence of benefits, to a wider audience, in particular to commissioners⁹.

A collaborative study between Care Farming UK and Natural England in 2015 which looked at expanding delivery of care farming services to health and social care commissioners¹⁰ recommended that Care Farming UK, should continue to work with other supporting organisations to significantly improve the promotion of care farming services at a national level to the general public (including potential service users, carers and their families); to strategic health and social care commissioning agencies (such as: NHS England, Public Health England and the Local Government Association); and to patient representation bodies and specialist advice organisations (e.g. MIND, Alzheimer's Society etc.).

A lack of information on available placements was identified by commissioners in the 2015 study as a barrier to care farm commissioning, therefore up to date information on available care farm placements needs to be widely available. As a result of these recommendations Care Farming UK has now made information on the location of all known care farms in the UK available on our website, to enable commissioners to locate care farms in their area and to see what services Care Farming UK members provide. In addition, Care Farming UK has committed to compile an annual 'care farming offer' report, to publish this on its website, and communicate its availability as widely as possible to commissioners and public health officials. This State of Play 2015 report is therefore the start of this annual update commitment.

1.1.5. Scale of care farming in Europe

- Care farming is a growing treatment option in Europe¹¹, but the scale and context of care farming in different countries varies widely. The Netherlands leads the way with over 1100 care farms; Norway has over 600; in Belgium, Italy, Austria and Germany there are several hundred¹² and in Sweden, Slovenia and Finland, care farming is in the early stages, but numbers are increasing all the time¹³.
- Care farming is a thriving sector and is considered almost 'mainstream' in The Netherlands and Belgium, compared to other countries where the sector is less developed. In the Netherlands care farming has originated both from the farming and from the healthcare sector; in Norway, Italy and the UK care farming is strongly agriculture based (care farming emerged from farming and then linked with healthcare); in comparison to Germany for example, where care farming is strongly healthcare based (care farming arose from healthcare and linked with agriculture).

1.2. Methodology

1.2.1. Online Survey

An adapted form of the care farm questionnaire used by Care Farming UK in 2014 was developed using Survey Monkey and the link to the research was circulated to all care farmers on the Care

⁹ Commissioners is a broad term for those organisations, and individuals, who pay for the services available from care farms, and include Health & Well-being Boards, Clinical Commissioning Groups, local authorities, Probation Trusts, and organisations that will influence commissioning such as Public Health England

¹⁰ Full report available at: <http://www.carefarminguk.org/sites/carefarminguk.org/files/NECR194%20edition%201.pdf>

¹¹ Hassink et al., 2006; Haubehofer et al., 2010; Elings, 2012

¹² Haubehofer et al., 2010

¹³ Haubehofer et al., 2010

Farming UK database; via twitter and Facebook; and by email to the wider care farming network in September 2015. Responses from the online survey for each farm were then transferred onto the Care Farming UK database by Care Farming UK staff.

1.2.2. Updating information via the Care Farming UK website

Members of care farming UK were also given the option to update the data held on the Care Farming UK database themselves via the membership pages on the website.

1.2.3. Information from Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Updated information on the numbers of care farms in Ireland (R.o.I. and Northern Ireland) were provided by the SoFAB support offices. Information on Scottish care farms came from the Care Farming Scotland website and Care Farming UK database. Information on Welsh care farms originated from the care Farming UK database.

2 Care farming: State of play 2015

2.1 Results of survey and updated care farm data

2.1.1 Number of care farms

A total of 138 care farms (from a total of 240) updated their details on the Care Farming UK website or responded to the short online survey. The regional distribution of care farms across the UK can be seen at: <http://www.carefarminguk.org/map>

2.1.2 Client Groups

The majority of Care Farms in the UK provide services for a range of client groups, including people with learning difficulties (95% of care farms), autism spectrum disorders (85%), people with mental illness (71%) and excluded young people (63%) – as shown in Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1.

Those care farms that identified that they provided services for 'other' groups, said they also provided services for people suffering from brain injuries, vulnerable mothers and families, the homeless and the long term unemployed.

The number of different client groups that care farms cater

for varied between 1 and 12, with the average care farm catering for 5 different client groups.

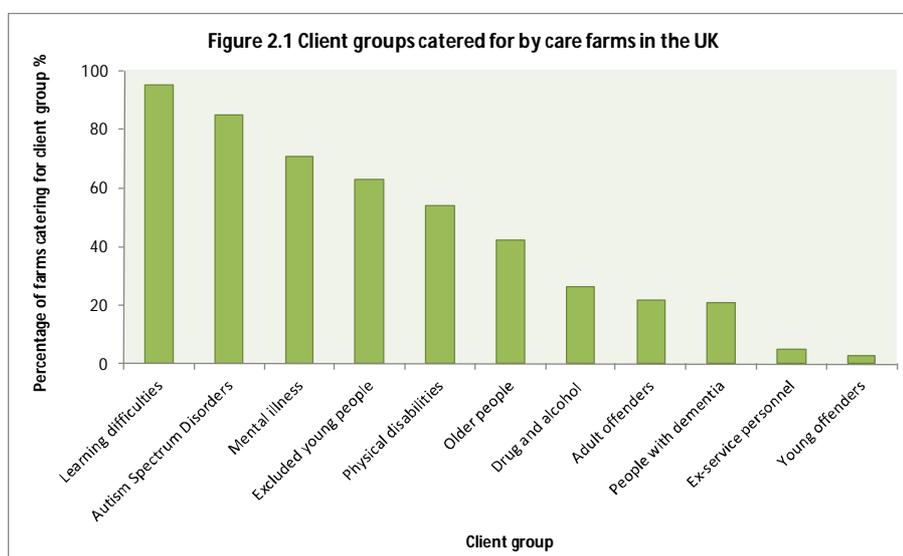


Table 2.1 Client groups attending care farms

Client Group	Percentage of Care Farms	Client Group	Percentage of Care Farms
People with learning difficulties	95%	Drug and alcohol problems	26%
Autism spectrum disorders	85%	Adult offenders	22%
People with mental ill-health	71%	People with dementia	21%
Excluded young people	63%	Young offenders	3%
Physical disabilities	54%	Ex-service personnel	5%
Older people	42%	Other	4%

Note: Percentage of Care Farms represents the percentage of care farms catering for each group (N=138).

2.1.3 Number of clients attending care farms per week

The care farms were asked on average how many clients attended their farm each week. The mean number of clients catered for at each care farm per week is 35, although it ranges from 1 to a maximum of 300. The majority of care farms (79%) see up to 50 clients a week but 5 care farms cater for over 100 clients per week.

2.1.4 About the care farm sessions and programmes

Care farmers were asked several details about the types of care farming sessions they provide including the length of a typical session, how many sessions they are able to provide each week, how many clients they cater for on a weekly basis and also the average duration of the care farm programme.

Length of care farm session

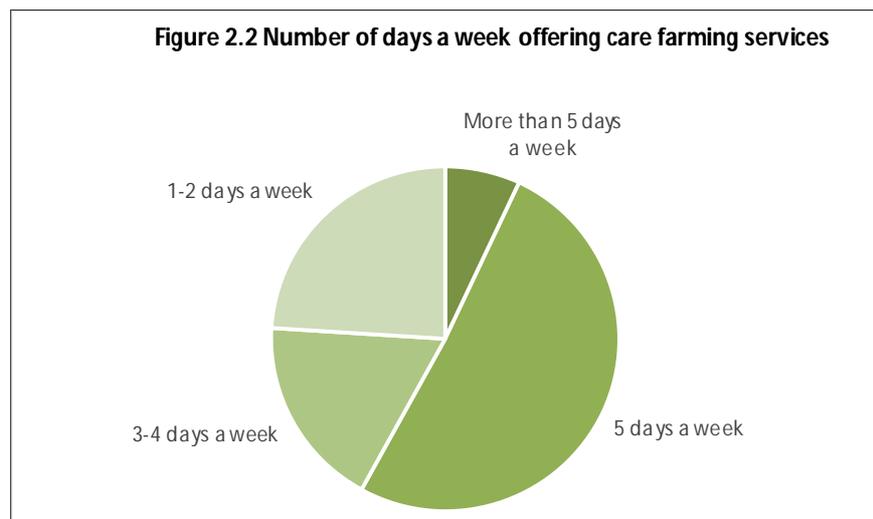
For the majority of care farms (78%) a care farming session lasts a full day. Approximately half of farms also provide sessions lasting for half a day (51%), and 33% provide a mixture of both. Several care farms stated that they also have hourly sessions where required and others said that the length of session often varies based on their client needs.

Number of days a week care farming

The number of days a week that care farms are delivering care farming services varies from 1 day a week to a maximum of 7. However, the majority of care farms open for 5 days a week (Figure 2.2).

Number of care farming sessions provided in a week

The number of weekly care farming sessions held by the care farms varies from 1 to 145 with the typical number of sessions a week being 10 and the majority (94%) of care farmers offer between 1 and 10 sessions a week.

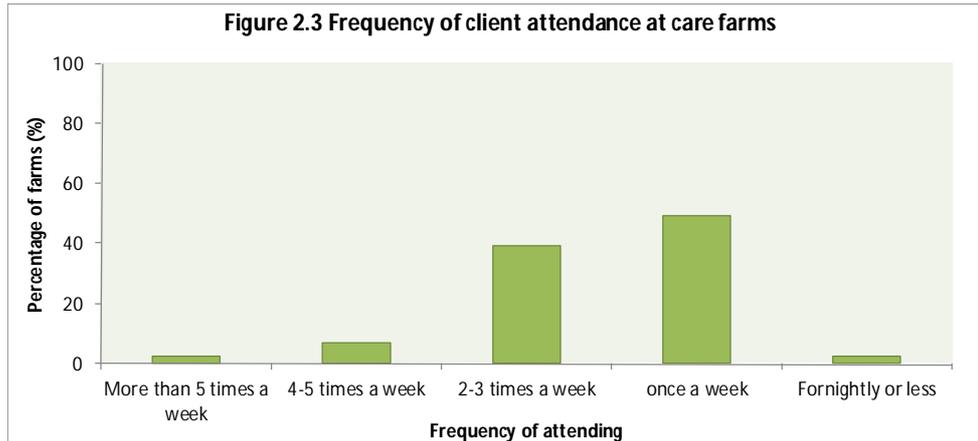


2.1.5 Frequency of attending and duration of care farm programme

Care farmers were also asked how frequently their clients typically attended their care farm. Each farm was also asked the length of a typical care farming programme¹⁴.

¹⁴ where ranges were provided the midpoint of this range was taken

The majority of clients (88%) attend care farms between 1 and 3 times a week (Figure 2.3).



In terms of care farm programme duration this varies from 1

week to over 3 years, but on average care farm programmes last for 8-12 months. However, many care farmers (51%) did stress that the length of time a client attends a care farm for varies from person to person and that the emphasis is on determining the appropriate duration for each client on an individual basis. Indeed, 49% of care farms said that the participants are often enrolled on a programme indefinitely or for as long as they needed.

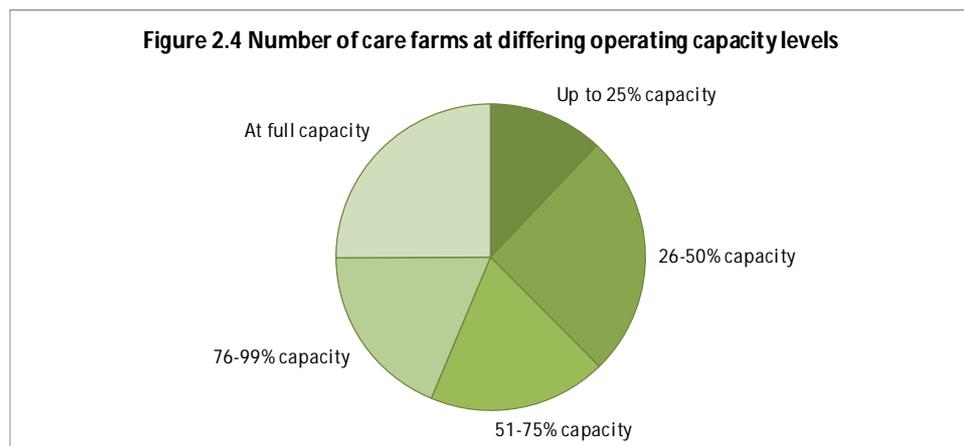
2.1.6. Cost of care farming sessions

The cost per session for an unsupported client ranged from no charge to £300 per session, with a mean charge of £49. Costs for supported clients (i.e. those who attend with a carer) were similar ranging from no charge to £275 with a mean charge of £50 per session. With more intensive provision, charges will be higher to ensure the most effective intervention for the client. Some care farms also gave hourly rates for clients ranging from £5-38 per hour with the average being £13 for unaccompanied clients and £12 for clients accompanied by a carer.

2.1.7. Care farm capacity

All farms were asked i) if they are currently operating at their full capacity; and ii) if not at full capacity, what

proportion of their capacity they are operating at. The majority of care farms (75%) are not currently running at full capacity, and 25% are at capacity (Figure 2.4). The average operating capacity of UK care farms in this research was 57%.



2.1.8. Challenges to care farming

Finally, care farmers were asked to identify the three main challenges to care farming, in their own words. For care farmers, funding was identified as the most significant challenge to care farming services, in addition to securing contracts and recognition of the value of care farms and care farming services.

2.2. Care Farming in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland¹⁵

Social farming in Ireland is the practice of offering family farms as a form of social service. The farm is not a specialised treatment farm; rather the farm remains a typical working farm where people in need of support can benefit from participation in the farms' activities in a non-clinical environment.

A survey in 2007 estimated there were around 10 private care farms and around 80 institutional farms or sheltered workshops offering care farm type services in Ireland¹⁶. From 2006-2008 Ireland was involved in the So Far Project, which involved 7 countries including: Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, France, Slovenia and Ireland; and this has since given rise to the development of the SoFAB project.

The SoFAB (Social Farming Across Borders) project¹⁷ is a cross border EU funded project facilitating the development of a cross border cross sector network to further support the development of social farming in the area. The project established 20 pilot farms in the region to enhance the ability of farmers to provide social Farming and test the training and support needed to make it a viable option in the future. Social Farming Support Offices (R.o.I. and N.I.) were established in 2015 to continue the work of the SoFAB Project. There are currently estimated to be 15 care farms in NI and 20 in R.o.I. in various stages of development

2.3. Care Farming in Scotland and Wales

There are around a dozen care farms in Scotland, from Ullapool in the north to Dumfries in the south, offering care farming services to various client groups¹⁸. There are eight care farms in Wales, mainly in Mid Wales and the South.

¹⁵ This section is adapted from the SoFAB website: <http://www.socialfarmingcrossborders.org/>

¹⁶ McGloin and O Connor, 2007

¹⁷ Organisations involved in this project include: University College Dublin (Lead Partner), Queen's University Belfast and Leitrim Development Company with representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland and the Colleges of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise. There is also an independent Advisory Group comprising representatives with experience of Social and Care Farming in the UK, Scotland and Ireland, as well as representatives from Health Services in NI and ROI and SoFAB Network members.

¹⁸ Figures from Care Farming Scotland website: <http://www.carefarmingscotland.org.uk/>

3. Discussion

In comparing the results of this survey to previous surveys of care farmers carried out by Care Farming UK numbers of care farms in the UK have continued to grow from 180 in 2012¹⁹; to 230 in 2014²⁰ and 240 in 2015. There has also been a rise in the number of farmers interested in providing care farm services in future. In addition, there has been an increasing interest in care farming by the farming sector and a variety of different commissioners.

This latest 'state of play' survey accessed data from 138 of the estimated 240 care farms (a response rate of 58%) and found that although there is much variation, care farms in the UK typically provide day sessions for their clients costing around £50 per session, with a client attending regularly between 1-3 times a week, for an average of 8 months to a year.

The number of different care farm contexts, offering different activities for many client groups, suggests that the potential for bespoke care is significant. The fact that care farms typically cater for an average of five different client groups at any one time also has positive implications for increased social inclusion and for breaking down barriers and prejudices between social groups.

The results of this state of play could be scaled up in order to give an estimate of the extent of care farming for the whole of the UK. Currently, there are approximately 240 care farms known to be operating in the UK. Given that the care farms in this study provide services for a mean number of 35 clients each a week, 240 care farms provide services for an estimated total of 8,400 vulnerable people per week in across the UK.

Furthermore, the majority of care farmers in this research stated that their care farm was not currently running at full capacity, with the mean operating capacity standing at 57%. So theoretically, if all the places at existing care farms were filled, care farms could provide over 14,500 clients per week with farming services in the UK. There is therefore a significant amount of latent potential for care farming to expand as an option in health, social and educational care.

Care farming also makes a considerable contribution to the rural economy. The average cost of a care farming session is £50 and so given that at the current 57% capacity level an estimated 8,400 people attend care farms in a week; over 40 weeks per year, this is equivalent to a sector spend of approximately £17m²¹. If these existing care farms were operating at 100% capacity in future (over 40 weeks), this would equate to approximately £29m per year²².

The findings from this review improves our understanding of current care farming services provided in the UK, and the care farming 'offer' to relevant health, probation and education commissioning bodies. Through the annual 'State of play' exercise from Care Farming UK²³, Commissioners and local authorities will have access to new and up to date information regarding the provision of care farming services, which will allow them to better assess how to access the current and potential care farming services in their area.

¹⁹ Bragg, 2013

²⁰ Bragg et al., 2014

²¹ Based on an estimate of 8400 people at £50 per session - approximately £420,000 per week into agriculture. 40 weeks a year rather than 52 as many care farms are only open during term times

²² At full capacity based on 14,500 people at £50 per session - approximately £725,000 per week into agriculture. 40 weeks a year rather than 52 as many care farms are only open during term times

²³ For more information, contact: coordinator@carefarminguk.org

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