

Commissioning care farming

Occupational therapy

Key facts

Occupational Therapist Hannah Harrison first became aware of care farming whilst talking to her patients and decided to find out more.

Hannah now works closely with Rachael Fell-Chambers at Densholme Care Farm in East Yorkshire to help patients improve their mental and physical health outdoors.

Our partnership

Hannah's role involves working with people who use mobility devices like wheelchairs. It was during client clinics that she first heard about care farms from her clients.

Hannah explains: "I would chat to patients during their assessments. I'd ask them about their lives and what they did during the day and some of them attended a care farm."

Keen to know more, Hannah visited Volunteer Director Rachael at Densholme Care Farm and discovered the positive outcomes of care farming first-hand.

"The benefits of care farming are the meaningful and purposeful activity as well as increased confidence amongst service users," said Hannah.

"It increases people's independence and their mental well-being. It's about social interaction, being outdoors, having new experiences and meeting new people."



Densholme Care Farm holds the benchmark of the Care Farming Code of Practice and has always worked closely with occupational therapy teams. Hannah is part of a strong ongoing relationship between the local NHS City Healthcare Partnership and the farm.

The referral process

A service level agreement helped to outline roles and responsibilities between Hannah's team and Densholme at the start of the partnership.

Clients hold the budget for the care farming place. Sometimes this is managed through a broker or perhaps a parent/carer. Payments cover the full cost of providing the place.

Typically, the time from initial contact with Hannah to a client starting on the farm takes four weeks and service user contracts are reviewed annually.

Although there is not currently any formal continuing monitoring, Denholme Care Farm does provide daily logs and reviews for other commissioners where required.

In her role, Hannah assesses anybody over the age of 18 with physical disabilities to make sure they have the right support.

Assessments usually take place in a person's home, although sometimes initial assessments are done over the phone.

Occupational Therapy teams help people to decide what their goals are. Hannah combines her approach to support both mental and physical health.

"As an Occupational Therapist, whatever role we are in, we always put the client at the centre of what we do. Going to a care farm can be massive for someone's mental well-being and amazing for social interaction."

Challenges

Hannah says that the most common concerns that her clients have are about managing access and transport. "If someone is in a wheelchair or using a rollator (like a 4 wheel walker), it's important that they know that they can still get around using the walking aids or wheelchair.

"It is also important that they can access the toilet, or perhaps a changing place facility and still maintain their maintain dignity."

Achievements

The partnership means that more people in East Yorkshire are finding community, purpose and joy in nature and the outdoors.



Hannah explains: "Quite often, people coming to us will only interact with their carers or families. They might have low confidence.

"Care farms give people a different environment where they can grow and be creative. They can nurture something themselves."

Hannah recommends working with care farms to other health and social care providers. She said: "Get in touch, go and have a look, take your client with you if you can, and experience it for yourself. It's got to be a positive experience for many."

Speaking about the successful partnership, Rachael said: "The contract has certainly been beneficial for us. Any referral is important to us but we like working with a range of commissioners so that different client groups can benefit from our care farm."

What people say

Working with occupational therapy services means that Densholme can reach and benefit more people like Cheryl, Kyle and Adrian.

"I learn new skills every week and have made new friends; having people to chat to is wicked. We all do ace teamwork, there is an awesome atmosphere. Coming here brings me out of my shell."

Cheryl - service user

"My experiences at Densholme have been great. So far every job we do is great but it can be physical. I enjoy working as part of a team and meeting new people."

Kyle - service user

"The place I would go before was more like school work, and I was stuck inside all day so I like the farm more than that. I enjoy getting outside and being in the fresh air."

Adrian - service user



More information

Growing Care Farming is part of the Government's Children & Nature programme and is delivered by Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive.

GCF will transform the scale of the care farming sector across England through the provision of advocacy, training and resources to create more opportunities for children and adults with a defined need to benefit from the bespoke health, care and educational services provided on care farms.

See www.farmgarden.org.uk/GCF for more details.

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