



# Growing Care Farming Final report



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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	4
<b>Part 1: Growing Care Farming – Background and Context .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. GCF – Background and context .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. Background.....	5
1.2. Project Partners.....	5
1.3. Effects of Covid-19 and other external challenges on the GCF project.....	6
1.4. The care farming sector and Covid-19.....	7
1.5. Staffing.....	8
<b>Part 2: GCF Achievements and learning .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2. Advocacy, Support and Resources.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. Advocacy and promotion - Approach and adaptations.....	9
2.2. Advocacy and promotion activities .....	9
2.2.1. Advocacy and promotional activities .....	9
2.2.2. Communications and social media.....	10
2.2.3. Growing Care Farming Update Bulletins and the ‘Resource round up’ .....	13
2.2.4. National Conferences .....	14
2.3. Support and resources – Approach and adaptations .....	15
2.4. Support and resources.....	16
2.4.1. Themed webinars .....	16
2.4.2. Case studies, films and other resources.....	17
2.4.3. Care farming Knowledge base and engagement with GCF webpages.....	19
2.4.4. Countryside Classroom.....	20
2.4.5. School visits plus – with LEAF Education .....	21
2.4.6. Annual Survey of the care farming sector .....	22
2.5. Advocacy, Support and Resources – Feedback, learning and legacy .....	25
2.5.1. Feedback.....	25
2.5.2. Learning and legacy .....	27
<b>3. GCF Training.....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1. Training - Approach and adaptations .....	30
3.2. Training - Activities .....	31
3.2.1. Online training courses and resources .....	31
3.2.2. Face-to-face and blended learning courses.....	32
3.2.3. CEVAS training development.....	32
3.2.4. Engagement with GCF training courses.....	33
3.3. Feedback, learning and legacy.....	33
3.3.1. Feedback.....	33
3.3.2. Learning and legacy .....	35

<b>4. GCF Networking .....</b>	<b>38</b>
4.1. Networking - Approach and Adaptions .....	38
4.1.1. Networking - Original plans .....	38
4.1.2. The Pilot.....	38
4.1.3. Networking – Adapted approach .....	39
4.2. Regional Networking – Activities.....	39
4.2.1. Yorkshire & Humberside.....	40
4.2.2. North East and North West .....	41
4.2.3. Other regions.....	41
4.2.4. Webpages and newsletters .....	41
4.3. Central networking – Activities .....	42
4.3.1. Online care farming network meetings.....	42
4.3.2. Other support – including for Social Prescribing .....	42
4.4. Engagement with GCF Networking.....	43
4.5. Feedback, learning and legacy.....	43
4.5.1. Feedback.....	43
4.5.2. Learning and legacy .....	44
<b>5. Quality Assurance .....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1. Approach and adaptions.....	47
5.1.1. The Care farming Code of Practice - overview .....	47
5.1.2. The Code process and approach of GCF .....	47
5.1.3. Effects of Covid-19 on the Quality Assurance work of GCF.....	48
5.2. Quality Assurance – Activities .....	48
5.2.1. Online resources - Introduction to the Code and other support .....	48
5.2.6. Code of Practice review meetings .....	51
5.3. Engagement with the Care farming Code of Practice .....	51
5.3.1. Engagement with the Code of practice resources .....	51
5.3.2. Number of organisations achieving the Code of practice .....	52
5.4.1. Feedback.....	53
5.4.2. Learning and legacy .....	54
<b>Part 3: Recommendations.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>6. Recommendations for future work .....</b>	<b>56</b>
6.1. Conclusions.....	56
6.2. Recommendations for future work .....	56
<b>Appendix A: The relevance of care farming to Environment Land Management (ELM) scheme.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendix B: First Yorkshire and Humber Learning Report.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Appendix C. Growing Care Farming Yorkshire &amp; Humberside - Second Regional Learning Report.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Appendix D - Plans for the Green Care Quality Mark .....</b>	<b>78</b>

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We would also like to thank all the existing and prospective care farmers, green care practitioners and Code Assessors who took part in the development of training and other resources for the project; and to all the care farmers, service users, referral agencies, commissioners, carers and families who agreed to participate in our GCF films and case studies – we could not have done it without you!

## Part 1: Growing Care Farming – Background and Context

### 1. GCF – Background and context

#### 1.1. Background

The Children and Nature programme is a flagship programme for the Government's 25 YEP: '[A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#)' launched in 2018. The Children and Nature Programme was led jointly by Natural England, Defra and Department for Education, with a budget of £10m.

Social farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive, delivered the [Growing Care Farming \(GCF\)](#) project, one of three pillars of the Government's Children and Nature Programme<sup>1</sup>. The Growing Care Farming project worked with care farmers, potential care farmers and commissioners from education, health and social care to: i) raise the profile of care farming; ii) build the capacity of the care farming sector by increasing both the supply of and the demand for care farming places in England; and to iii) maintain a consistent and reliable standard of service delivery from all care farms.

The Project aim was to expand and transform care farming services across England through a programme of:

- i) Advocacy, support and resources,
- ii) Training
- iii) Regional and national networking
- iv) Quality assurance via the Care farming Code of Practice,

to enable existing care farmers to increase the scope and quality of care farming activities offered and to attract new care farmers and green care practitioners to join this growing sector.

#### 1.2. Project Partners

##### [Social Farms & Gardens](#)

SF&G is a UK wide charity that assists nearly 2,000 organisations to support the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the environment through engagement with nature-based activities. SF&G works with and supports a wide spectrum of organisations delivering services such as Green Care and community and social nature-based activities, across the whole of the UK, working in both urban and rural settings.

Their remit includes:

- Demonstrating the importance and benefits of nature-based activities, advocating on behalf of nature-based organisations.
- Providing support and advice for community growers nationally and internationally.
- Delivery of training programmes and resources to grass roots organisations.
- Promotion of quality assurance via the Green Care Quality Mark to support members to provide commissioned services and to demonstrate delivery of high-quality provision.

##### [Thrive](#)

Established in 1978, Thrive is the gardening for health charity that uses gardening to make positive changes to the lives of people who are living with disabilities or ill health, or who are isolated, disadvantaged, or vulnerable. Thrive delivers social & therapeutic horticulture programmes from its centres in London, Reading and Birmingham to improve an individual's physical and psychological health, communication and thinking skills. Thrive also offers a variety of training, education and advice services for practitioners and professionals using nature-based interventions for health and wellbeing (ranging from introductory

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<sup>1</sup> supported by Defra, funded by the Department of Education and managed by Natural England



workshops to extended learning) and offers practical information and gardening advice to help people realise the health benefits of gardening in their own space and time.

### **1.3. Effects of Covid-19 and other external challenges on the GCF project**

Our work on GCF has not been immune from the need to change and adapt due to budgetary changes and adjustments to the timescale of the GCF project, and of course the Covid 19 pandemic. As a result, the final delivery approach of Growing Care Farming was significantly different to the original plan.

After the launch in May 2019 and the start of the 6 month 'Pilot' from September 2019- February 2020, the Growing Care Farming team had already started reprofiling and revising the GCF delivery model and budget, as a response to learning from the pilot phase. Some further reprofiling and adjustments to both the budget and the delivery model took place to factor in delays and restrictions resulting from Covid-19, based on the assumption that things would go back to 'normal' in later in 2020, which subsequently proved not to be the case.

As we entered the first lockdown in March 2020, we had just launched our suite of face-to-face training, had started to roll out the regional engagement work in the regions, and were eagerly awaiting several promotional events all of which had to go on hold because of the pandemic.

All GCF staff remained in post, although some were part-furloughed during the second lockdown, and we worked hard to turn a programme of work that was heavily focussed on face-to-face events, training and engagement into something that could be run completely remotely until restrictions were lifted. With Covid-19 being no respecter of regional geography, we made the decision to adapt our work to a more centralised delivery model, enabling care farmers from all over the country to participate immediately, rather than waiting for the phased regional roll-out in the original GCF delivery plan. We felt that this change, together with the increase in central support, networking and resources would enable the maximum number of people to benefit in challenging times - whilst maintaining the all-important national advocacy for the sector.

The reductions in budget (firstly in September 2020 and then again in 2021) and the reduced timescale of the GCF project as a result of the pressure the pandemic placed on Government resources, has also had a pronounced effect on project delivery. Many of the aspect of the project that we aimed to deliver had to be dropped and for the last year of the project, staff hours were reduced, and all face-to-face events and networking shelved. As a result of this much of the second stage development work that was planned suffered due to a lack of time to implement.

However, the work continued and the focus of GCF remained on supporting care farmers, to increase support and communication with the sector, to keep people informed of ways to keep 'connected' with their service users, to buoy spirits up to help reduce isolation; and to encourage uptake and completion of care farming Code of Practice applications. We continued to speak to care farmers across the country, ensuring that their concerns and issues were being passed on and continued to represent the sector throughout. Many care farms, city farms and green care providers got in contact with us towards the end of the first lockdown about reopening and resuming activities. With responsibilities for looking after staff, volunteers, and the people they support, questions about regulations, risk management and health and safety came in thick and fast. For example, we were repeatedly asked for advice on how reopening can happen in a safe and responsible way, so we worked with highly experienced, Code Assessors to create a checklist to aid reopening.

Our partners at Thrive, worked hard to reformat our face-to-face training to make the courses appropriate for delivering remotely, our networking was all done online, and we upgraded our ability to host different types of resources on our web platforms, and all the staff team were involved in producing resources (such as video, webinars and podcasts) to share via our website – all accessible at the click of a button.

## 1.4. The care farming sector and Covid-19

As with all other areas of the economy, the care farming sector faced many challenges over the last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The logistical and financial pressures on small businesses were great and the social distancing and lockdown restrictions put particular pressure on care farm and green care sites trying to deliver services to some of the most vulnerable people in society. During the first national lockdown, many care farms closed their doors to clients, whereas some were asked to remain open to provide services, (for example for vulnerable children and the children of key workers) and others to support people with learning disabilities<sup>2</sup>. As the lockdown continued, care farms that were closed worried about the vulnerable people they support and had deep-seated concerns about the survival of the business, given the tight margins so many were forced to operate under from cash-strapped commissioners.

Amidst many heart-breaking stories however, there were reasons for optimism. So many care farmers got in touch with GCF, telling us stories of how they continued to connect with their clients, sharing their fantastic social media approaches and reporting how their communities, supporters and commissioners were rallying round them. Some farms were still operating a minimum service, with commissioners keen to see some of the most vulnerable service users supported, albeit it in a responsible, socially distanced way.

In the autumn and the new year 2021, with further lockdowns coming into force, many care farms were once again battling with a desire to remain open and accessible for the people they support and with their obligation to contribute to the national effort to reduce the infection rate. Again, some care farms closed, although many continued to offer a reduced service or online support.

Our [Annual care farming and green care survey 2021](#) confirmed that 16% of care farms said they were facing challenges due to Covid-19. In contrast, 37% of care farms have seen an increase in enquiries due to the pandemic and 29% an increase in referrals, with 28% experiencing no change. Other changes due to Covid-19 that were highlighted in the survey include low number of referrals during lockdowns, followed by surges and backlogs as they were lifted; some service users being hesitant to return due to Covid anxiety; and a change in type of referral and service user 'type'.

However, care farms once again showed that they could rise to the challenge. We asked care farms and green care sites to let us know about any changes their organisation made, and which of these were so successful that they will be continuing them in the future. These innovations included: increased engagement with Facebook and social media, creation of newsletters and increased communication, online support and activity sessions, welfare checks, development of new resources and activity packs, changes to operating procedures and outreach work. Most organisations told us that they would be continuing with their innovations such as engaging on social media, online newsletters, online support sessions and changed operating procedures but about 10% told us that they would be stopping their remote delivery after Covid.

In terms of how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected progress in developing care farms or green care sites over the last year, in the latest survey, about half of the prospective care farmers said that their plans and progress had been delayed in some way but that things were now moving forward, around a third told us that Covid made no difference to how they were progressing, and others said that the pandemic gave them more planning time which enabled them to progress faster.

*“Covid brought us volunteers who have been affected by the pandemic and have benefited from time at the farm, which has confirmed our beliefs about the importance of access to the natural environment on people's well-being and made us want to push forward with our long-standing desire to establish care farm provision on site.”*

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<sup>2</sup> In a survey to SF&G members carried out in April 2020, 24% of care farms were completely closed with nobody at all attending; 57% told us that some staff and volunteers were working under social distancing measures but remained closed to the public and service users; 17% said that some staff and volunteers are working but with reduced access to public and only 2% were working as normal.

*“Covid made me want to seek new opportunities and follow a dream of opening a care farm.”*

## 1.5. Staffing

As the project grew and adapted, so did the project team. The Growing Care Farming project staff team comprised:

- Dr Rachel Bragg, Care Farming Development Manager
- Deborah Evans, Regional Care Farming Manager
- Katie Jefferies, GCF Project Officer
- Pearl Cousins, Code of Practice Administrator
- Sarah Marrison, Regional Support Officer
- Hannah Beal, Digital Content Coordinator (who joined the team in October 2020)
- Sophie Antonelli, Digital Content Support (who joined the team in September 2020)

SF&G staff who also worked on the GCF project include:

- Jennie Reed, Communications Coordinator
- Meggie Rogers, Communications Coordinator (who took over from Jennie Reed whilst on maternity leave)

We were also fortunate to have support from other colleagues at Social Farms & Gardens:

- Angie Stratton (Finance), Carmel Ferguson (Administration), Suzanne Haynes (HR) and Diane Godwin (Membership).

Thrive staff who also worked on the GCF project include:

- Damien Newman, Training, Education and Consultancy Manager
- Freddie Watson-Stubbs, Learning and Technology Officer
- Neil Wilcox, Training & Education Officer
- Mark Emery, Training & Education Officer
- Mark Lang, Communications and PR Manager

The GCF Project Management Group comprised:

- Chris Blythe – Director, Social farms & Gardens (until December 2021)
- Kathryn Rossiter - CEO, Thrive
- Dr Rachel Bragg, Care Farming Development Manager
- Deborah Evans – Regional Care Farming Manager



## Part 2: GCF Achievements and learning

### 2. Advocacy, Support and Resources

#### 2.1. Advocacy and promotion - Approach and adaptations

An important part of the role of GCF, was the advocacy and promotion of care farming at a national and policy level, to simultaneously increase the pressure to drive up demand for care farming places and to support the creation of further supply. Aligning the expansion of care farming services with policy was (and still is) critical. Care farming complements a range of key policy drivers across sectors including (but not exclusively) those relating to mental health (including dementia), specialist education, social prescribing and agriculture.

The original approach of the GCF project was to be via various face-to-face meetings with key policymakers and professionals involved in healthcare, social care, education and agriculture at a national level. Although this was how the work started, face to face advocacy was on hold during the Covid-19 restrictions and then remained unsuitable for the remainder of the project due to restrictions in GCF budget and timescale. However remote advocacy continued (as and when appropriate) after the first year of restrictions.

and we will be redirecting staff time into developing online resources and other support. In terms of our GCF advocacy and promotional work, during the height of the pandemic, it was inappropriate for the focus to be on advocacy during these difficult times. The audiences that we wanted to promote care farming to - health, social care, and educational professionals responsible for commissioning services - rightly had their attention focused on dealing with the Covid-19 crisis and managing the significant changes that occurred. Similarly, the agricultural sector also faced challenges with Covid-19, and the pressures to the food supply chain that come with it. We continued to advocate that care farming can become an additional income stream and thus make the farm more resilient in times of economic uncertainty, but we did not promote care farming in the manner we had originally planned, until later in 2021. We were also aware that the care farming, commissioning and wider environment was likely to look quite different post Covid-19 and our delivery of the GCF project needed to reflect this.

Over the last two years, there has been an increasing recognition of the part that nature can play in helping people to feel better. During the lockdowns, many people turned to their gardens or to nearby parks and natural spaces for solace, and for many this made a huge difference to how they coped mentally in difficult times. Related to this an important message that we promoted, is that with this new level of understanding of how beneficial the outdoors can be for our mental health, care farms and green care sites are therefore well-placed to be an important part of the nation's mental health recovery post pandemic.

#### 2.2. Advocacy and promotion activities

This section covers:

- Advocacy and promotional activities
- Communications and social media
- Media engagement
- GCF Updates
- National conference

##### 2.2.1. Advocacy and promotional activities

A key part of the Project hinged on the success of developing good relationships with those responsible for referrals in health, social care and specialist education (e.g., Clinical Commissioning Groups (now Integrated Care Systems (ICS)), General Practitioners, Social Prescribing Services and schools/Alternative Provision Institutions etc.), in order to engage with currently available referral mechanisms and to promote the use

of care farming within them. With this in mind, the GCF team have attended a variety of meetings about social prescribing, promoting care farming and green care as an ideal option for social prescribing whilst at the same time highlighting the need for sustainable funding for service providers.

In the same vein we have also been promoting care farming in discussions around ELMs (Environmental Land Management Scheme) to highlight how care farming can be considered a 'public good' provided by farmers and to support the development of resilient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly farm businesses<sup>3</sup>. Many care farms received funding for care farming via Higher Level Stewardship in the predecessor Countryside Stewardship scheme and we are keen to see this continue via ELMs (see Appendix A).

The Care Farming Development Manager and other GCF staff have promoted care farming and the GCF project at nearly 100 different meetings and events over the project (see Table 2.1), ranging from small in-depth meetings with single organisations (such as LEAF Education ([Linking Environment and Farming](#)), FSC, Dementia Adventure) partnerships and conferences (such as AgriFood Charity Partnership, Countryside Classroom, and the Oxford Farming and CLA annual Conferences) through to round-table discussions informing the Natural England Board and Government departments (such as a Cabinet Office event to discuss the role of nature in social prescribing, a Ministry of Justice discussion on Prison Farms) and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Health and the natural environment<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 2.1. Advocacy and promotional work**

Activities	2019 /20	2020/21					2021/22					GCF Total
	Annual total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	
<b>Meetings attended by GCF staff for advocacy and promotion of care farming</b>	15	4	5	7	12	28	14	6	12	9	41	84
<b>Presentations given by GCF staff to promote care farming to stakeholders</b>	7	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	3	2	6	15

### 2.2.2. Communications and social media

Engagement with the GCF project’s social media, via Twitter and the SF&G website, not only promoted the care farming sector, but also provided peer to peer and other support for care farmers, commissioners and interested parties, and signposts to relevant information and training opportunities.

Communication with care farmers, prospective care farmers and others within the sector has been paramount during the challenging Covid-19 times and the GCF team worked hard to ensure that care farming and the GCF project remained in the public eye, so that advocacy could continue to build on this, after the pandemic. We also reviewed the project communications approach to communicate more

<sup>3</sup> Care Farming Development Manager, Dr Rachel Bragg spoke with Janet Hughes, the Programme Director, of Defra's Future Farming and Countryside Programme about where care farming fits in with ELM and the wider agenda, which has led to further meetings with Defra (including the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) team) and the Rural Payments Agency. Also, meetings with Department for Education on care farming and Alternative Provision.

<sup>4</sup> Other notable meetings and events include: Meetings with- LEAF, FSC, Dementia Adventure, Access to Farms partnership, Countryside Classroom, National Outdoors for All Working Group, The Country Trust, National Academy for Social Prescribing, Green Care Coalition ; Events - Health Expo 2019, Solutions to Isolation Conference at Future Roots, The Wildlife Trusts' webinar: Wild LIVE: So, where next for nature and British farming?', CLA's webinar "An early insight into the new agricultural policy", Nature Connections Conference, Launch of Nature on Prescription, Thriving Communities webinar, Green Social Prescribing Community of Practice Collaborative.

frequently to keep people informed as to what was happening in the sector and to maintain engagement in the project.

### Communication themes

Each month (starting in June 2020) we set up a new online communications theme that we pushed via the GCF Twitter channel. Over the project, these themes have included:

#### 2020-21

- June, Training
- July, Covid-19 Recovery
- August, A Snapshot of the Sector
- September, Code of Practice
- October, Legal Governance of care farms
- November, Surviving the winter; activities and tips for the cold winter months
- December, Care Farm Christmas
- January, Care Farming for Mental Health
- February, Care Farming for Social Care
- March, Celebrating Care Farming: Adapting to Change

#### 2021-22

- April, GCF Conference
- May, Education
- June, Countryside Classroom
- July, Annual Survey release
- August, getting outside for summer
- September, Maximising income for Green Care sites
- October, Training
- November, Care farming for dementia
- December, Care Farming for Learning Disabilities and ASD
- January, Celebrating Progression through Care Farming
- February, Annual Survey results
- March, Project Closure and legacy

### Social media

The focus for GCF communications was mainly via our social media channels - Twitter and YouTube, although the team regularly posted and responded to queries in the [Social Farms & Gardens' Facebook Group](#) which supports peer to peer learning. Twitter was selected as the focus of our social media effort due to the existing network of care farmers, commissioners and other relevant stakeholders using the platform. The historic Care Farming UK Twitter account was rebranded to represent the Growing Care Farming project.

The content produced on our Twitter account included promotion of care farming as a service provision, the work of the GCF project (events, new resources, training etc) and sharing good practice and relevant content from other organisations<sup>5</sup>. Some examples of our most popular tweets are highlighted below:



The account is also used to network with individuals, to ensure as many people were aware of the project as possible and to promote upcoming training and events. An example of one of the promotional initiatives via Twitter was the promotion of our films to promote the use of care farming in different commissioning sectors. Each film was allocated a month of Twitter coverage, being the focus and theme of all tweets within that month. For example, we released the 'Care farming for social care' film in February 2021 in line with various social care campaigns that take place throughout



<sup>5</sup> Google Alerts was also used to identify new articles and new web pages that were related to care farming. This allowed us to share relevant content on twitter that hadn't come from us, allowing us to advocate on behalf of the sector using external resources, and signposting to relevant sites with ease.

February such as Dignity Action Day, Sign2Sing Week and YouCanCareWeek2021. The campaigns allowed us to draw focus towards the value and importance of care farming in the context of social care, and premier our film to tie this all together.

A YouTube account was set up for the GCF project. Films and recordings of events produced by the project were housed on the GCF YouTube account (as well as on the GCF website where appropriate), and videos from other organisations (such as individual care farm films) were also highlighted and stored in a playlist. This allowed us to signpost enquiries to the channel so that users can obtain (are share) visual information about care farming whilst simultaneously being signposting to care farming/green care organisations with a YouTube presence. At the end of the GCF project, all videos have been moved to a [playlist](#) in the main SF&G YouTube channel to ensure a sustainable legacy

Quarterly and annual statistics for all our social media can be found in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2. GCF Social media statistics**

	Measure	2019 /20	2020/21					GCF Total					GCF Total
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	
Twitter	Number of Twitter impressions <sup>6</sup> (thousands, K)	157.3	28.5	50.8	81.9	90.1	251.3	46.8	31.5	24.2	9.2	111.7	520
	Average Twitter impressions per day	-	314	593	900	890	2697	514	346	266	120	312	3009
	Engagement rate <sup>7</sup> (%)	0.98	1.2	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.6	1	1.8	1.8	2.4	1.75	1.42 (ave)
	Retweets	-	54	123	175	154	506	84	63	122	21	290	796
	Number of total followers	-	2144	2191	2227	2288	2288	2319	2356	2379	2378	2358	2358
	Number of followers gained	-	19	47	36	61	163	31	37	23	-1	90	253
YouTube	Number of video views	-	159	459	590	1723	2931	1321	1048	1692	1312	5373	8304
	Number of watch hours	-	9.5	31.3	36.1	104	181	78.4	64.5	87.8	78.1	308.8	489.8
	Number of total subscribers	-	11	20	29	47	47	66	82	99	117	117	117

While marketing tools like newsletters are helpful in reaching certain demographics, social media was effective in reaching other demographics, including prospective care farmers, service users or family members of service users who may otherwise not have been aware that the project and care farming was available to them. Similarly, YouTube provided a platform for us to disseminate large amounts of information globally, at the viewers convenience, which proved beneficial in reaching beyond the project scope. For example, we would see a spike in event and training registrations after promotion on twitter,

<sup>6</sup> The total number of times a GCF tweet is shown on somebody’s timeline.

<sup>7</sup> Shows how many twitter followers out of every thousand have reacted to the tweet; an engagement rate between 0.33% and 1% is considered very high.

often from individuals previously not affiliated with the project or SF&G in any way. This suggested that our social media communications captured audiences that were previously untapped and therefore was a strong addition to other promotional resources like the GCF Newsletters.

### Media engagement

In 2019/20 two major events were held, the GCF Project Launch and the Going Live event for Yorkshire & Humberside. In 2020/21 three major events were held, a Going Live event in both the North East and North West, and the online conference 'Celebrating Care Farming: Adapting to Change'. Each event generated a substantial amount of interest in the project and continued the conversation around the importance of care farming, particularly in live of the Covid-19 pandemic, with Twitter, YouTube and email engagement peaking during each period. All face-to-face events ceased for the GCF project after March 2020 due to the pandemic restrictions and reductions in the GCF budget.

During 2019/20 media engagement included:

- Defra, wanted to produce a short piece with a care farmer for their internal newsletter.
- **BBC Radio York**, featured a story on care farming on their channel with an interview with Sarah Marrison.
- **BBC Radio Humber**, featured coverage of the Going Live event for Yorkshire & Humberside and information on the GCF project.
- **Farmers Weekly Proagrica**, produced an article on care farming and the diversification opportunity this could provide for readers. The article can be found [here](#).
- **Northern Farmer**, attended the regional live event in Yorkshire & Humberside and created an article on the project and sector, which can be found [here](#).

During 2020/21 media engagement included:

- **Farmers Guardian**, featured some of our care farms in their national 24hrs campaign in August. The webpage for the campaign be found [here](#).
- **The Guardian**, produced a piece on care farming that can be found [here](#).
- **Positive News magazine**, wrote a feature on the benefits of care/therapeutic farming that can be found [here](#).
- **People's Friend magazine**, wrote a feature on Social Farms & Gardens, which included information about the GCF Project and the GCF case studies. The issue can be found [here](#).
- **Farmer's Guardian**, wrote an article on green recovery featuring an interview with Rachel Bragg. The article can be found [here](#).

During 2021/22 media engagement included:

- **University of Essex**, published an online news piece regarding the OBE being awarded to Dr Rachel Bragg. The piece can be found [here](#).
- **BBC**, have been in touch requesting statistics for a documentary they aired on Pennyhooks Care Farm on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. The documentary and supporting information can be found [here](#).
- **Care Management Matters**, published a feature on Care Farming and the Power of Ecotherapy. The feature can be found [here](#).

### **2.2.3. Growing Care Farming Update Bulletins and the 'Resource round up'**

#### GCF Bulletin

Originally, once the GCF project had been launched in May 2019 and the pilot delivery phase of the GCF project was underway, Growing Care Farming Bulletins were circulated quarterly via email, and also uploaded onto the website to allow Thrive and other organisations to signpost to them in their own newsletters, whilst keeping a consistent GCF message. The bulletins highlighted the major project events and developments. Monthly Regional newsletters written by the Regional Engagement staff team were also sent via email, as the regions went 'live' (for more information see Chapter 4).



With the onset of the pandemic and the associated restrictions, GCF Bulletins moved from a quarterly to a monthly basis, partly due to the increasing amount of news and funding information but also due to the need for increasing communication with care farmers and other stakeholders in the sector over the challenging times brought by Covid-19. All GCF Bulletins can be found [here](#). Due to the changes to the regional networking element of the GCF project, the regional eNewsletters ceased from July 2020 and instead updates and regional specific information was included in the main GCF bulletin (under 3 new subsections North, South, Central and East).

### **Resource Round Up**

The sheer volume of regional information on funding, training and other opportunities (peer support, networking, tender opportunities, etc) being gathered and communicated to care farmers by the RSO, resulted in a decision in June 2021 to separate this information from the main GCF project news with the creation of a separate Resources Round Up bulletin, where opportunities of all types relevant to care farming and green care were curated.

This round up has proved extremely popular with high levels of opening and click throughs from recipients and we have received praise from organisations such as Natural England on the quality of this publication. Again, the quality and popularity of this bulletin has been recognised by the wider organisation, and resources have been allocated to continuing the bulletin and expanding its reach/readership to the whole membership in the future more details [here](#).

### **2.2.4. National Conferences**

Natural England hosted the launch of the Growing Care Farming project at the Royal Over-Seas League in London on 13th May 2019. Speakers at the launch included: Therese Coffey, Minister for the Environment, Defra; Nadim Zahawi, Minister for Children and Families at the Department for Education; Natural England Chief Executive Marian Spain; James Sanderson, Director of Personalised Care at NHS; Mark Coulman, Care Farmer, Hall Farm; Chris Baker, Commissioner, Ongo; and Dr Rachel Bragg, Care Farming Development Manager, Social Farms & Gardens. More details about the launch event can be found [here](#).

Originally the first of two GCF national conferences was scheduled to take place in November 2020. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions and uncertainty as to when face to face gatherings could be allowed, we postponed the conference and then took the decision to hold it remotely in 2021. The online conference *'Celebrating Care Farming: Adapting to Change'* was held on March 25<sup>th</sup> and saw the care farming and green care community come together virtually to showcase some of the fantastic work that took place on care farms in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our Regional Care Farming Manager opened the event with the first showing of the *'Celebrating care farming'* film, which was followed by an update on GCF Project progress from our Care Farming Development Manager.

The main focus of the conference looked at care farming adaptations due to the pandemic, chaired by Rachael Fell-Chambers of Densholme Care Farm in Hull, who spoke of the challenges that the pandemic had presented at Densholme and across the sector, before introducing each of our guest speakers.

- Liz Marley of Poppies Care Farm in Suffolk, spoke of the various community pushes that they have taken part in since the beginning of lockdown, such as the provision of veg boxes to local cafes and charities, cleaning of local nature trails and taking part in big charity pushes such as Comic Relief.
- Jo Dudek of Fields and Farms in Leicestershire, spoke of her experience of opening a care farm at the start of a pandemic, and how the care farming Code of Practice and CEVAS course had assisted her in this.
- Robin Asquith and Adam Wren from Camphill Village Trust, spoke about their new online offering; Opportunity TV, which had been created to ensure service users and staff members feel connected even when apart, and the opportunities this has presented to Adam as a care farming beneficiary to take on more responsibility. They also spoke of the new sites they are working on, which focus on improving access to nature in urban areas.

The event then closed with a plenary Question & Answer session, allowing attendees to pose questions to speakers for valued insight. Following the event, positive feedback was received from attendees and presenters who found the conference to be useful, insightful and positive. A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

### 2.3. Support and resources – Approach and adaptations

As communication with a range of different audiences (e.g. care farmers, commissioners, agriculturalists, health, social care and educational professionals) was key in GCF, a range of supporting events and resources were developed throughout the duration of the project to support the growth of the care farming sector. These resources included information for those who are setting up a care farm or other green care site and promotional materials for care farmers to use with commissioners locally and regionally. We also developed promotional and supporting resources for stakeholders to use at a national and policy level, as well as information and guidance for commissioners, case studies, online resources and videos, advice and guidance on complying with the Code of Practice and other innovative materials.

Originally, these resources were to augment the regional engagement work to ensure extensive independent local support for care farms around England. We hoped the resources would help to identify potential demand for care farm places locally and that a support system would be available to each individual care farm. This support would comprise both central resources and shared learning from other regions, fed back to help care farmers to create a compelling case for the benefits of care farming specific to the various commissioning bodies, as well as assist in identifying and addressing any barriers to referral, ultimately building capacity for advocacy and engagement at the regional (and local) level.

However, with the restrictions of Covid-19 and budget constraints, all face-to-face delivery ceased in March 2020 and the focus for resources and support shifted onto online resource development and ultimately the development of an online care farming ‘knowledge base’. In addition, we developed new ways to engage remotely with our network of care farmers and prospective care farmers and new ways to offer support and to share good practice through online networking and themed webinars. This not only ensured maximum accessibility during Covid restrictions but also adds to the comprehensive GCF project legacy.

In addition, in early 2021, we collaborated with LEAF Education<sup>8</sup> (and the 32 partner organisations that make up Countryside Classroom) to make care farming more accessible for teachers and education referrers by creating a permanent presence on the website dedicated to care farming. The Countryside Classroom website is a free online hub of teaching resources, people to ask, and places to visit designed to enable teachers to use food, farming and the natural environment in and out of the classroom. It is an important place for teachers to find free high-quality educational support and therefore we felt it was well positioned to provide an ideal platform for promoting the benefits of care farming to educational settings.

Again, working together with LEAF Education in May 2021, the GCF team developed a comprehensive plan in supporting LEAF farmers who deliver farm visits and other engagement opportunities to grow their offering for young people with a defined need to include care farming. Specifically moving from ‘Farm Visits’ to ‘Farm Visits Plus’, i.e. ultimately supporting farmers in developing care farming services. This work was originally to span across 2 years of the project, but due to the timescale changes it took place over 9 months.

The other major element of this GCF workstream were the annual surveys of the care farming and green care sector surveys. The 2019/20 survey was unaffected by the pandemic, but the 2021 survey was delayed and an additional snapshot survey about care farm status during the second lockdown was also conducted.

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<sup>8</sup> Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) and the 32 partner organisations that make up Countryside Classroom

## 2.4. Support and resources

This section covers:

- Themed webinars
- Case studies, films and other resources
- Care farming Knowledge Base and other webpages
- Countryside Classroom Care farming hub
- Farm visits plus – with LEAF Education
- Annual surveys of the care farming sector

### 2.4.1. Themed webinars

The value of themed meetings delivered face-to-face during the Pilot phase of the GCF project was highlighted by many stakeholders. Themed meetings or events, allowed specific topics to be addressed, responding to the needs of the sector. Restrictions due to Covid-19 meant that we had to postpone (and then cancel) face-to-face delivery and develop these themed meetings as online webinars. This enabled the project to continue engaging with care farmers, prospectives and commissioners (where appropriate) during the difficult lockdown and recovery stages. These themed webinars also allowed for involvement of commissioners and potential commissioners or referrers, many of whom are often too busy to attend face to face meetings but were able to attend these shorter themed meetings that do not require travel.

We hosted fourteen webinars between May 2020 and December 2021. These webinars attempted to address pertinent issues that were being raised by care farmers and/or provided information which could be helpful to their new and adapted approaches to staying connected with the service users and supporters during the pandemic. The twelve webinars delivered included the following themes.

- Creative engagement on social media
- IT and data protection
- Reducing Covid risk and re-opening your care farm
- Care Farming – A snapshot of the sector (based on 2020 annual care farming survey results)
- Crowdfunding
- Developing your own awards and qualifications using AQA
- Surviving the winter
- Governance options
- Care Farming for dementia
- Measuring Outcomes
- Case study – the Story of Clynyfw care farm
- Care farming for Education
- Green Social Prescribing – Making it work for you (as an SF&G Monthly Member Webinar)
- Care farming – a snapshot of our sector (as an SF&G Monthly Member Webinar)

A total of 382 attendees (see Table 2.3) from all 9 England regions and from Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland attended. All webinars were recorded and uploaded onto the SF&G website and YouTube to enable access to the recording for legacy and also to allow people who couldn't attend the sessions to view them. The success of this approach and relevance to the wider membership was recognised by SF&G and our final two webinars were promoted as SF&G Monthly Member Webinars, which will be continuing after the end of the project.

**Table 2.3. GCF Themed webinar engagement**

Attendees	2020/21					2021/22					GCF Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	
Care farmers	15	25	37	29	<b>106</b>	18	18	22	0	<b>58</b>	<b>164</b>
Prospective care farmers	8	15	27	11	<b>61</b>	26	4	17	0	<b>47</b>	<b>108</b>
Health and social care professionals	2	3	3	1	<b>9</b>	4	0	7	0	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>
Education professionals	1	5	7	2	<b>15</b>	3	0	1	0	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>
People from wider nature-based sector	4	4	16	7	<b>31</b>	6	1	13	0	<b>20</b>	<b>51</b>
People from agricultural sector	3	0	4	0	<b>7</b>	1	0	1	0	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>

### 2.4.2. Case studies, films and other resources

#### Case studies

20 case studies were developed throughout the Growing Care Farming project – all [available here](#).

- 8 care farm case studies were written to showcase the diversity in care farming models and the range of different approaches taken. These first case studies covered several aspects: care farm setup and development; the activities that take place on site; and the associated challenges and achievements that the individual farms experienced. The purpose of these case studies is to help those interested in starting a care farm, care farmers, referrers and commissioners in health, social care and specialist education, potential care farming service users and their families to gain insight into life on a care farm.
- 2 two lived experience case studies highlighting how care farming has helped people - in their own words. One a service user turned volunteer and secondly a care farm volunteer both of whom outline how being involved with a care farm has benefitted them.
- 2 commissioner case studies which highlight partnerships between care farms and their commissioning agencies - including how they started and how referrals work, plus challenges and achievements from the perspective of the commissioners and the care farmers they work with.
- 1 case study showing how one care farmer found working through and achieving the care farming Code of Practice (now the Green Care Quality Mark) invaluable in starting her care farming delivery journey.
- 4 case studies highlighting care farming for young people as part of alternative education provision. The GCF project worked with LEAF Education to make care farming more accessible for teachers and education referrers and part of this work produced these case studies for the Countryside Classroom website (for more information about this work, see section 2.4.4.).
- 3 case studies were produced by Dementia Adventure and the GCF team to highlight the development of care farming services for people living with dementia. Social Farms & Gardens were a partner in a dementia training initiative called '[Dementia Adventure in a box](#)', funded by the Community Lottery Fund and the case studies developed through GCF feature different funding and support approaches to supporting people living with dementia on care farms.

## Films

At the start of the GCF project, we developed some films together with our partners at Thrive to give some more information about care farming ('What is care farming' V1), the Code of Practice (Introduction to the Code') and 'The GCF project', as well as producing some film footage as part of the mixed media content within the GCF training courses.

Later on in the project, in response to the unavailability of national level referral agencies due to Covid priorities and restrictions, a set of four films aimed at each commissioning sector were produced in collaboration with the film company Jones Millbank in Bristol, in order to promote the benefits of care farming remotely to relevant decision makers. The films focus on the benefits of 'Care farming for mental health and wellbeing' – released January 2021, 'Care farming for social care' – released February 2021, 'Care farming for education' – released in May 2021 and Care Farming for Dementia and Older People – released November 2021.

A film was also developed for the national conference in March 2021 called 'Celebrating Care Farming: Adapting to change' which highlighted some of the ways care farms developed innovations for service delivery during the pandemic (see section 2.2.4.).

In the final six months of the project, we were also keen to produce some films told from the perspective of care farming beneficiaries themselves that demonstrate successes and progressions as a result of their involvement with care farming and five films were developed – Luke's Story, Kerry's Story, Daisy's Story, Harry's story and Laurelle's story – which show the diversity of people who take part in care farming programmes and the differing outcomes for each individual.

Finally, a second more accessible and contemporary version of the 'What is Care Farming?' film was produced which was launched in December 2021 to correspond with the end of the delivery phase of the GCF project work. All the 13 of the GCF produced videos can be found via the [knowledge base](#) or on the [YouTube channel](#)<sup>9</sup>.



## Other resources

A number of other resources were produced during the GCF project, and these include:

- A leaflet on care farming and the GCF Project, which aims to provide a snapshot of care farming for those that are unfamiliar with the sector, and outlines the definition of care farming, who can benefit from care farming, why it works and the role of the GCF Project, as well as contact information for the GCF team. The leaflet was disseminated at various events, such as the GCF Project Launch and the Going Live regional event in Yorkshire and Humberside and is also available [online](#).
- An introductory information sheet giving an overview of care farming has been produced, outlining what care farming is, who care farming is for and who benefits together with an introduction to the GCF Project. See '[Care Farming: Transforming People's Lives](#)'.
- 'Care farm visit protocol' we were getting a lot of enquiries from a variety of different people wanting to visit a care farm. Whilst undoubtedly the best way of showing people what happens on a care farm, farm visits can be a lot of work to organise, take care farmer time away from delivering services and can have potentially adverse effects on service users and on the sector if not handled

<sup>9</sup> All videos from the [GCF channel](#) will be migrated to the [SF&G channel playlist](#).



well. As part of the GCF project we developed a ‘Visit protocol’ that we can share with the press, Ministers and other interested parties to ensure that visits go smoothly, do not have a deleterious effect and highlight best practice.

- To complement this, we also prepared a ‘Media visit sheet’ that people can complete in advance, to outline what they would like to achieve from visiting a care farm, or in case of the media, what angle, what aspects they are particularly interested in - all of which helps to manage the expectations of both parties.

### 2.4.3. Care farming Knowledge base and engagement with GCF webpages

#### Knowledge base

As awareness and recognition of care farming has grown, it became increasingly apparent that knowledge and resources to support its development existed in more and more disparate places. Websites, wide-ranging social media interactions, forum discussions, university research papers, industry bulletins, care farm publications and the wealth of experience and knowledge that has been garnered by the care farmers themselves and other supporting parties over the years.

Reflections from the pilot phase of GCF, combined with the limitations on face-to-face interactions and the budget restrictions brought about by Covid-19, suggested it was timely to look at aggregating all this



knowledge into a simple online, easily-indexed and easy to access, repository or system – known as a ‘knowledge base’. A knowledge base is a self-serve online library of information about a service or topic (in this case care farming) that can interact and respond to user input more effectively.

Therefore, in the summer of 2020 we recruited a Digital Content Coordinator and a Digital Content Support to the GCF staff team to lead on the development of our knowledge base and content for it. The GCF knowledge base enabled us to create, curate, share, utilise and manage knowledge across the sector in order to enhance the support and promotion of care farming and provide a ‘shop-window’ for the project and its associated aims and outcomes. This is confirmed by the web analytics (Table 4), which show that the unique views of care farming web content trebled in six months after the launch of the care farming knowledge base.

The knowledge base will remain promoted and accessible on the SF&G website after the end of the Growing Care Farming project ends and will provide a valuable legacy in terms of continued support and information for those within the sector and for other interested parties. The knowledge base can be found [here](#).

#### Engagement with GCF webpages

Access of the digital content of the Growing Care Farming project has shown a steady increase in views over time, and this has been supported by the coordinated communications activity and promotion. In particular, the introductory content that has been developed for care farmers, prospective care farmers and those with an interest in care farming has received the most views.

The analytics of our knowledge base, resources pages and other key webpages on the GCF section of the SF&G website over the timespan of the project are shown in Table 2.4.

The original suite of webpages developed for the GCF project (<https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/gcf>) were targeted towards care farmers and prospective care farmers, commissioners from health, education and social care, and service users and their families. The original GCF webpages also included sections on the main activities of the delivery – i) Training, support and resources, ii) Regional Networking and ii) Quality Assurance. All these resources have subsequently been migrated to the knowledge base or other relevant and accessible pages of the main Social Farms & Gardens website.

Our GCF work in the regions (see Section 4) was highlighted in the Regional Networking pages which contained three broad regions – North (Yorkshire and Humberside, NW and NE); Central and East (W. Midlands, E Midlands and East of England); and South (SW, SE and London). However, with the changes and reductions to the regional networking work within GCF due to Covid and budget reductions these pages were scaled back and have now been removed - information on groups and networks in the regions can be found [here](#).

**Table 2.4. Engagement with GCF webpages**

Webpages – no of views	2019 /20	2020/21					2021/22					GCF Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	
<b>GCF Homepage</b>	<b>3015</b>	764	1011	853	1395	<b>4023</b>	1016	689	854	746	<b>3305</b>	<b>10,343</b>
<b>What is Care Farming? page</b>	<b>319</b>	85	221	177	271	<b>754</b>	82	51	98	93	<b>324</b>	<b>1,397</b>
<b>Case studies page</b>	<b>255</b>	42	83	177	115	<b>417</b>	136	123	237	189	<b>685</b>	<b>1,357</b>
<b>Events page</b>	-	238	298	332	376	<b>1244</b>	301	197	2	0	<b>500</b>	<b>1744</b>
<b>Support and Resources homepage</b>	-	331	239	111	295	<b>976</b>	143	73	32	20	<b>268</b>	<b>1244</b>
<b>Training homepage</b>	<b>1257</b>	197	341	342	823	<b>1703</b>	315	219	486	571	<b>1591</b>	<b>4,551</b>
<b>Regional Networking homepage</b>	<b>152</b>	87	96	104	137	<b>424</b>	116	101	85	89	<b>391</b>	<b>967</b>
<b>Quality Assurance – Code of Practice page</b>	<b>160</b>	84	297	536	692	<b>1609</b>	493	479	426	513	<b>1911</b>	<b>3,680</b>
<b>Knowledge Base pages</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	2388	4178	3895	4210	<b>14641</b>	<b>14,641</b>
<b>All GCF Pages</b>	<b>4928</b>	2672	3565	4794	6980	<b>18,011</b>	4881	3994	4021	4229	<b>17,125</b>	<b>40,064</b>

#### 2.4.4. Countryside Classroom

As part of the GCF work of promoting care farming to commissioners and potential referrers, the GCF team worked with LEAF Education on a piece of work to make care farming more accessible for teachers and education referrers via [Countryside Classroom](#)<sup>10</sup>. Over half of UK care farms work with young people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and learning difficulties or as part of Alternative Provision, with 40% working with under 18s with learning disabilities, mental ill health or physical disabilities. Referrals to care

<sup>10</sup> Countryside Classroom is a managed by a partnership of 32 organisations that represent the very best in food, farming and environment education. Both Social Farms & Gardens and LEAF Education are existing members of the partnership

farms can be part of SEND, part of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or as Alternative Education Provision. Care farms also help young people with mental health and wellbeing or rehabilitation.

Countryside Classroom is a website that helps teachers to find resources, places to visit and school support relating to the themes of food, farming and the natural environment, and the site contains a range of quality assured educational content from hundreds of contributors. The GCF team felt that Countryside Classroom was well-positioned to provide a platform for promoting the benefits of care farming directly to those in educational settings, in addition to its original remit. In partnership with LEAF Education and the web developers Suru, the GCF team worked to develop more information about care farming in different types of educational setting (e.g., SEND provision, Alternative Provision etc.); highlight locations where care farms are available and to demonstrate benefits and good practice using case studies.

As a result, care farming now has a permanent ‘hub’ on the Countryside Classroom website (see [here](#)) and it features an overview of why care farming works so well for young people, a video, a searchable map and case studies. Teachers and education referrers can now learn more about care farming and search for care farms in their local area. The GCF team hope that the Countryside Classroom resources will help education professionals understand the hugely positive impact that care farming and green care services can have on young people and their education and wanted to make it easier for students who might be struggling with mainstream education to be referred to local care farms and benefit from their life-changing services.

*“We are incredibly pleased to see the addition of care farming on the Countryside Classroom website – care farms have so much to offer schools. Raising the awareness of what care farms can deliver to mainstream schools can only benefit young people. As part of this work, we reached out to SENCOs across England who are all amazed at what care farms can offer their pupils and are keen to access the many benefits they have to offer.”* Carl Edwards, Director, Education and Public Engagement at LEAF.

After the launch of the care farming hub on the Countryside Classroom webpage in May 2021 the team also encouraged those care farms working with young people to register on the new care farming hub. Currently there are 27 care farms registered on the site.

#### 2.4.5. School visits plus – with LEAF Education

To further support the increase of care farming services delivered from existing farms, the GCF project team collaborated with LEAF Education to work with LEAF member farmers. Many of the LEAF farmers are already working with LEAF Regional Education Consultants (RECs) to offer high-quality farm visits as part of mainstream education (i.e. one-off visits and not care farming). LEAF farmers have a history of being forward-thinking and many were involved in the [Let Nature Feed Your Senses](#) project, which looked to welcome groups of young people

with special education needs or disabilities, specifically sensory impairments, or adults with dementia, to farms. It therefore made sense for GCF and LEAF to work in partnership to ultimately support farmers in developing a care farming offer. Originally this work was expected to span 2 years of the GCF project delivery but with the early closure of the project, this work was condensed into 9 months from May 2021 to January 2022.



In the first instance, LEAF Regional Education Consultants attended the several of the GCF training courses to increase their understanding of care farming (these included Starting with care farming, Developing good practice in care farming, Nurturing young people with anxiety and depression and Developing Alternative Provision on care farms). After attending these online sessions, the RECs sought volunteers (4 farmers) to

develop their journey from the delivery of school one-off events to grow their offering into a care farming provision for schools.

Once the farmers were selected, they accessed GCF resources online, then visited a care farm accompanied by LEAF RECs and GCF staff and then a face-to-face CEVAS Therapeutic course was organised for the farmers and LEAF RECs to attend (run by an experienced care farmer on another care farm). The RECs were in attendance to offer their experience in transforming the farmers' current work with to schools to incorporate care farming visits – they helped the farmers develop resources and practical activities to adapt their current school provision to include care farming sessions. Both the RECs and the Growing Care Farming team continued to work with the selected farmers to prepare them for their first sessions and the RECs help facilitate the first care farming sessions delivered on the farms. Each of the four farms carried out four care farming sessions assisted by the LEAF RECs.

As part of this journey, the farmers agreed to film a video diary of their progression throughout the project to share their learnings in a more accessible and engaging way for other farmers. This journey has not been documented in this way before and is a unique opportunity to promote care farming to the wider farming network. These video diaries are now hosted on the [Visit My Farm website](#)<sup>11</sup> and are also signposted from the SF&G training webpages both for mainstream educational visits and care farming (therapeutic) visits.



LEAF Recs also produced a 'Practical Activities for Farm Visits' document, aimed at helping farmers to develop activities for a care farming session and this is available on the Countryside Classroom website [here](#). The farms in this work will also be added to the care farming section of Countryside Classroom as examples of places to visit and will highlight their offering to the schools that they have worked with.

Further promotion of the resources and of widening the offer to include care farming services will take place via LEAF and their networks of farmers, together with SF&G and Thrive networks. In addition, the farmers are also taking part in the pilot of the Green Care Quality Mark (formerly the care farming Code of Practice) to ensure that their care farming service provision is of high quality.

#### 2.4.6. Annual Survey of the care farming sector

Social Farms & Gardens<sup>12</sup> have tracked the scale and scope of the care farming sector since 2005, providing valuable data for care farmers and people in the green care sector as well as for policy makers and commissioning agencies – all surveys, including those conducted as part of the Growing Care Farming work can be found [here](#). Care farming in the UK has grown from less than a hundred care farms in 2005 to a network of around 400 care farms in 2022. Care farms vary in size, context and delivery approach but together they form a key element of the green care sector. Changes in number of care farms and care farming places delivered for over the duration of the Growing Care Farming project are shown in Table 2.5.

#### 2020 Survey

In early 2020, according to our [2020 survey](#) there were an estimated 299 care farms currently operating in the UK and a further 90 in the Republic of Ireland. There were also an estimated 150 prospective care farms

<sup>11</sup> One of the main go-to pages for farmers looking to offer visits on farms and the 'host' site for the CEVAS training.

<sup>12</sup> In 2006 it was carried out by National Care Farming Initiative and then by Care Farming UK which merged with FCFG to become SF&G.

in various stages of development. Both the numbers of care farms and prospective care farms showed an increase since the previous survey in 2017. Other key findings included:

- Care Farms in the UK provide services for a range of people, including adults with a Learning Disability (72%) adults with mental ill-health (67% of care farms), adults with ASD (65%), and with learning difficulties at 54%. For service users under 18, learning difficulty (53%), ASD (52%), young people excluded from school or on Alternative Provision (50%) and Learning Disability (44%) were the most frequently catered for.
- In England, the total number of weekly care farming places reported by care farms in the survey was 2,861 (from 30% of care farms). Including numbers from 100% of care farms in England, the total increased to approximately 9,536 places per week. Care farms on 2020 were delivering services for an average of 46 weeks per year, so we conservatively estimate that care farms were delivering 438,656 places per year in England alone and 469,660 in the UK.
- Referrals to a care farm may come with or without funding. Some referral routes seem to be better at providing funding for their individual referrals than others. In 2020, referrals from social care and education seemed to be better funded than those from health. Nearly 80% of referrals from i) Local Authority social services; ii) self-referrals via personal social care budgets; iii) Local Authority schools; and iv) SEN services, came with associated funding to pay for the service provision.
- When an individual referral comes with associated funding, the care farm can provide the service, as costs are covered. If a referral does not come with funding, the funding needs to be sought from elsewhere. As a result, care farmers typically had to access other funding sources to adequately cover the costs of providing services and maintaining their organisation.



## 2021 Survey

With 2020/21 being a very unusual and challenging year, the GCF team felt that it would not be appropriate to run the annual care farming survey in January 2021 as originally planned. With the UK in lockdown and many care farms operating at a reduced capacity and others closed completely a true picture of the number of care farming places provided by the sector would not have been attained. The focus of the GCF work for this time was more about supporting the existing provision and working to reverse any decline, rather than expecting large 'growth' in the sector. We also felt that in times of such uncertainty, it would also be unrealistic of the project to expect many people to set up new care farming business ventures during the restrictions.

That said, it was important to gauge the impact of the pandemic on the care farming sector and to understand what the post-Covid landscape looked like so in 2021, the survey was delayed by six months from January to August until after the worst of the lockdowns and restrictions were lifted, to gain more accurate data on the state of play of the sector. In addition, in the [2021 survey](#), we also included questions relating to the effects of Covid-19 restrictions and extended the survey to include responses from prospective care farmers and green care providers.

In late 2021, there were 402 care farms and green care providers currently operating in the UK and a further 80 in Ireland. There were also an estimated 220 'prospective' care farms and sites in various stages of development. The number of care farms has grown by 34% since the previous survey in 2019/20. Other key findings included:



- As in 2020, for adults, the most common service user groups attending care farms are those with a Learning Disability (62% of care farms), with mental ill-health (61%), with ASDs (61%) and with learning difficulties at 49%. For young people under 18, learning difficulty (52%), ASD (52%), Learning Disability (41%) and those excluded from school or on Alternative Provision (25%) are the most common service user groups catered for.
- Again, over 80% of referrals from i) Local Authority social services; ii) self-referrals via personal social care budgets; iii) Local Authority schools; and iv) SEN services, come with associated funding to pay for the service provision, compared to 30% or less from social prescribing and other healthcare referrals. However, associated funding for referrals from probation services, Children’s Mental Health Teams (CMHT) and Voluntary and Charitable Sector (VCS) organisations increased since the last survey.
- In England, the total number of weekly care farming places is approximately 14,368 places per week. As care farms are delivering services for an average of 47 weeks per year, we estimate that care farms are currently delivering 675,296 places per year in England alone (representing a 54% increase from 438,656 since the last survey) and 734,140 places per year in the UK (a rise in 57% - see Table 2.5).



This year we asked care farmers to tell us how they had been impacted by Covid-19 lockdowns and continued restrictions:

- In terms of lost delivery, this varied from site to site with 12% losing no delivery time and others losing 75 weeks (just over 18 months). On average, care farms and green care sites lost 23 weeks (almost 6 months) of delivery due to the pandemic restrictions.
- 37% of care farms have seen an increase in enquiries and 29% an increase in referrals due to Covid-19, although 28% experienced no change. Other changes included a low number of referrals during lockdowns, followed by surges and backlogs as they were lifted; some service users being hesitant to return due to Covid anxiety; and a change in type of referral and service user ‘type’.
- Care farmers and green care providers developed new ways of working and created innovative ways to stay in touch with their service users during the pandemic. We asked them to let us know about any changes their organisation made, and which were so successful that they are continuing them in the future. The majority told us that they would be continuing with their innovations such as engaging on social media, online newsletters, online support sessions and changed operating procedures but about 10% told us that they would be stopping their remote delivery after Covid restrictions have been lifted.

**Table 2.5. Key changes in care farming statistics over the duration of the GCF project**

	Start of GCF		End of GCF project		Increase (number)		Increase (%)	
	England	UK	England	UK	England	UK	England	UK
<b>No. of care farms<sup>13</sup></b>	253	<b>299</b>	344	<b>402</b>	91	103	36% increase	<b>34% increase</b>
<b>No. of prospective care farms</b>	99	112	200	229	101	117	102% increase	104% increase
<b>Weekly care farming places</b>	9,536	10,210	14,368	15,620	4,832	5,410	51% increase	53% increase
<b>Annual Care farming places<sup>14</sup></b>	438,656	<b>469,660</b>	675,296	<b>734,140</b>	236,640	264,488	54% increase	<b>57% increase</b>

<sup>13</sup> And green care sites

<sup>14</sup> Based on a 47-week delivery year

## 2.5. Advocacy, Support and Resources – Feedback, learning and legacy

### 2.5.1. Feedback

Feedback from stakeholders (care farmers, prospective care farmers, referral agencies and interested parties) on project work and resources has been gathered since the start of the GCF project via a Feedback form in SurveyMonkey. Data from 300 stakeholders has been analysed by the University of Essex in their Insight report [here](#). A statistically significant increase of 36% in care farming knowledge levels as a result of engagement with GCF project work was highlighted.

In the University of Essex report, stakeholders also said that GCF had helped improve the perception of care farming and had successfully reached the farming community, others outside of the farming community who might want to get involved in care farming (e.g., individuals from other non-farming, healthcare, social care, and educational backgrounds) and had increased awareness of care farming in government agencies such as Defra and Natural England.

Respondents to the research valued the GCF team’s role in advocating for the sector with higher level policy makers, which they hoped might influence positive change for the sector. The project’s work consulting with the Government’s new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme was specifically mentioned, as was the value of the project providing information about the need to evaluate outcomes of care farming to demonstrate effectiveness, which helps advocate for the sector as a whole.

In terms of support, stakeholders spoke of drawing on the expertise and support of the GCF team and considered them as a central point for concerns and advice. Care farmers said they felt able to reach out to the team when feeling overwhelmed, in need of information or support and expressed gratitude for the support received. The project team were described as “well organised” and able to provide a “wealth of information” and “comprehensive guidance”, including signposting to resources at a national level. Care farmers described feeling “supported”, “not alone”, “more motivated” and “part of something larger” because of the support received. They also found the team extremely helpful in keeping up and understanding wider changes and issues relevant to the sector, such as developing links with social prescribers and the sector’s response to the coronavirus restrictions. In fact, GCF was perceived to have created an inclusive community, with opportunities to engage in the activities believed by care farmers to have had a positive impact on their loneliness and social isolation, exacerbated by the pandemic.

A selection of feedback received relating to GCF advocacy, support and resources has been divided into what worked, what didn’t work so well and opportunities for improvement and is outlined in boxes 2.1-2.3 below.

#### Box 2.1. What worked well:

##### Written feedback from online webinars:

*“Great to hear about practicalities of running a project for people with dementia and understand what resources and tools are out there to support you in this.” “Hearing from one project’s experience. I liked being able to watch and listen to the presenters and ask questions via chat.” “Loved the videos.” ‘Engaging, passionate speakers, good depth of info’*

*‘I think the speaker was the most inspirational, driven and focussed person I’ve ever met! Just a joy to listen to, thank you so much!’ ‘It was inspiring and there was some invaluable practical advice.’ ‘It was lovely to hear about an enterprise that’s grown through adversity to become a thriving business that’s providing real value for people. As a brand-new care farmer it was great to see the journey from start to finish.’*

*‘I liked hearing from each of the care farms and hearing about their experience and operation.’*

*‘Yesterday’s webinar was absolutely brilliant, thank you so much for organising that. I’ve still got my questionnaire to complete. It really helped to actually hear some real-life studies and actual figures and examples.’*

*‘Engaged, relaxed approach to sharing information and seeking challenge’. ‘Good presentation and the graphics were good. - Zoom and the delivery of the [GCF Annual] survey results.’ “It was interesting seeing the results of the [GCF Annual] survey”.*

*‘What a wonderful funding summary – well done.’*

*'Feedback from those involved in Green Social Prescribing.' 'Good information clearly delivered - Helpful the way the session focussed on both the "experts/commissioners" and the practitioners.'* *'Good mix of speakers - both strategic and delivery'.* *'It's a very interesting and relevant topic. Great to hear the top tips which were extremely practical.'* *'I enjoyed the Green Social Prescribing session!'*

*'The webinars Social Farms and Gardens (care farming) ran during lockdowns were brilliant and motivational. Thank you.'* *'SF&G GCF online meetings have been really helpful, especially also being able to access them as recorded sessions. Thank you!'* *'Many thanks for all your support over the past months. It has been so useful and also comforting to have contact and hear how everyone is doing. Farming is so often isolating but even more so since the pandemic and contact with others via the growing care farm webinars/sessions have made a real difference.'*

#### Newsletters and advocacy

*'Thank you for the newsletter and I really appreciate the fact that you will be changing the time and days of the care farm network meetings as I am always delivering a session on a Thursday morning.'* *'I really appreciate the support we all get from the SF&G team and I find the regular communication so helpful.'* *'Keep doing the great work in supporting us all'.* *'SF&G do an amazing job. Thank you :)'* *'Thank you to SF&G for the professional support. Your technical, lobbying and networking support is invaluable. Thank you.'*

#### Films

*'I have just watched this again. A five-minute film that truly lifts the soul! Every time it seems new and every time it makes me cry! Thank you for making time to ensure others realise what a difference care farms can make.'*  
(Regarding dementia film)

#### Written feedback from the GCF Conference:

*"A well organised and run event, great speakers with relevant information and lovely attitudes. Zoom platform worked well. Appreciated being able to ask questions and post chat with other attendees."* *"Being online worked well as it brought people together from across the country (and beyond!). I really like the presentations from different care farms and hearing about what they do, and who they work with."*

*"Interesting presentations from care farmers and about the projects. Was good to have a service user there too."*

*"Very well organised, smooth flow of speakers, great introductions, very informative, covered everything from research to putting into practice, frameworks, legal, commissioning, social care and best of all real-life practice with wonderful people and users."*

*"Hearing about other care farmers - showed me that Care farming can be approached in a myriad of ways according to your site, strengths and many other things. I also found the enthusiasm and positivity of the GCF staff so encouraging and I feel confident that they will move what mountains they need to raise the profile and availability of Care farming."* *"Excellent. The presentation from Growing well was excellent. Totally inspiring"*

### **Box 2.2 What didn't work so well**

#### Online webinars

*"Maybe it would be better a longer webinar, at least 1.5h?"* *"it would have been nice to know all contacts details on webinar other than just the guest speakers."* *'Some of the videos in the presentations had sections with poor sound quality.'* *'Time of delivery as during our care farm session'*

*'Questions at the end ran over and I couldn't stay'* *'A little more time for Q & A's!'* *'I found the 'question' box a bit small and clunky. Not ideal only being able to view one line of a rather large question you are asking. It meant I didn't correctly edit the final version which meant the reader spoke some random words at the end that I thought I had deleted.'*

*'I would have liked more detail/the full [GCF Annual Survey] report to be available.'* *'There was a lot of talking and very detailed slides for the first 45 minutes. Quite hard to take it all in.'*

*I found the first two speaker's content a little out of my depth as I really am just starting out. It was a bit too dense and too many words on the slides for me, as a very visual person - not so keen on slides full of words - it doesn't go in and I find it difficult to concentrate because I'm trying to read and listen at the same time!*

#### GCF Conference:

*"It was a shame to have participants invisible. Feels too much like a broadcast in the panel only format, and the presenters all kept saying so too!"*

*"Tiny thing - Tell us a couple of times how many in the audience and if possible, type of sector/interest joining (this should be available from the registration form we fill in to register)."*

### Box 2.3 Opportunities and improvements

#### Online webinars

*“Links to others email details we had to rely on individuals typing their emails in and we didn’t get much time to copy down their details.”*

*‘I wonder if there is an easier/better way of asking questions? I was unable to see what others had asked and so wasn’t sure if my question would be a duplicate question. Also, some people may not have had their questions asked due to time restrictions. This could possibly be improved.’ ‘Deliver session’ after 4pm’*

*May have been useful to hear or see the mix of audience’s organisations and the income mix of others on the event*

*In the year-end summary of care farming, which I attended, it would have been good to have one or two care farmers give their assessment of the year on their farm. Just two minutes each if time allowed.*

*‘Fewer slides with lots of detail.’ ‘Would be good to have a conduit between social prescribing links and the organisations providing the green care.’*

*‘Practical toolkits/post event information sharing to support networking, particularly given the virtual world we work in at the moment.’ ‘I would definitely be interested in a session on evaluation and collecting feedback, which was mentioned in the session.’*

#### GCF Conference:

*“A regular online event of sharing.”*

*“Allow all to be visible if they want, enforced muting is good at times but we like to see each other. As it was, I couldn’t even see a participant list - just the names of people who used the chat, and many of those were using the "to panellist only" chat... so felt a bit lonely as a participant.”*

### 2.5.2. Learning and legacy

In December 2021, the GCF team took part in a participatory appraisal event to look back at through the key areas of work within the GCF project (Networking and enquiries; Digital resources; Training; Quality Assurance – Code; Advocacy and promotion etc) to reflect on:

- i) What has worked well (and in terms of legacy, does it need to continue post GCF, and if so in what capacity?)
- ii) Any gaps in provision – what haven’t we done? Is there something that needs to be taken forward in future?

After the group reflection exercise, the findings were discussed as a team and sorted into three categories:

- Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)
- Requires ongoing maintenance (can be done in-house by SF&G)
- Needs additional funding, resources or support to take forward (needs a funding bid, collaboration etc)

The findings for advocacy, promotion, support and resources are outlined below, sorted by the three categories above.

#### Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)

- We have been successful at engaging care farmers in ‘tried and tested’ ways and we need to now find new ways of engaging with the sector going forward.
- GCF Bulletin; the bulletin shows positive statistics with engagement rates higher than the national average but content pertaining to care farming and green care will now migrate into the SF&G main newsletter.
- Engaging new care farmers - lots of resources and training have been developed and are available for new care farmers to use. All available from our care farming and green care Knowledge Base – our shop window. This has allowed us to consolidate the knowledge we have on the website, with digital resources laying the foundation for sector building, learning and awareness – this will remain as our legacy on the main SF&G website (to avoid being lost as a ‘past project’).

- The films we have developed have been very successful. We have promoted the factors of care farming that service providers don't have the resources to promote themselves and have increased our reach. The films are accessible, highlight our messaging and promote the sector by sharing the impact green care has on service users and others. Films will be visible via YouTube and the knowledge base.

### **Areas of GCF work that require ongoing maintenance (SF&G)**

- Having easily accessible and navigable digital information is important for project visibility and engagement. Our digital content was well received by new entrants or those with a general interest in learning more about care farming. Content strategy helped us address knowledge gaps and enables targeted and relevant content creation going forward.
- Consistent and coordinated communications activity is key to amplifying impact, as well as driving engagement.
- Based on the success of the GCF themed webinars, SF&G have replicated and widened their use to apply to the whole SF&G membership. Consistent and relevant subject matter, with the involvement of external 'experts' (as appropriate) based on engagement with the sector is key to their continued success.
- The Countryside Classroom Care farming hub needs further promotion to care farms to promote the services they have available.
- The Resources Round-up; the success of the round-up warrants this service to continue, however this. The 'Resources Round-up' has been successful in providing bespoke and relevant funding avenues for green care, adding value for people in the sector. The service will need to widen out its scope and include additional resources to continue adding value and will require staff time and resources to curate. As part of the legacy for the GCF project, the promotion of relevant funding avenues from the Resource Round-up is being integrated into a new SF&G Resource Round up [see here](#).
- A key success of the GCF Project has been the production of relevant social campaigns and messaging around digital resources release. To continue this work, this should form part of SF&G communications to promote the whole offer and streamline our message, to provide a global overview and tease out what is 'key'.
- From the email queries, we have been able to get a feel for reoccurring queries (such as setting up a care farm, how to connect with others, insurance needs etc.) and this in turn fed into the development of relevant resources. Production of resources & statements to answer frequently asked questions should continue and be disseminated via the Knowledge Base.
- To maintain advocacy of the sector on a national level, SF&G should signpost to other engagement routes. For example, within Social Prescribing hubs and Integrated Care Systems. Advocacy successes should be integrated into the wider organisation through comms and continued representation in meetings.
- Promotion of green care and care farming activities, needs and relevant support within the Facebook member's page should continue.
- Some care farmers (and other green care organisations) have not had the capacity to set up a social media presence, which in many cases would benefit them. The GCF webinar that was very well attended, supported the need for more 'tech' help for care farmers. Therefore, training in social media would be a useful add on for SF&G to offer its members.
- We have been successful in tracking the scale of the care farming sector since 2006 and the Growing Care Farming project enabled two more surveys of the sector that highlighted an increase in the number of care farms and a 57% rise in care farming places to 734,140 places per year in the UK, despite the restrictions and challenges of a pandemic.

### **Future work in partnership with other organisations (with extra resources, funding or support)**

- More lobbying at a policy level – raising the profile and the causes of SF&G members and green care providers. Maintaining links with government and pushing for new advocacy links.

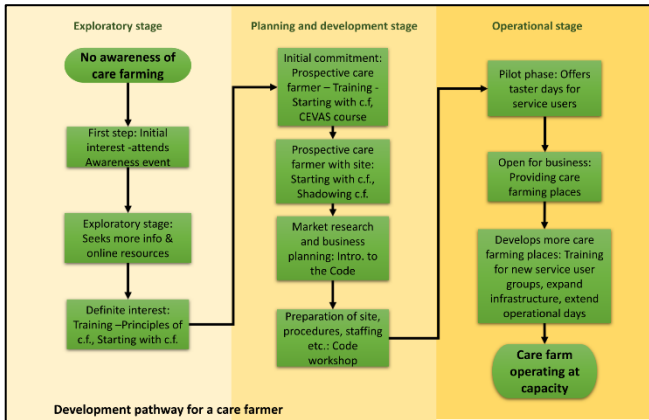


- Continued national advocacy and promotion of green care and care farming by the engagement of more referrers/policy makers/stakeholders who can campaign for the green care sector's behalf (such as an MP or an Alternative Education provider).
- Continued promotion of care farming as an option within mainstream agriculture (e.g. via ELMs, FiPL etc.)
- Facilitate networks for those in the green care and care farming sector to talk to each other and share best practice.
- Promote the difference between green care and light touch community engagement nature-based approaches.
- Clear strong arguments regarding the benefits of green care. in conjunction with partners, develop and maintain easy to use resources to promote a wider understanding and awareness of the green care sector offer – with all related organisations using consistent clear messages or a statement of common aims. Perhaps via the Green Care Coalition – strategic direction and partnership is key to vision.
- Partnership working to create a green care 'offer' including training for the individual, organisational support, promotional resources and Quality Assurance – all curated with links in one place.
- Developing and signposting to regional connections within Social Prescribing – making sure the offer from the sector remains relevant for Social Prescribing.
- GPs trained to understand the importance of green (social) prescribing across the UK.
- Getting green care into the curriculum for the training courses/degrees/qualifications of professionals - for example in health, occupational therapy, social care and alternative education provision.
- Development of a more user-friendly service (or App) for finding local green care providers or linking in with existing apps or services.

### 3. GCF Training

#### 3.1. Training - Approach and adaptations

The aim of the suite of training developed through the GCF project was to assist interested parties in developing care farming services, regardless of which stage of the operation they are in – from those at the start up stage and who are not yet delivering care farming services, right through to training for existing care farmers as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). A variety of information resources and training courses were produced to allow for a linear progression of understanding allowing trainees to select their starting point depending on their level of expertise (see figure).



allowing trainees to select their starting point depending on their level of expertise (see figure).

Thrive’s training and education programme has increased the professionalism of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) practitioners through a series of courses, beneficial to individuals working within the wider Green Care sector, not solely in STH. The training for GCF was

developed using SF&G’s experience in working with care farmers and Thrive’s knowledge of transitioning through different levels of training with input from care farmers and GCF staff. Although Thrive delivered the majority of the training (either face to face or via their online platform), the GCF staff had significant involvement and oversight of the entire package to ensure all resources and training packages were consistent and booking for all the courses was via SF&G webpages to allow collection of project metrics.

The Growing Care Farming training was developed centrally and in the original iteration of the project, was going to be delivered both online and face-to-face at regular intervals within the 9 regions of England to complement the regional networking part of the GCF work, with training and resource provision covering aspects of care farm setup, development, and delivering training specific to the needs of particular service user groups.

Over the Pilot delivery phase, three of the face-to-face training courses were delivered at three locations (Leeds, Shropshire and Bristol) before the Covid-19 restrictions meant that the remaining three courses in that Quarter had to be cancelled. Social distancing and lockdown at the beginning of the 2020/21 financial year meant that to continue delivering training, the face-to-face delivery elements of the GCF project were re-developed by Thrive into an online ‘blended learning’ package and beta tested and launched later in the year. These online blended learning versions - consisted of information, resources and narrated presentations, with two topical live sessions and a Question and Answer (Q&A) with trainers and one or two care farmers experienced in working with the specific service-user group. These courses and the original online courses continued throughout the length of the GCF work until the end of the project in March 2022 and meant the GCF training was accessible to more people, in their own time, regardless of location.

Several additional elements included in the training package, such as ‘Care farmer shadowing’ and ‘Care farm awareness’ days were unfortunately cancelled before they started, due to the effects of the pandemic and budget restrictions. Although care farm visits were not possible, aspects of these elements were adapted and included in the online regional and national networking events wherever possible (see Section 4). Support for the Care farming Code of Practice was also offered as a training opportunity – both through online resources and in a workshop format (this is covered in more detail in Section 5).

Throughout the GCF project, we also signposted to relevant care farmer training offered by other nature-based organisations that we work with in the sector, such as the [CEVAS](#) Therapeutic Route training, dementia awareness training from [Dementia Adventure](#) and [Countrymen UK](#) training.

## 3.2. Training - Activities

This section covers:

- i) Online training courses and resources
- ii) Face-to-face and Blended learning courses
- iii) CEVAS training development
- iv) Engagement with GCF training courses

### 3.2.1. Online training courses and resources

This training includes the following modules:

- Principles of care farming
- Starting with care farming
- Developing good practice in care farming

#### Principles of care farming

‘Principles of care farming’ is delivered by SF&G via a suite of webpages and resources in mixed formats (short film clips, presentations, interviews etc.) with the aim of promotion and awareness raising i.e. further information about what care farming is, how it fits with other green care approaches and within health social care and specialist education. It also covers basics of referral pathways; the synergistic benefits of care farming and green care; highlights different models of care farming –including the choice and also the commonalities; and introduces the concept of quality assurance via the care farming Code of Practice.

The intended audience of this course is for generalist info for referrers, prospective care farmers and also contains useful information for service users and existing care farmers. Principles of care farming will remain accessible after the end of the GCF project [here](#).

#### Starting with care farming

Starting with care farming is delivered by Thrive via their online training platform and comprises mixed formats, including films, presentations and worksheets with the aim to help prospective care farmers get



started with care farming. It covers aspects such as site, activities and facilities; how to decide on client group and commissioners; funding plans, ethos and motivations; and introduces the Code. The intended audience of this course is prospective and new care farm staff. Starting with care farming will remain accessible after the end of the GCF project [here](#).

#### Developing good practice in care farming

Developing good practice in care farming is delivered by Thrive via their online training platform and also comprises mixed formats, including films, presentations and worksheets with the aim to highlight how to do care farming well. The course covers how to develop activities for your clients, goal setting and bespoke activities; responding to need; measuring effectiveness and developing metrics for service users; the Code; and signposts to further training. This course is aimed at prospective and new care farmers. Developing good practice in care farming will also remain accessible after the end of the GCF project [here](#).

### 3.2.2. Face-to-face and blended learning courses

Four client-specific training courses were developed as part of GCF, originally as face-to-face training to be delivered by Thrive trainers over 2 days at a care farm delivering services for the particular service user group. These courses were:

- Care farming for mental health
- Care farming for Learning Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Developing Alternative Provision on care farms
- Nurturing young people with anxiety and depression through care farming

The original plan was to have one of each of the four courses delivered in each of the 9 England regions each Quarter that the region was 'live'<sup>15</sup>. However, Covid necessitated the redevelopment of these courses into a blended online format and a central delivery model where one of each of the four courses was delivered each Quarter until end of March 2022, accessible to people in all regions.

The four courses cover several common elements before covering material specific for the user group and were aimed at care farmers, green care providers and prospective care farmers who would like to offer regular, structured services to people with a particular defined need. So those who wanted to offer regular, structured services to people with either: a Learning Disability or ASD; adults with mental ill health; young people with anxiety and depression; to young people as Alternative Provision; as part of a health, social care or education programme would find these courses useful.

The courses covered how to assess local demand for their specific provision and how to establish relationships with potential referrers. The specific benefits of care farming for the particular service user group were discussed and consideration was given to how to create activity sessions, how these fit into a typical day, and how to plan over a longer period. The courses covered the importance of assessment, determining outcomes and possible progression routes and developing a care farm site to make it accessible and compatible for activities and users before looking at the challenges faced by each of the services user groups and how care farming can help meet their needs. The audience of these courses were care farmers, new care farmers and prospective care farmers. The four client-specific, blended learning courses will not continue post GCF.

### 3.2.3. CEVAS training development



CEVAS stands for Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme which is a nationally recognised accreditation offered by the [Access To Farms](#) (ATF) partnership (of which Social farms & Gardens is a member) which brings together agricultural organisations that support farmers to provide opportunities for people to experience farming. There are two available routes: a 'Therapeutic Route' for care

farming that covers a wide range of individuals with largely therapeutic aims and outcomes and an 'Educational Route' that predominantly covers school visits with educational aims and outcomes. The CEVAS courses are aimed at people thinking of setting up a care farm, those who have only recently started offering care farming services or have new members of staff, volunteers, advisors and carers that they would like to bring up to speed.

<sup>15</sup> The roll out of the regional networking work of GCF was to be staggered, piloting in one region before including two new regions per quarter until all 9 were live. Covid and budget restrictions meant we only went live in 3 regions before switching to online delivery.

Through GCF we also signposted to relevant care farmer training offered by other organisations such as CEVAS. As part of the GCF work, we reviewed and adapted the CEVAS ‘Therapeutic Route’ training to i) ensure it was still working well; ii) that it dovetailed into the GCF training offer and did not compete or replicate; and iii) reflected any changes highlighted by the LEAF review of the ‘Educational route’ training option, to ensure consistency. We worked with care farmers to feed into this process, as the care farmers that fed into the other GCF training courses had a very good understanding of both what the Thrive and SF&G training already covered and the elements of the care farming Code (now the Green Care Quality Mark). Two CEVAS Therapeutic route trainers and GCF staff, with support from LEAF RECs also developed a new online Therapeutic Route course which piloted in March 2022.

Both the face-to-face and the online CEVAS Therapeutic Route courses will continue post GCF and are available [here](#).

### 3.2.4. Engagement with GCF training courses

In 2019/20, 32 people attended the pilots of the face-to face courses before Covid hit and the courses were cancelled and remodelled into online blended learning courses. Overall, a total of 406 people attended GCF training courses and a further 920 accessed training resources online. Details of attendance and engagement with at all GCF training opportunities are shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1. Engagement with GCF training courses**

Training course – No. of attendees	2020/21					2021/22					GCF Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	
Principles of care farming (no. of page views)	90	105	60	178	433	103	91	111	182	487	920
Starting with care farming	13	15	10	42	80	37	25	21	20	103	183
Developing good practice in care farming	4	11	6	21	42	12	15	6	12	45	87
Care farming for LD and ASD	-	-	5	6	11	5	4	3	7	19	30
Care farming for mental health	-	-	7	2	9	2	1	7	9	19	28
Developing Alternative Provision on care farms	-	-	-	5	5	4	9	3	6	22	27
Nurturing young people with anxiety & depression on care farms	-	-	2	4	6	5	5	2	1	13	19

## 3.3. Feedback, learning and legacy

### 3.3.1. Feedback

Feedback from stakeholders (care farmers, prospective care farmers, referral agencies and interested parties) on project work and resources gathered since the start of the GCF project has been analysed by the University of Essex in their Insight report<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Available here: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/knowledge-base/article/what-growing-care-farming-project>



In the University of Essex report, the GCF training was described as highly relevant, up to date and covering a good breadth and depth of information, topics (e.g., strategic and delivery), geographical areas and was targeted at care farmers at various stages. The themed training was particularly well received, video content featuring care farmers was considered inspirational as were the testimonials from service users. The combination of delivery methods e.g., presentations and videos, were well received as was the flexibility of accessing pre-recorded content and tutors were described as supportive and helpful. Involvement of care farmers provided an opportunity for attendees to listen and learn from others, including hearing about different approaches to care farming, opportunities to ask for advice, and understand the value and personal benefits of being a care farmer.

A selection of feedback received relating to GCF training has been divided into what worked, what didn't work so well and opportunities for improvement and is outlined in boxes 3.1-3.3 below.

### Box 3.1 What worked well

#### Online courses

*"Good range of relevant topics covered by the course, clear delivery via presentations and transcripts, very supportive course tutor, helpful and detailed live activities with expert input, clear online format which was easy to access."* *'Online, free and accessible'*

*'Use of video presentations and hearing different perspectives of both care farmers and service users'*

*'I really like the input and examples from existing care farmers'* *'Great free resource, very informative'*

*'Excellent presentation of resources; very well pitched level of external links for further reading; availability of transcripts as pdf filed a big plus; range of views and experiences in supporting media very good'*

*'Helpful and relevant information'*

*"That there were lots of videos and reading at the same time. Simple but effective, and very informative"*

*'Good presentations - easy to access. Do in my own time with support if required'* *'A good brief overview to care farming - useful hearing other care farmers advice'*

#### Client-specific online and face-to-face courses:

*"I think that considering it had to be done virtual instead of face-to-face it was still done professionally, and I felt I learnt a lot and I loved chatting to the others on zoom and felt like I got an awful lot out of it."*

*"I found the live online sessions very useful as it was an opportunity to talk to other care farmers and hear about their care farms and experiences in this field."*

*"The slides which are read out to you so you can read them along with the narrator."* *"Simple to understand & informative."*

*"Videos of people running care farms and service users' feedback."* *"I thought all of the videos were very well done; it was great to have the views of a variety of individuals. Many of the links were very useful. It was easy to access and to use."*

*"The variety of forms of delivery and the use of theory to help us share the importance of care farming to others. The structured session plans and guidance about risk assessing was also really helpful."*

*"Everything was really clearly laid out and easy to understand. I found the links that were included very useful."*

*'The flexibility of this course was great, and I could complete sections when I was available. Very informative course, very enjoyable.'*

*'The specific information provided on the PowerPoints. The live sessions with the trainer, care farmers and other people on the course.'* *'Although I was the only learner who attended the live events it was beneficial as I had plenty of opportunity to ask questions and talk through the content.'* *"Good structure, building layers. Face to face learning.'* *'Excellent speakers from a range of perspectives.'*

*'I found the presentations interesting and thought provoking. It was useful to be challenged to have to provide some written work too.'*

*'I enjoyed that learning could be done at my own pace, however with live sessions to keep the motivation up! Each part was different, yet linked and overall it was very easy to understand and take in the information provided.'*

*'The course was varied in content with, films, presentations, exercises to complete and group meeting with cohorts and trainer. I found this a good blend and efficient use of the time.'*

*'I liked seeing the examples of referral forms, measuring impact through personal reviews, daily logs and quarterly reviews. This will be helpful in my setting to measure impact and to provide proof of impact should it ever be needed.'*

**Box 3.2 What didn't work so well**Online training:

*"I would have liked more concrete information about how to cost/salaries of care farming rather than just saying "go away and look at your own financials" as we need some real-world guidance. The video presentations got a bit tedious - it would be better to have a talking head video, but they were ok. The case study videos and interviews were really good. I think for prospective farmers (like us) who are thinking about moving into this area, we probably need more specifics about changing from a farm to a care farm and steps to take - as the advice is quite general and is a big leap from running a normal farm." "The narration of the power points was not great"*

*"I couldn't answer one of the questions on my phone as it did not allow me to drag the words into the boxes."*

*'Some of the technical glitches/sound quality. Amount of text per slide although recognise this accommodates different learning styles and needs, in addition to the audio' 'The voice over is a bit monotonous and could be a bit more dynamic' 'More visual notes and images on the voiced over ppts would be useful.'*

*'I'm not a big fan of watching a slide show which is being read out loud verbatim, but I know that this is a good way for some people to learn and the availability of transcripts was great. Thank you!' 'It would have perhaps too been beneficial to bounce ideas off other learners who may be at a similar stage to myself.'*

Client-specific online and face-to-face courses:

*'Time of face-to-face learning clashed with work. No option for evening/weekend.'*

*'Maybe if there were more attendees, we could have had better conversations during the live events and learnt more from one another.' "Because there were only two of us on the course at this time, I think it lacked a little input from a variety of learners."*

*'I did find the forum a bit tricky, but probably because I am not familiar with IT' 'Issues with audios during Zoom meetings' 'For me.. it was only focused on England. Might be good to highlight regional equivalents.'*

*"Unfortunately, the experienced practitioner in alternative education provision was not available for the live sessions, but our tutor is arranging a follow up live session where this can be included."*

*"There was a bit more depth of learning I was after, but I can see that it probably wasn't the remit of this course."*

**Box 3.3 Suggestions for improvements**

*"Break up text presentations with images/audio etc." "Possible easy read/accessible information with graphics/more photos/bullet points for individuals for whom written words difficult to process?" "Video presentations of slide shows - perhaps split the screen so you can see the person presenting too, more stimulating and easier to follow."*

*"A short quiz at the end of each section." 'Maybe some interactive activities at the end of each section just to help to consolidate the learning for each section.'*

*'I think I was incredibly keen until the paperwork side of things cropped up. I know you have to be realistic and honest, but maybe a deeper explanation of how to become familiar with the processes, maybe a contact at the growing care farming centre, not just trying to get hold of other care farms.' "Would be great to get to speak to a Care farmer or meet with others who are looking to start similar projects."*

*'I found this a very thorough and helpful training module and will be able to use this in my further planning. Possibly little more detail on type of activities that could be used - more demonstrations on that maybe'.*

*'In time, perhaps a live online walk around a farm with the ability to ask "live" questions of the Care Farmers would be really informative.' 'It's been really helpful thank you. Thinking about the qualities of activities and planning the day have been particularly helpful.' "Clearer pathway to find courses, and how the assessments work."*

**3.3.2. Learning and legacy**

The partnership working of Thrive (as experts in adult learning) and SF&G (with existing care farming resources and good relationships with the care farming sector) has been very positive. Both organisations (and the resultant training packages developed) have benefited from significant involvement from experienced existing care farmers, many of whom are care farming consultants, Code of Practice Assessors and CEVAS trainers. Their input was invaluable, and the final training package was more comprehensive and practical because of it.

The face-to-face training was well received at the beginning of the project, but the necessitated move to online training actually made the training more accessible. Due to the busy schedules of care farmers, having a set day and taking time out for travel proved inconvenient to many, so having an online version was very helpful.

In the GCF team's participatory event reflecting on through the key areas of work within the project, we looked at Training and we considered: i) What has worked well (and in terms of legacy, does it need to continue post GCF, and if so in what capacity?); and ii) Any gaps in provision – what haven't we done? Is there something that needs to be taken forward in future?

After the group reflection exercise, the findings were discussed as a team and sorted into three categories and the findings for training are outlined in this section:

- Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)
- Requires ongoing maintenance (can be done in-house by SF&G)
- Needs additional funding, resources or support to take forward (needs a funding bid, collaboration etc)

### **Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)**

- We've been successful at considering the pedagogic processes and the progression through the suite of GCF Training from start up to development.
- The online courses (Starting with Care Farming and Developing Good Practice in Care Farming) have been well received with good content. As GCF legacy, these courses will remain in their current form for 12 months on the Thrive web platform whilst discussions continue over development of new courses (either within SF&G or in partnership with Thrive) relevant for the wider green care sector.
- As part of the GCF legacy, the GCF Training webpages have been streamlined into the main SF&G events and training page, so they are easy to locate.
- Blended learning client specific courses the consensus between Thrive and the GCF team is that these courses need to be adapted<sup>17</sup> as part of possible follow-on work, so they won't continue in their current form after the end of the GCF project.

### **Areas of GCF work that require ongoing maintenance (SF&G)**

- To continue the support for prospective care farmers and green care providers, marketing around the GCF Training package and the CEVAS Therapeutic route courses should also continue.
- Although we have been successful at providing a comprehensive training package for those wanting to move into delivering care farming and green care services, there is more work to be done around training provision for existing care farmers, to ensure continuing professional development within the sector.
- Suggestions for further training that SF&G could deliver in future include: i) person-based training for green and blue social prescribing, and ii) core, paid-for training linked to the sections of the Green Care Quality Mark (such as safeguarding, risk assessment, governance, outcome measurement etc.).

### **Future work in partnership with other organisations (with extra resources, funding or support)**

- A need for specific, accredited training for new staff working at green care sites including care farms has been highlighted – i.e., specific accredited training for green care practitioners to help solidify sector skills recognition (for example, a Level 3 Qualification for in green care practice).

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<sup>17</sup> We found that much of the information shared in the blended learning courses we replicated across all 4, with additional information specific to each client-group being shared within its relevant course. Any future adaptations are likely to include a core curriculum with breakouts/modules being offered specific to each client-group – to allow trainees to attend any they wish, without having to repeat the core info through attendance to multiple courses.

- The confidence of referrers (e.g., social prescribers) is essential for care farming and green care, and training, qualifications and quality assurance are vital to achieving this confidence to refer and commission services. A comprehensive suite of training for those in the green care sector from setup to CPD is needed. This can be delivered and marketed by several different organisations that work to their individual strengths but together promote and deliver a coherent and compelling 'offer'.

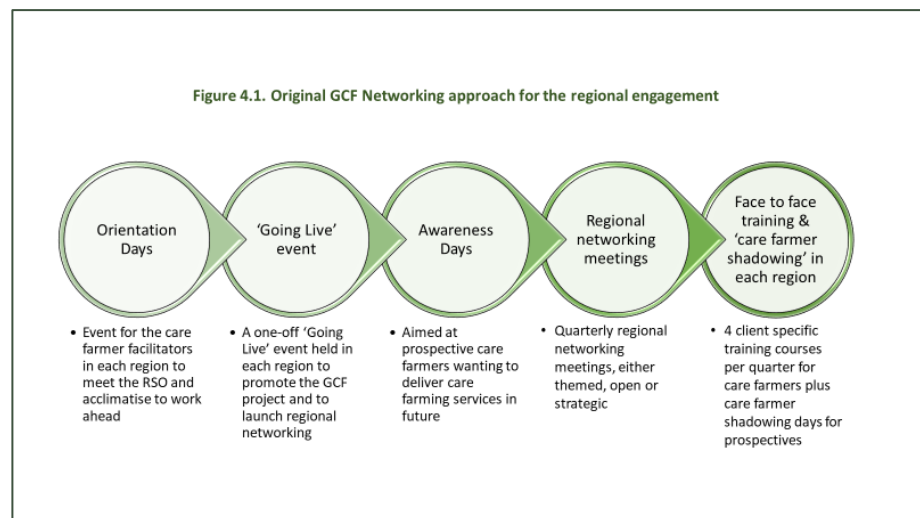
## 4. GCF Networking

### 4.1. Networking - Approach and Adaptions

#### 4.1.1. Networking - Original plans

The GCF staff team at Social Farms & Gardens have a history of working closely with care farmers to help to address needs of the care farming sector. What we have done particularly well in the past is bringing practitioners together to network, share experiences, provide peer support, develop their own identity and sector and, crucially, raise awareness of care farming in their own areas. Care farmers have often operated in a vacuum and care farming has spread without ‘Development Workers’ supporting them. Furthermore, initiatives that have advocated a top down ‘development’ approach have failed in the past, which is why a plan of ‘engagement’ in the regions was taken, rather than a plan of ‘development’. The approach was one of bringing people together, enabling networking and local responses to local needs; combined with gaining a more in depth, comprehensive picture of the ‘care farming state of play’ for each region - thus creating the conditions amenable to strategic growth.

The original iteration of the regional engagement work planned in late 2019 for both care farmers and commissioners in specialist education, healthcare and social care, was to be implemented by care farmer facilitators in each of the 9 England regions, supported by five Regional Support Officers (RSO) and a Regional Advisory Group, under the overall guidance of the Regional Care Farming Manager. The care farmer facilitators (experienced or retired care farmers) with identified specialisms (i.e., working with specific commissioner groups or exhibiting a particular model of best practice) were originally going to be gathering data on the origins of the current care farming referral pathways in their region, collating the learning and informing the development of care farming in the area. They would be paid for their time in developing a strong regional identity for care farming, identifying the gaps in provision that care farming can fill and coordinating regional events and meetings with key commissioners. The Regional Care Farming Manager would ensure that milestones associated with the care farmer facilitator teams are met and that work undertaken is within budget. The Regional Advisory Groups would support the care farmer facilitators and the wider Regional Network made up of care farmers, prospective care farmers, current and potential commissioners and interested parties.



An outline of the activities planned for each of the 9 regions as per the original model is shown in Figure 4.1.

#### 4.1.2. The Pilot

The regional networking workstream had a successful start, with the first regional roll-out taking place in Yorkshire and Humberside. This was the Pilot phase from October 2019 – March 2020, which also included preparatory work in the North East and North West regions. We started with a Regional Network Meeting at a local care farm followed by an ‘orientation Day’ just outside York in October. Then in November 2019 we held a ‘Going Live’ event in York that brought together care farmers, prospective care farmers and commissioners in the Yorkshire and Humberside region to look at care farming in their area and outline how the project will benefit the growth of care farming provision. An ‘Awareness Day’ also took place in



The poster features the logos for Social Farms & Gardens and Thrive (using gardening to change lives). The title is 'Growing Care Farming Yorkshire & Humber Going Live Event'. The text invites participants to a regional launch to learn about care farming across Yorkshire & Humberside, highlighting opportunities and challenges, and to participate in workshops on referral pathways and social prescribing. It states the event is free to attend but advance booking is required. The event details are: When: Tuesday 26th November, 13:00 - 17:00; Where: Askham Bryan College, York, YO23 3FR. Contact information is provided: For more information or to book, contact us on email at rso@farmgarden.org.uk. The poster includes two circular images: one showing a person in a red jacket interacting with a goat in a field, and another showing a group of people in a greenhouse. Logos for the Department for Education, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and Natural England are at the bottom. The footer reads 'Growing Care Farming: Transforming the scale of the care farming sector'.

Thirsk in March 2020 for those who were interested in care farming to increase their knowledge of what setting up a care farm entails. Both events were well attended and produced feedback that assisted in shaping events in other regions. Four face-to-face GCF training courses were also delivered by the Thrive training in Yorkshire and Humberside during the pilot, but Care Farmer Shadowing did not take place. Two reports outlining the learning from the Pilot stage of GCF were written in December 2019 and March 2020 and can be found as Appendix B and C.

The original GCF delivery model relied heavily on a face-to-face approach for regional networking - however, this approach was subsequently amended for 2020/21 and beyond, due to learning from the Pilot phase and the restrictions of Covid-19. Later that year, further changes and scaling back were again necessary due to budget reductions and the regional networking strand of GCF was the most affected.

#### 4.1.3. Networking – Adapted approach

The imposed lockdowns due to Covid 19 impacted significantly on the sector and the GCF team’s ability to deliver face to face regional events, so we adapted our provision in response to this to ensure continued support and involvement of those who had engaged with the project across England. The principal areas of need we attempted to address were:

- Questions, queries and guidance regarding common issues across the sector
- Ongoing assistance and networking opportunities to support those care farms who were closed or had staff working in isolation.

In response to these two areas of need, we established monthly themed webinars (see Section 2.4.1.) and online networking opportunities. Existing regional engagement staff were redeployed initially to focus on setting up and delivering the new themed webinars on a national level during the Covid-19 restrictions<sup>18</sup> and we established and hosted monthly informal network meetings via Zoom led by the regional team.

All face-to-face networking remained on hold for the duration of the project. The regions where the networking had already started (Yorkshire and Humber) and where there had already been some initial work (NE and NW), benefited from the central support and networking approaches developed by the GCF team in response to Covid restrictions (see also Section 2). This new online support increased accessibility to care farmers and prospective care farmers from all regions and increased overall engagement with the GCF project. Additionally, it had the knock-on effect of enabling more regions to come ‘online’ earlier than planned in the original iteration of the work.

The rolling out of the GCF networking to the remaining 6 regions of England was scaled back, regions were combined and the ‘going live’ work was moved online. The recruitment of the 4 additional Regional Support Officers was cancelled and the RSO for the ‘North’ took on a wider remit.

## 4.2. Regional Networking – Activities

Yorkshire and Humberside had 6 months of face-to-face regional networking before all activity moved online. The North East and North West regions had some initial face-to-face contact with the Regional Support Officer prior to the regions being rolled out, but the ‘Going Live’ activity was all done remotely via

<sup>18</sup> Subsequently responsibility for running these webinars was shared amongst the wider GCF team on a rotational basis as they continued for the whole of the delivery phase of the project.

Zoom and GoToWebinar. Once it was clear that all face-to-face delivery was on hold and the available budget had been reduced, the remaining regions were merged into 'Central and East' and 'South' and we had two more online events (an adaption of the original 'Going Live' and awareness events).

#### 4.2.1. Yorkshire & Humberside

Regional engagement in Yorkshire & Humberside began in Autumn 2019, with the first regional events being a network meeting followed by an 'Orientation Event' in October 2019 and the regional 'Going Live' event which was held in November 2019 in York. From January 2020 the focus was on continuing



engagement and responding to local needs and we hosted a funding information workshop in February and the first Care Farming Awareness Day was held in Thirsk in March. With the advent of the Covid pandemic and the associated restrictions, all face-to-face networking ceased, although online network meetings were held in April and October 2020

After the Orientation event, research was undertaken with support from three identified care farming

facilitators to help provide a clearer picture of the local care farming sector (in terms of places, referral routes and success/challenges). This research fed into the regional 'Going Live' event which was held in November 2019 in York and was attended by over 45 people. A report was produced in December<sup>19</sup> which collated all learning from the first quarter of engagement. Attendees were a representative mix of care farmers, prospective care farmers, commissioners and those interested in the wider field of 'green care' and the event was supported by the care farming facilitators.

From January 2020 the focus was on continuing engagement and responding to local needs identified by care farmers and commissioners. We responded to feedback from the autumn events by hosting a funding information workshop in February to enable those care farmers with little or no experience of fundraising to gain an understanding and some basic skills in fundraising and commissioning for their care farm. The feedback from this session was excellent, with a further need identified to provide a more in-depth commissioning workshop.

In March the first Care Farming Awareness Day was held in Thirsk. This was attended by 22 people, the vast majority of whom were prospective care farmers, and the day provided real life examples of care farming (run by the care farming facilitators), shared good practice, ran discussion groups around key elements of care farming and provided great opportunities to network. Both events brought a significant number of new prospective care farmers to the project from across the country as well as enabling us to develop closer working relationships with and between care farmers.



Several changes to the original plan of delivery were implemented as a result of the learning from the Pilot phase. Themed meetings were originally going to be organised by Care Farming Facilitators in the regions, but it became clear that there simply was not the capacity in the sector, never mind in each region, for care farmers to do this. In addition, the face-to-face Awareness Day and the Funding workshop were oversubscribed, which meant that some people missed out. There were also people from outside the region that wanted to attend and could not. It also became clear that themed meetings are likely to

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix B

address topics that are appropriate for all regions and could have wider appeal<sup>20</sup>. The learning from the second quarter of the Pilot was collated into a report in March 2020<sup>21</sup>.

Subsequent meetings of the Yorkshire and Humberside Network took place online on the 7<sup>th</sup> June and the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021 for individuals based in Yorkshire and Humberside (see Table 4.1 for more details).

#### 4.2.2. North East and North West

During the Pilot phase of the GCF project, the Regional Support Officer for the North had been networking via email and telephone to help generate new contacts in both the North East and North West regions. This resulted in new engagement from existing and prospective care farms, commissioning contacts and other interested organisations. This preparatory communication helped to pave way with the subsequent rollout in each region.

As an introduction, all North East care farms and prospectives were contacted by the RSO in January 2020 to raise awareness of the approaching rollout and promote the planned 'Going Live' event. The baseline of care farms and prospective care farmers in this region compared to Yorkshire and Humber was much lower.

With the Covid restrictions meaning no face-to-face delivery, these regions were then effectively on hold until later in the year when the RSO began preparations for online awareness and going live events in the regions in early 2021. The NE event (originally planned on 13th May 2020 in Newcastle) took place remotely in January 2021 and the NW event (which was due to take place in June 2020) took place in February 2021. Subsequent meetings of the Regional Networks took place on 20<sup>th</sup> April (North East) and on 19<sup>th</sup> May (North West), see Table 4.1 for more details.

#### 4.2.3. Other regions

Due to the uncertainties over Covid 19, specific face-to-face networking for all other regions was put on hold for the remainder of the GCF project. However, 2 hybrid online events (based on learning from the previous face-to-face ad online Going Live and Awareness days) were held for the 'Central and East' regions and the 'South' regions, but as they were remote events, they were accessible to anyone around the UK who wanted to attend. These were held in June and October 2021. Although considerably scaled back, regional networking and relationship building work in all of the 9 regions continued remotely for the remainder of the delivery phase of the GCF project via the central networking events, email and telephone support from the Regional Support Officer (see Section 4.3), GCF Bulletins and the Resources Round ups.

#### 4.2.4. Webpages and newsletters

##### Webpages

Our GCF work in the regions was originally highlighted in the Regional Networking pages which contained three broad regions - 'North', 'Central and East' and 'South', however, with the changes and reductions to the regional networking work within GCF due to Covid and budget reductions these pages were scaled back and have now been removed - information on groups and networks in the regions can be found [here](#).

##### Newsletters

Our Regional Support Officer developed bespoke monthly newsletters for Yorkshire and Humberside region from October 2019 right through until March 2020 (see [here](#)). These newsletters contained regional news, funding and tender opportunities, useful resources and case studies of care farm users. When the delivery

<sup>20</sup> Another reason why Online themed meetings took place was so that more people could access them from across England (and also the wider UK).

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix C

approach was changed due to Covid, these newsletters were developed and merged into the GCF Bulletins and the Resources Round Ups (see Section 2.2.3).

### 4.3. Central networking – Activities

#### 4.3.1. Online care farming network meetings

In order to allow networking to continue during the Covid-19 restrictions and beyond, care farmers, prospectives and other stakeholders were invited to attend monthly online care farming network meetings (promoted via the GCF Bulletins, emails and on our Twitter feed). These virtual network meetings (delivered via GoTo Meeting and then later via Zoom). were open format and have enabled people to attend from all English regions (as well as from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) to identify any challenges facing the care farming sector. As the network meetings were also less structured than the webinars, this allowed GCF staff to ensure support remained relevant, to respond to any identified needs and which in turn increased engagement in the project.

The monthly and informal network meetings were not recorded, did not have an agenda, but we frequently highlighted the most recent webinar content or other topical issues when no specific issues were raised by attendees. Numbers were limited to make it possible for all participants to have an opportunity to speak if they wished but we also made it clear that people were welcome to join and listen only with cameras off if they felt they would prefer not to actively participate.

Over the first 12 months we found that numbers attending the network meetings varied (anywhere from 6 to 28, plus GCF staff), however what was consistent was the positive feedback from those concerned. Their feedback made it clear that they valued this regular and safe space to raise issues, ask questions and gain knowledge from both GCF staff and one another's experiences. Due to the success of the first year of GCF online network meetings, and in the absence of any real return to face-to-face meetings due to the continuation of restrictions and new Covid variants, we decided to continue with delivery right up until the close on the project in March 2022. Engagement at these events in our last Quarter in 2022 has been higher than ever before (see Table 4.1), with the events often being oversubscribed.

#### 4.3.2. Other support – including for Social Prescribing

##### Themed webinars

The value of themed meetings, delivered during the Pilot phase of the GCF project as regional face to face meetings in Yorkshire and Humberside, was highlighted during the Pilot. This learning, together with the restrictions due to Covid-19 we developed these themed meetings to be delivered online as webinars (see Section 2.4.1. for more details). As this format enabled more people to attend, regardless of location and enabled the recording of webinars as standalone as resources after the events, the themed webinars moved under the remit of support and resources rather than regional networking.

##### Local promotion at regional events and direct support via email and telephone

In addition to the GCF events delivered centrally, our Regional Support Officer continued to work at the grassroots level, developing relationships with service providers (care farmers, green care practitioners and prospective care farmers); health, social care and education commissioners; various referral organisations; and other interested parties on a regional basis.

We have developed connections with many third sector local infrastructure organisations (LIOs), Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) and wider national organisations such as the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE), Locality, Small Charities Coalition (SCC), Girl Dreamer, Sustain, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF), and the National Academy of Social Prescribing (NASP). We have connected with regional/sub

regional peer support networks, social prescribing networks, regional NHS structures and many others. We have advocated regionally on behalf of the sector at numerous events and meetings, raising awareness of the variety of nature-based interventions available and particularly highlighting how green care is different from other nature-based activities. When opportunities have arisen, we have also organised targeted events for our mailing list subscribers via our GCF regional network mailing lists.

Regarding promoting care farming to healthcare professionals, we have actively engaged with all seven [Defra / NHS England green social prescribing test and learn projects](#) across the country to ensure the care farming and green care sector is recognised withing social prescribing and have signposted to involvement and funding opportunities for care farming provision.

Our RSO (together with the wider GCF staff team) also undertook a significant amount of ‘hand-holding’ – providing bespoke advice, support and signposting to both prospective and existing care farmers, and also to referral organisations and social prescribing link workers/team leaders seeking suitable opportunities in their local area - helping to match up supply and demand. This support was greatly valued by stakeholders.

#### 4.4. Engagement with GCF Networking

The number of people engaging with GCF networking events are shown in Table 4.1. In total GCF networking staff held or attended 84 networking events and meetings also attended by a total of 933 people<sup>22</sup>. Of these attendees, 330 were care farmers, 236 were prospective care farmers, 58 health care professionals, 58 social care professionals, 85 education professionals, 166 were from other commissioning bodies, referral agencies or ‘interested parties’. A total of 557 of these people attended GCF networking events (see Table 4.1) and 376 were at other meetings.

**Table 4.1. Engagement with GCF networking events**

Networking events	Number of attendees												GCF Total	Overall Total
	2019/20	2020/21					2021/22							
	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total			
Yorkshire & Humberside	121	9	-	35	-	46	6	4	4	-	14	227	933	
North East	5	-	-	-	19	19	4	-	-	-	4	28		
North West	2	-	-	-	43	43	8	19	27	-	54	99		
Central networking events	-	28	23	28	64	143	28	13	19	-	60	203		
Other meetings												376		

#### 4.5. Feedback, learning and legacy

##### 4.5.1. Feedback

Feedback from stakeholders (care farmers, prospective care farmers, referral agencies and interested parties) on project work and resources gathered since the start of the GCF project has been analysed by the University of Essex in their Insight report<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting that these are total numbers for general information – there may be some double counting if people attend multiple events.

<sup>23</sup> Available here: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/knowledge-base/article/what-growing-care-farming-project>



In the University of Essex report, networking opportunities were valued by care farmers for peer support between care farmers at different stages of the process, listening to others' experiences, connecting with like-minded people with shared visions, good practice success stories, problem solving and giving advice.

Networking events were seen as an informal arena for all to speak and share, with care farmers from all over the country joining networking meetings providing rich and diverse experiences and helping to build provision nationally. Care farmers described sharing contact details and how connections made through Networking events resulted in site visits and the identification of potential partnerships, which may otherwise have been difficult to establish. These opportunities helped to integrate previously isolated farmers into care farming communities created by the Growing Care Farming team at SF&G.

*"But I think that's been really good being able to meet [remotely], I've met probably 30, 40, 50 people that I wouldn't have met otherwise from all over the country."*

As the online care farming networking meetings are open format, we did not ask attendees to fill out the GCF feedback forms asking for what worked what didn't and improvements for the future. For the awareness launch events we did ask for feedback, but we have only received examples of 'what worked', other support was also not evaluated but we did take note from any emails that we received about this aspect. Some examples of written feedback about GCF networking are shown in Box 4.1.

#### **Box 4.1 Written feedback from regional networking events:**

##### Online networking meetings

*'Thank you SFG team for this great networking meeting... so helpful and inspiring!' "Good networking opportunity. Have connected with a local prospective care farmer this morning."*

*"For me, that that was an eye opener because people talking and they were mentioning things that I hadn't even heard of even thought of and being able to say "oh yeah that would work" or "yeah I'd like to know that a bit more about that" and, at the end of the sessions, there are always links, as to how to get in touch with people and so on."*

*'I find these network meetings really informative and encouraging'. 'I've learned so much from attending today's meeting' 'Thank you so much for your support, I will be attending as much as I can'.*

##### Face to face and online Awareness events

*'Fantastic, thank you so much to everyone involved' 'Thanks so much for a great session'*

*'Very inspiring! Thankyou' 'Very interesting talks.' 'Really enjoying the presentations and the company this morning.' 'Fantastic projects and keen to arrange some visits when out of lockdown' 'The audio made up for the video, fantastic to hear about this work for the first time' 'Thanks so much, unfortunately I have another meeting now, but this was very interesting and inspiring' 'really informative and inspiring!!'*

*'.....Excellent discussion and presentations. Thanks everyone' 'Fantastic concept and brilliant presentations. Thanks so much for sharing this.' 'Thank you all for two hours packed with inspiration.'*

*'Thank you so much! So inspiring.' 'Thank you, really interesting and inspiring work being carried out :-)'*

*'Great event thanks all at GCF team*

##### Other support

*'Thanks for all the information – Much appreciated! Will have a look through it all'*

#### **4.5.2. Learning and legacy**

As a result of the face-to-face regional engagement work, momentum increased within the care farming sector in Yorkshire & Humberside, as demonstrated by the growth in the size of the network, which doubled in less than 6 months. New relationships were forged, and existing ones strengthened and the numbers of contacts signing up to the mailing lists and the attendance at the four events showed a real demand for the opportunities the GCF project provided. Feedback from all face-to-face events in the region received overwhelmingly positive feedback and we had the templates of several events which were to be tweaked and rolled out across other regions as required. Although we continued to engage with the sector centrally and remotely, unfortunately due to the pandemic we were not able to extend this level of support to other regions, but the learning is there if a regional networking approach could be funded in future.

Working closely with existing, well-established care farmers brought a level of credibility to our GCF work and prospective care farmers have repeatedly highlighted that they have gained much from this type of peer support. It is clear from the initial pilot work, that recruiting and working with care farming facilitators was more complex than initially anticipated. The Yorkshire and Humberside region had a strong, mutually supportive group of care farmers prior to the project, but it was apparent that each has their own area of expertise which understandably means that, they may be unable to offer wider support outside their knowledge. The care farming sector is also still relatively small and so it is often harder to find enough experience care farmers to be able to commit the time, or have the relevant expertise, to engage to such an extent as was required in the original GCF delivery approach.

Whilst the care farmers are fantastic advocates and are best placed to talk from the heart and share their experience and learning with both commissioners and those wanting to start care farming, they were not always best placed to do the initial gathering of learning in each region. In addition, the capacity of care farmers to help with organisation of regional events and networks was also limited due to existing commitments. As a result, the RSO did more of the research and organisation for the NE and NW and we planned to use the existing care farmers more strategically, through more targeted 'peer support' or mentoring.

Learning from the regional support and networking element of the project has primarily been positive. Within the limited resources available (one part-time RSO covering all 9 English regions) care farmers in each region have received

- access to themed support and learning
- national peer networking opportunities
- regionally focused support and signposting.

In the GCF team's participatory event reflecting on through the key areas of work within the project, we looked at the networking aspects and considered: i) What has worked well (and in terms of legacy, does it need to continue post GCF, and if so in what capacity?); and ii) Any gaps in provision – what haven't we done? Is there something that needs to be taken forward in future?

After the group reflection exercise, the findings were discussed as a team and sorted into three categories and the findings for training are outlined in this section:

- Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)
- Requires ongoing maintenance (can be done in-house by SF&G)
- Needs additional funding, resources or support to take forward (needs a funding bid, collaboration etc)

#### **Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)**

- Due to the success of the online 'Care farming network meetings' from Growing Care Farming, SF&G followed the example and started delivering monthly SF&G 'Member Gatherings' using the same format but opening them up to all SF&G members. There is therefore no need to continue the care farming network meetings post GCF, as legacy will be covered under these Member Gatherings.
- Given the challenging circumstances within which we have had to operate over the last two years we have continued to recruit new care farmers, prospective care farmers, health, education and social care/social prescribing professionals to our growing network.
- GCF has attracted a greater diversity of participants at webinars and networking events, creating more interest and enabling valuable connections between commissioners and providers at events.

#### **Areas of GCF work that require ongoing maintenance (SF&G)**

- The engagement work has retained the involvement of the established and experienced care farmers in addition to gaining involvement from new contacts, to continue the momentum of engagement with

care farmers and green care providers post GCF, SF&G will need to continue to be responsive to the emerging needs of our audience.

- There is a need to ensure that care farming / green care support and enquiries are handled post GCF project to safeguard continuity and momentum in the sector despite the dramatically reduced resources available.
- As highlighted in Section 2, to provide services to existing care farmers for CPD rather than for those in the 'start-up' stages, we need to continue to engage care farmers and green care providers in relevant ways, such as a move from 'networking' to sharing learning and best practice.
- Considerable progress has been made by the GCF regional and advocacy staff in developing relationships and signposting to regional connections and opportunities within Social Prescribing – post GCF, our members will be looking for us to remain as a conduit for relevant information regarding green Social Prescribing and promoting the significance of green nature-based interventions within health and social care.

#### **Future work in partnership with other organisations (with extra resources, funding or support)**

- Our GCF networking activities have highlighted the need for some sort of resilience provision for care farmers, many of whom either work alone or lead a small team of staff and volunteers. As such they often do not have anyone with whom they can discuss difficult issues they have to face and the effect on their own mental health – i.e., no 'supervision' as you would find in social care or 'clinical supervision' amongst mental health professionals. The GCF team had been discussing how best to address this and how this could be provided sustainably in the longer term – depending on knowledge, experience and capacity this work could either be led by SF&G or as part of a collaboration of other organisations within the green care sector.

## 5. Quality Assurance

### 5.1. Approach and adaptations

#### 5.1.1. The Care farming Code of Practice - overview

SF&G (as Care Farming UK) led a bottom-up participatory consultation of the care farming sector<sup>24</sup> around the issue of quality assurance and care farming. As a result, a 'Care farming Code of Practice' was established, intended to support the requirements of service users, commissioners and other referral agencies in providing quality assurance.

The Code was created by a team of experienced care farmer practitioners and other experts in the field, drawing on their wealth of experience of legislative, logistical and ethical requirements for care farms. The emphasis on its initial development was to ensure a quality and consistency of service across all care farms. Subsequently the Code has also been i) recognised as a useful tool to help care farmers collate and document evidence, policies and procedures for their internal use; and ii) act as a checklist for care farms in the process of starting up, to make sure they have considered all aspects of care farming prior to delivering services.

The Growing Care Farming project allowed us to focus on Quality Assurance and improve the Code, administer it consistently and to take the learning forward to develop it further on behalf of the wider green care sector. As a result of the GCF project the Care farming Code of Practice has been streamlined, made more appropriate for a wider range of service delivery and on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 was rebranded as the [Green Care Quality Mark](#). Like the Code, the Quality Mark is managed by Social Farms & Gardens and is a site-specific, self-assessment application, regularly updated to reflect any changes in commissioning, legislation and good practice.

#### 5.1.2. The Code process and approach of GCF

The quality of services delivered by care farms is assured through a process of self-assessment, enabling care farms and other green care sites to demonstrate that they follow the care farming Code of Practice. A clear set of guidelines, it is intended to show that care farms which adhere to the Code are safe, professional and effective service providers. The Code includes aspects such as safe-guarding, risk assessment, health and safety, staff and volunteer recruitment and training, farming activities, operational reporting and evaluation of outcomes – and is organised into four sections:

- About our organisation
- We run a responsible operation
- We care about the people we work with
- Our organisation is a safe place to be

An organisation's Code of Practice application is reviewed by a panel of assessors and when passed, the organisation is awarded Code status. The care farming Code is a paid for service<sup>25</sup> which operates on a rolling cycle, with an annual 'Compliance' process to maintain Code status.

The appointment of a dedicated Code Administrator (as part of the GCF project), has meant that over the course of the first year of delivery, there was a review of care farms adhering to the Code, new developments in the management and application process and the backlog of compliance requests cleared. Our Code Administrator has enabled more timely and efficient communication with care farm Code applicants and enquiries and feedback regarding the changes from care farmers and assessors alike has been very positive.

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<sup>24</sup> Concerns were raised by long established care farmers to ensure that newcomers to the sector could be supported in delivering good quality service provision.

<sup>25</sup> Currently £60 annually

*"It is a credit to experienced care farmers that the Code has evolved and is increasingly being recognised as a standard that every care farm should be able to demonstrate they meet."*

*"I think the Code is a great way of ensuring that care farms and other green organisations are delivering services to a uniform standard."*

The care farming Code assessors are now contracted to assess applications on a paid for, rather than a voluntary basis, thus making the whole process more efficient and robust. There have been regular six-monthly Code review meetings, resulting in the Code application form being updated to ensure compliance with changing legislative requirements.

### 5.1.3. Effects of Covid-19 on the Quality Assurance work of GCF

The Code of Practice work essentially continued as planned during the project and seemed to be less affected by Covid-19 and budget cuts than other workstreams of the project. That said, the challenges of Covid-19 restrictions, the effects of staff being furloughed and adapting to social distancing had a stagnating effect on those care farms and other organisations going through the Code application and compliance process. Many care farms put their applications on hold because they had limited on-farm capacity whilst dealing with the effects of the pandemic, and so growth rates of Code applications slowed considerably over this time.

Nevertheless, our Code Administrator continued with the timely and efficient communication with care farm Code applicants and enquirers (where appropriate); implemented a new database management system for the Code applications process; and worked with assessors and other members of the GCF staff team to develop a suite of online support for care farmers and prospective care farmers, to help them to complete their Code applications when they were ready. Engagement with the Code started to increase as the UK came out of the most severe lockdown measures and the GCF project continued to promote the Code to all care farmers<sup>26</sup> and prospective care farmers in the UK and the online support continued until the end of the project in March 2022.

## 5.2. Quality Assurance – Activities

This section includes more information on main activities:

- Online resources – Introduction to the Code and other support
- Code application guidance document and video tutorial
- Online Code Question and Answer sessions
- Code Newsletter
- Covid-19 Risk assessment checklist
- Code of Practice review meetings

### 5.2.1. Online resources - Introduction to the Code and other support

The Introduction to the Code webpage was designed to give people more idea about the Code of Practice, why it is so important and what it covers, in order to increase uptake and awareness. It contains several resources, a film (featuring care farmers explaining why the Code is important to them), a case study, a leaflet, a narrated PowerPoint presentation and other useful resources.

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<sup>26</sup> And other green care providers

## Film

In conjunction with colleagues from the training team at Thrive, we created a short film: ‘Why the Code is so important’. The film featured care farmers explaining the care farming Code of Practice, what it entails and why they feel it is so important, both to individual farms and green care sites and also to the wider sector. The film can be found [here](#).

## Code case study and leaflet



As part of the GCF work, we also commissioned a [case study](#) about one care farmer's experience with the Code of Practice – Using the Care Farming code Support for care farmers.

*“Starting a care farm is both rewarding and challenging, and I found the support I needed in the Code of Practice”*

We also developed a downloadable leaflet on the Code of Practice that gives a synopsis of the Code and the top 5 reasons on why it is a good idea - available [here](#).



## Other support

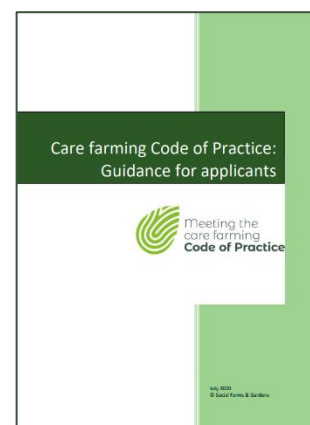
Other support on the Introduction to the Code webpage includes information on how to apply for the Code; a ‘Meet the Code team’ page with short biographies of the Code Assessors and the Code Administrator.

Engagement details for the ‘Introduction to the Code’ webpage and other support is shown in Table 5.1. The page has now been renamed and adapted so that it continues to be of relevance for the Green Care Quality Mark, and this version can be viewed [here](#).

### 5.2.2. Code application guidance document and video tutorial

A comprehensive guide for applicants completing their Code application forms was created as part of the Growing Care Farming work. The guidance document covers all of the items in the Code and explains why each is important, what processes and procedures need to be in place in order to comply with legal requirements and those of the Code, and signposts to other useful resources and links. The idea is that the applicant has the guidance document open at the same time as the application form and works through both simultaneously. The guidance document is only available for those who have paid to enrol in the Code system.

In addition, a short video tutorial based on a PowerPoint presentation narrated by the Code Administrator was also developed, which navigates through the different sections of the Code application form and how to complete it. It includes: i) an overview of the supporting resources available; ii) a look at the 4 sections of the Code application form; iii) a look at the types of questions and how to answer them on excel; and iv) how the guidance document is designed to explain what the assessors are looking for in each section. This is a private video available on the GCF YouTube channel and is for new applicants. A link to this is sent out with the application documents at the





start of the application process. This video has been viewed a total of 303 times since it was created in 2020.

### 5.2.3. Online Code Question and Answer sessions.

In the original iteration of the GCF work, we had planned to run face-to-face Code completion workshops, (based on Code workshops that had been undertaken by Care Farming UK), however with the advent of the pandemic, all face-to-face delivery was cancelled, and we looked at developing an online equivalent.

Limitations around the need and logistics of delivering a day-long ‘Complete your Code’ workshop via an online platform were raised by Code assessors and so an alternative format for online sessions was developed. Online Code Question and Answer (Q and A) sessions were held via GoTo Meeting approximately every 2 months and lasted 1-1.5 hours depending on take-up. Sessions were led by a Code assessor (on a rotation basis) and supported by the Code Administrator.

The Q and A sessions were open to anyone enrolled in the Code process and offered an opportunity for those struggling with a particular point to ask for advice, or to help care farms that were having their application sent back repeatedly for further clarification by assessors. One advantage of online delivery was that it enabled those care farmers and green care practitioners who have difficulty sparing time away from the care farm, to ask advice on particular areas of the Code from the comfort of their office. The first of our Code of Practice Online Question and Answer Sessions was held at the beginning of November 2020 and a total of 7 Q and A sessions were held over the course of the GCF project.

### 5.2.4. Code newsletter

Whilst there was always a small section on the Code in the monthly GCF bulletin to keep the wider community aware of Code news, a slightly more detailed Code specific newsletter was developed to keep people up to date with Code developments via a regular newsletter. This newsletter went to everyone who has either already achieved the Code or is working towards it. The aim of this newsletter is to keep care farmers and green care practitioners informed of any updates, provide useful tips, provide reminders and to generally help us keep in touch. The newsletter also featured organisations who had recently achieved the Code.

As the Code newsletters progressed, they:

- acted as a reminder to those care farms who hadn't completed their application that there was support out there and encouraged them to access the support.
- proved to be a good way of highlighting some of the questions asked and the answers given in the Q and A sessions, to share the learning across the Code community.
- communicated all the work that happens behind the scenes of the Code – i.e., with updating the Code application form itself, the compliance process and the work of the Code Administrator.

We also hoped that the Code newsletters would encourage new assessors to sign up and as we moved out of lockdown and promoted the Code further, we saw the numbers of people engaged with the Code process rise.

The newsletters started in Quarter 2 of 2020/21 and 7 quarterly newsletters were sent out, including one in April 2022 that outlined the legacy of the Code post GCF and highlighted the new Green Care Quality Mark process.



### 5.2.5. Covid-19 Risk assessment checklist: Re-opening of care farms and green care sites.

Concerns voiced by care farmers and green care staff about re-opening after the first lockdown voiced at the online networking meetings and to GCF staff resulted in the Code Administrator working with the wider GCF team and with our Code assessors in June 2020 to develop the Covid reopening checklist (available [here](#)). The main issues identified included how to open safely, advice on carrying out Covid-19 risk assessments and advice on mitigation measures to reduce any risk.



### 5.2.6. Code of Practice review meetings

Every six months the care farming Code of Practice is reviewed by Code assessors and GCF staff to ensure that it is up to date, any changes in legislation are reflected and any issues raised by applicants are addressed. The review also looks at changes in commissioning and good practice and the Code is then revised, as and when necessary. These review meetings have been invaluable in safeguarding that the Code process is reviewed regularly and as the Code Assessors are all practitioners or retired practitioners it also ensures that it remains relevant to the sector. Over the course of the GCF project, 8 Code review meetings were held.

#### Additional outcomes of the Code review group

Having a forum in which to gather the Assessors together was also beneficial during the pandemic, when we held an additional meeting to explore additional risk assessments relating to Covid-19. We had received many queries from care farms wanting to reopen and in need of support. It was clear that one risk assessment template would not cover everything - government guidance was changing weekly, each commissioner and local authority regulations differed and the context at each care farm can be very different. It was agreed that we could provide a checklist rather than a template from which organisations could consult when carrying out their own risk assessment and a flowchart to guide people through the thinking process when completing such an assessment. The outcome of this meeting was the checklist detailed in Section 5.2.5.

The review group also played an important part in the development of the new online Code (now called the Green Care Quality Mark). In late 2021 GCF staff worked with the Code assessors in streamlining and rebranding the Code, making it relevant to a wider variety of green care organisations and changing the way the application is made (now through an online platform). More information about the new Green Care Quality Mark can be found [here](#) and details of plans for the Green Care Quality Mark can be found in Appendix D.

## 5.3. Engagement with the Care farming Code of Practice

### 5.3.1. Engagement with the Code of practice resources

Engagement with resources related to quality assurance via the care farming Code of Practice has increased over the course of the Growing Care Farming project. Web analytics for three of the web-based resources are outlined in Table 5.1. Views of the main webpage for the Code increased nearly twelvefold from 160 in 2019/20 to 1911 in 2021/22. Engagement of the Code in terms of numbers of care farms compliant and applying are shown in Section 5.3.2.

**Table 5.1 Engagement with Code resources**

Webpages – no of views	2019 /20	2020/21					2021/22					GCF Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Total	
Code of Practice main page	160	84	297	536	692	1,609	493	479	426	513	1911	3,680
Introduction to the Code	-	-	-	215	310	525	493	203	154	150	1,000	1,525
How to complete Code video	-	-	-	42	60	102	117	38	26	20	201	303

### 5.3.2. Number of organisations achieving the Code of practice

At the end of the GCF project, a total of 62 organisations (comprising 40 care farms and 22 prospective care farms) are working towards their Code of Practice status. A total of 54 organisations (comprising 47 care farms and 7 Green Care projects<sup>27</sup>) have achieved Code of Practice compliance. The geographical spread is shown in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2 Geographical spread of organisations enrolled in the Code process**

	England regions								Wales, Scotland or NI
	Yorks & Humber	NW	NE	SW	SE & London	W Midlands	E Midlands	East England	
Care farms and green care organisations with the Code	4	1	0	16	2	7	3	13	8
Care farms and green care organisations working towards the Code	12	1	2	10	7	5	7	9	9

The change in numbers of Code applications and Code compliant care farms and green care sites over the course of the Growing Care Farming are shown in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2. Care farms and green care sites working towards the care farming Code of Practice**

Status	Number of organisations											
	2019/20				2020/21				2021/22			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Achieved Code of Practice	40	40	40	42	43	45	44	45	46	49	52	54
Actively working towards the Code	55*	32*	32	37	38	38	37	49	54	61	61	62

\*Note: Initial data on the number of organisations working towards the Code were not as up to date as we would have liked at the start of the GCF project. As a result, a review was undertaken when the Code Administrator was in place and we removed care farms who had been working towards the Code for over 3 years, those who had not paid for their continuing Code status or those who had not sent in their continued compliance form. This explains the apparent drop in numbers between Q1 and Q2 in 2019/20.

<sup>27</sup> other green care organisations with the Code include equine-assisted therapy, Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) projects and community gardens delivering commissioned services.

In the last Quarter of the financial year 2020/21<sup>28</sup>, data we decided to look in more detail at the figures to give an idea of which year of the three-year process Code compliant farms were in (Figure 5.1.), and how much time it was taking those working towards the Code to get to Code completion (Figure 5.2.).

Farms that have achieved the Code	
Code farms – Stage (as of mid-March 2021)	Totals
Year 0 (achieved the Code 'recently')	7
Year 1 compliance	8
Year 2 compliance	15
Year 3 compliance (new application)	5
Achieved the Code > 3 years ago and are now undergoing a new cycle or have passed (at Year 0 again)	5
Code farms that haven't actioned compliance requests (achieved Code ranging from 2014 - 2019)	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>

**Figure 5.1. Care farms achieving the Code**

Working towards the Code	
How long have they had their application for? (as of mid March 2021)	
< 6 months	17
6 – 12 months	6
> 12 months	20*
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

\*Reasons include COVID 19, lack of / no response, not ready to start trading, people leaving, busy etc.

**Figure 5.2. Code completion times**

## 5.4. Feedback, learning and legacy

### 5.4.1. Feedback

Feedback from stakeholders (care farmers, prospective care farmers, referral agencies and interested parties) on project work and resources gathered since the start of the GCF project has been analysed by the University of Essex in their Insight report<sup>29</sup>. In the report, GCF stakeholders felt that Quality Assurance is one of the key ways to increase the confidence of referrers in care farming, and that the care farming Code of Practice is a valuable tool for regulating care farming, by building credibility and confidence around the sector. The level of support received from GCF staff around the care farming Code of Practice was also described as 'excellent'.

*"...so one really important thing was their Code of Practice. I was very keen to adopt that and go through that quite rigorous process with them to check our quality and standards and policies, and that I found that very useful."*

Much of the support work for the Code was online, specific to individual organisational need or delivered one-to-one via email or telephone, the GCF feedback forms were not appropriate. However, we did take note from any emails and feedback that we received about the Code. We also asked care farmers engaged with the Code process for their thoughts on their experiences with the Code. Some examples of written feedback about the care farming Code of Practice are shown in Box 5.1.

#### Box 5.1 Written feedback about the Care farming Code of Practice:

*"Having the Code of Practice has enabled us to network and build links with other farms across the country. It has also helped in raising profile around the health and social care work we do"*

*"Quality Assurance should be part of the culture of every care farm, and the Code of Practice provides the foundation to support and promote high standards from the ground up."*

*"We used the code of practice to help identify the requirements to make us a professional and credible social and care farm provider. It has helped us to focus on the right areas and been extremely useful when inducting staff and volunteers".*

*"Once I had been awarded the Code of Practice, I definitely had more confidence in my business and how we work. This was great when meeting new schools and clients."*

*"The Code of Practice is a valuable reference tool for those entering care farming"*

*"The Code of Practice enables us to not only showcase the brilliant work we do...it also provides a benchmark for all care farms to adhere to."*

*"Completing the Code of Practice highlighted a number of areas that we needed to tighten up on, but also identified the areas of care farming that we were doing really well! A worthwhile process and the badge has been used numerous times in funding bids!"*

*"Care farming colleagues who have applied the Code of Practice to their work give us added confidence that they are professional and represent care farming as a positive, quality service"*

<sup>28</sup> This was not calculated for 2021/22 due to reduced capacity of GCF staff and development of the new Green Care Quality Mark process.

<sup>29</sup> Available here: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/knowledge-base/article/what-growing-care-farming-project>

## 5.4.2. Learning and legacy

### Learning

As a result of the Growing Care Farming project work, the care farming Code of Practice became more robust and the process more efficient. It also enabled the development of supportive training and resources and of a new more wide-ranging re-invention of the Code - the Green Care Quality Mark – to ensure the sustainable legacy of quality assurance in the care farming and green care sector.

The engagement with Code of Practice training was valuable to those looking to achieve the Code. A variety of options for this training suite, such as online videos, web resources and Q and A sessions, allowed applicants to get the information and help they needed, allowing them to then go on and achieve the Code. The online Q&A sessions went particularly well. Being online and running for 1.5 hours were key factors in uptake, together with the approachable nature of the Code assessors running the sessions. As it was quite an open forum, the assessors could answer most things and it also turned into a good networking opportunity for applicants.

Numbers of organisations applying for Code status has increased over the course of the project, even whilst coping with a global pandemic. Overall, applicants seem to be happy with the Code process. The people that opted out tended to be doing so due to changes in the operational remit of their organisation or because key staff were moving on etc.

The growing relationship (e.g., via emails, phone support) between our Code Administrator and the organisations going through the code process also helped when determining who could help with or benefit from other elements of Growing Care Farming – for example being introduced to alternative education providers to refer to other aspects of the GCF work.

There were a couple of lessons learned relating to the Code process. The original application form (an Excel file) was quite cumbersome, and many people did not read the accompanying guidance document and so didn't complete the form correctly – leading to more requests for clarification<sup>30</sup>. We also discovered that there is no 'magic method' for encouraging applicants to respond more efficiently as it is very much dependent on the applicants' resources and capacity. Lastly, people like to know what they're 'buying' into and with most of the Code content behind a pay wall for copyright reasons, it was sometimes hard to strike a balance between outlining what the Code covers and revealing all the content before payment was made.

In the GCF team's participatory event reflecting on through the key areas of work within the project, we looked at Quality Assurance via the Care Farming Code of Practice and considered: i) What has worked well (and in terms of legacy, does it need to continue post GCF, and if so in what capacity?); and ii) Any gaps in provision – what haven't we done? Is there something that needs to be taken forward in future?

After the group reflection exercise, the findings were discussed as a team and sorted into three categories and the findings for training are outlined in this section:

- Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)
- Requires ongoing maintenance (can be done in-house by SF&G)
- Needs additional funding, resources or support to take forward (needs a funding bid, collaboration etc)

### Completed (with no need to continue or to re-do in the short term)

- GCF has been successful in marketing the Care farming Code of practice as dual purpose for the sector. Firstly, as a quality mark for maintaining standards in service delivery for care farms and green care organisations across the sector; and secondly as an invaluable framework to start up a care farm –

<sup>30</sup> This issue has now been addressed by the creation of a more user-friendly and accessible online application form as part of the Green Care Quality Mark.



enabling structure and foundation. As much of this work has been done, it will be easier for SF&G to market the new Green Care Quality Mark post GCF.

### Areas of GCF work that require ongoing maintenance (SF&G)

- Useful case studies have been produced for the Code, but more work is required, with more coherent messaging about the Code (QM) and the rationale and need for quality assurance within the sector. The ‘What’s in it for me?’ aspect needs to be marketed more strongly to care farmers and green care providers, together with providing similar messaging to referral agencies and service users (for example, provide reasoning as to why interested parties should choose to refer to or attend an organisation with the Code/QM over one without).
- The GCF team agreed that a USP<sup>31</sup> for both GCF and for the green care sector is the Code/Quality Mark. Local Authorities, Defra and NHS England via the Green Social Prescribing pilot work have expressed an interest in the Code and the definition of a ‘quality service’ for nature-based interventions. SF&G and the green care sector need to capitalise on this to increase both the spread and the consistency of the marketing around it.
- The process of delivering the Code of Practice has been improved and made more efficient by the placement of a dedicated member of staff; a dedicated member of staff in place to administer and support the Code (Quality Mark) process is imperative for this improved service to continue.
- The Code newsletter has proved successful, with the inclusion of tips on Code application, congratulatory messaging on completion, information on Code compliance and updates. The newsletter content should be turned into a key part of SF&G processes and Comms.
- The Code Q and A sessions have been particularly well-received by attendees but and future sessions will need to be facilitated and a will require the budget to allow an expert to attend to answer any questions.

### Future work in partnership with other organisations (with extra resources, funding or support)

- Care farmers and green care practitioners are typically time poor with limited time to attend training to ensure they have adequate skills, knowledge and experience to maintain quality standards. Tailored, more specific training and resources around aspects covered in the Code (e.g., safeguarding, risk assessment, governance, GDPR) would help tackle this. This could be delivered by SF&G or in partnership with other organisations in the green care sector – a green care sector offer – allowing each organisation to deliver training based their own expertise. Furthermore, the development of a coherent Quality Mark package which includes a training pathway, CPD and Governance has been suggested for the future.
- Related to this, there is also a need for a comprehensive suite of training for those in the green care sector that covers from setup to CPD, delivered and marketed by several different organisations that work to their individual strengths but together give a coherent and compelling ‘offer’ – all curated with links in one place.
- The idea of official accreditation on the Code or Green Care Quality Mark was given as a suggestion to add value and an incentive to achieving the Code. Although the concern over the cost implications for applicants (i.e., level of cost increase) if accreditation took place was also raised.
- The development of the Code into the Green Care Quality Mark, to give it a wider appeal, a bigger market and a more sustainable business model was always a planned part of the GCF legacy. A bigger collaborative bid to develop the QM further should be a priority. The buy in and support from other organisations working in the green care sector (e.g., within the Green Care Coalition) is essential if the QM is to grow and broaden out as a sector-wide Quality Assurance scheme. There is a need to avoid every nature-based organisation or Social Prescribing scheme developing its own quality mark equivalent, diluting the market and creating confusion, so a partnership approach is the best way to ensure this does not happen. Prospective funders are also more likely to fund such a collaborative approach.

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<sup>31</sup> Unique Selling Point (or Proposition)

## Part 3: Recommendations

### 6. Recommendations for future work

#### 6.1. Conclusions

The Growing Care Farming project has raised the profile of care farming and has increased levels of knowledge and understanding of the green care sector on both a national and a regional basis. We have achieved this against a backdrop of budgetary changes and a global pandemic.

Many valuable online resources have been developed over the course of Growing Care Farming and these digital resources lay the foundation for sector building, learning and awareness. Through our series of films, we have promoted the factors of care farming that service providers do not have the resources to promote themselves and have also increased the reach of the GCF project. Our care farming knowledge base will remain as our legacy on the SF&G website available for care farmers, green care practitioners, prospectives, referral agencies and interested parties to utilise after the end of the project.

Given the challenging circumstances within which we have had to operate over the last two years we have continued to recruit new care farmers, prospective care farmers, health, education and social care/social prescribing professionals to our growing network through our engagement work; and our online GCF training courses developed with Thrive, have been well received and will remain on the Thrive web platform as continuing GCF legacy.

GCF has been successful in marketing the Care farming Code of practice as a quality mark for maintaining standards in service delivery for care farms and green care organisations across the sector; and also, as an invaluable framework to start up a care farm – enabling structure and foundation. As a result of the Growing Care Farming project work, the care farming Code of Practice has become more robust and the process more efficient. It also enabled the development of supportive training and resources and of a new more wide-ranging re-invention of the Code - the Green Care Quality Mark – to ensure the sustainable legacy of quality assurance in the care farming and green care sector.

In terms of tracking the scale of the care farming sector, the Growing Care Farming project has enabled two sector-wide surveys that highlighted an increase in the number of care farms to 402 and a 57% rise in care farming places to 734,140 places per year in the UK, despite the restrictions and challenges of a pandemic. Growing Care Farming has therefore provided a wonderful opportunity to transform the scale of the care farming sector across England, creating more opportunities for both children and adults with a defined need, to benefit from health, social and specialist educational care services delivered on care farms.

#### 6.2. Recommendations for future work

The following recommendations for future work are made based on the learning from the Growing Care Farming project, input from the project and partner team and findings from the University of Essex GCF Insight report.

##### Maintaining momentum through advocacy and promotion

To maintain momentum of the GCF project through advocacy for and promotion of the care farming and green care sector on a national policy level by:

- engaging more referrers/policy makers/national commissioning and referral agencies and other stakeholders who can campaign on the green care sector's behalf
- continuing to work for the recognition of care farming (and other green care approaches) as a paid for therapeutic offering with consistent referrals to green care services in health & social care and

alternative education; and continuing representation in national and strategic forums such as National Outdoors for All Working Group, Defra’s Green social prescribing community and the National Academy of Social Prescribing.

- demonstrating relevance of green care interventions (such as care farming) to wider Government policies (e.g., COP 26, Levelling Up), for example by generating and highlighting empirical evidence around the environmental, social, educational and wellbeing impact of green care.
- Developing clear, consistent and strong arguments regarding the benefits of green care; and maintaining easy to use resources (in conjunction with partners) to promote a wider understanding and awareness of the green care sector offer – with all related organisations using the consistent clear messages or a statement of common aims (perhaps via the Green Care Coalition) – strategic direction and partnership is key to achieving our shared vision.

And at a regional strategic level by:

- maintaining regional relationships and signposting to other engagement routes – e.g., for health within Social Prescribing hubs and Integrated Care Systems.

### Continuing support to the care farming and green care sector

To support capacity building of the sector through increased awareness and credibility of the care farming, via training, networking and quality assurance, by:

- continuing to help care farmers and green care practitioners to adapt to changes and opportunities in the healthcare system (e.g., social prescribing and Integrated Care Systems).
- ensuring existing and prospective care farmers and green care practitioners continue to have networking opportunities for peer support, knowledge exchange and partnership building; and continuing to engage care farmers and green care providers in relevant ways, building on networking to sharing learning and best practice.
- continuing the training and best practice support for existing and prospective care farmers and green care providers by marketing the GCF training legacy and the CEVAS Therapeutic route courses.
- developing person-based training for green and blue social prescribing and developing training linked to the sections of the Green Care Quality Mark (such as safeguarding, risk assessment, governance, outcome measurement etc.).
- developing specific, accredited training for new staff working at green care sites including care farms – i.e., specific accredited training for green care practitioners to help solidify sector skills recognition (for example, a Level 3 Qualification for in green care practice).
- developing specific resources for specialised care farms (e.g., relating to working with different groups of service users) and produce a directory of care farms
- continuing to track the scale of the care farming sector through the use of ongoing annual surveys.
- expanding the geographical remit of resources and support to all UK regions based on the learning from the GCF work in England.

### Strengthening resilience of green care practitioners

- exploring the provision of an equivalent to ‘supervision’ (social care) or ‘clinical supervision’ (mental healthcare) to address the need for some sort of resilience provision for care farmers, to discuss difficult issues they have to face and the effect on their own mental health

### Developing a green care sector ‘offer’

- Building the confidence of commissioners (e.g., social prescribers) to refer and commission services from care farms and green care organisations through highlighting the training, qualifications and quality assurance ‘offer’ of the sector.
- Developing a comprehensive suite of training for those in the green care sector from setup to CPD - delivered and marketed by several different organisations that work to their individual strengths

but together promote and deliver a coherent and compelling 'offer', all curated with links in one place.

- Developing more coherent messaging about the Green Care Quality Mark and the rationale behind quality assurance within the sector; marketing the 'What's in it for me?' aspect to care farmers, green care providers, referral agencies and service users
- Developing the Green Care Quality Mark collaboratively as a sector-wide Quality Assurance scheme, with organisations working in the green care sector (e.g., within the Green Care Coalition).

## Appendix A: The relevance of care farming to Environment Land Management (ELM) scheme

### – Notes for Defra, Natural England and Rural Payments Agency

Dr Rachel Bragg and Deborah Evans, Growing Care Farming team, April 2021

This paper sets out the context and key facts about care farming and highlights why care farming represents a beneficial and relevant element for ELMs.

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#### Care farming –Key Facts

Care farming is the therapeutic use of farming practices.

- **Care farming** (sometimes called social farming) delivers regular, person-centred services for people with a defined health, social care or specialist educational need - as part of a structured health, care, rehabilitation or educational programme.
- **Care farms offer a range of farming-related activities** including care of livestock, growing crops and vegetables, horticulture and land management. Care farming is increasingly recognised by health, specialist education and social care commissioners for delivering a professional, quality service to a range of service user groups. **Care farms can be found all around the UK and are as diverse as the people they support.**
- Care farms most frequently provide services for people with mental ill-health or dementia, adults and children with learning disabilities or with ASD, those with a drug or alcohol addiction history, children excluded from school or on Alternative Provision and ex-service personnel with PTSD. Care farming places are typically for a day session but there are morning sessions, afternoon sessions and hourly sessions too. The cost of care farming sessions varies widely depending on service user need and ability, but **the average cost is £60 per individual per day session.**
- Currently there are around **300 care farms in the UK delivering 470,000 places across the UK annually**, providing opportunities to help people feel better and increase their Quality of Life through farming. **care farming contributes nearly £3M to the rural economy every year<sup>32</sup>.**
- **The referral routes and funding for care farming places varies enormously** and are often a very complex picture to understand. All sorts of different organisations refer people to care farms, from social services to GPs and families, Pupil Referral Units to Community Mental Health Teams, SEND services to support organisations.
- **Some referral routes seem to be better at providing funding for their individual referrals than others** Currently, referrals from social care and education seem to be better funded than those from health. **A valued funding route for care farming sessions currently, is via Educational Access payments for farms in Higher Level Stewardship.**
- Care farming is a quality service provision – services need to be delivered by well-run organisations operating to within good practice guidelines. **The levels of safeguarding, risk assessment, governance & accountability are higher for delivering care farming services** compared to one-off school visits. The care farming Code of Practice is a process we encourage all those providing care farming services to go through, so that we can be confident that sites meet a minimum set of standards. Currently around a third of care farms have either achieved Code compliance or are actively working towards it.
- **Care farm models vary widely, and no care farm is the same.** Some organisations are set up specifically to offer care farming as their focus, others are commercial agricultural units that have diversified to offer some care farming sessions in addition to their productive farming activities and other farms work in partnership, providing the land and farming elements for health, care or education organisations to deliver the care farming sessions.

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<sup>32</sup> More information about the scale of the care farming sector can be found in the 2020 Annual Survey here: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/gcf/scale-of-sector>



## Why care farming is so relevant for agriculture and ELMs

- As well as providing a much needed and effective service for the service user, **care farming is a good option for small to medium sized farms**. Anecdotally, we know that approximately half of the newcomers to care farming come from agriculture and the rest from health, social care and educational backgrounds. Some farms turn into care farms, whilst others simply want to offer some care farming as an additional enterprise from their farm.
- With concerns about Brexit and the worries for small to medium, family run farms – care farming is particularly relevant as it can **offer an additional income stream, but one that uses existing resources** (i.e. you need to be farming to offer care farming – in comparison to offering Bed & Breakfast or a wedding venue for example)
- The aim of ELMs is to use public money to pay for public goods from agriculture. Activities that provide a public good - either to the countryside, health and wellbeing or to the rural economy – particularly elements where there is no ‘market’ – e.g. wildlife conservation, social goods etc.
- It is the powerful combination of nature, meaningful farm-related activity and working in a group that makes care farming so successful. **Care farming is a discernible public good and crucially, not a commercial product from agriculture**, and as such should be recognised within ELMs.
- **Care farming represents a relatively low-cost, easy ‘win’ to be included as one of the options within ELMs** and the Government funded Growing Care Farming project provides an existing ‘off the shelf’ support package. At GCF we provide training and support, regional networking and some great resources – and there is a quality standard and a process already in place.
- Not all farmers will want to be involved in care farming as a certain passion or predisposition for using farm to help others is usually required – but farmers can go through training, work through the care farming Code of Practice, and with some funding support from ELMs to run a session, then they can be up and running and able to host care farming sessions on the farm. A farmer can decide that they would like to give it a go perhaps for 1-2 days a week for example, giving them the **opportunity to add a new enterprise whilst still remaining a farm**.
- Due to the pressures of the Covid pandemic, the Growing Care Farming project is now only funded by DfE and Defra until March 2022 (rather than the planned September 2023). Given that ELMs is not due to be fully functional until 2023/4, bridge funding is therefore needed to support the care farming sector and the associated care farming Code of Practice process over the intervening period.

**In conclusion**, care farming is relevant for agriculture and should be included in ELMs as it can:

- offer small-medium sized farms another income option, one that uses existing resources.
- help the rural economy and will help maintain profitable resilient farm businesses.
- provide a public good for society and much needed opportunities for people with a defined need.
- provide a good news story, showing joined-up governmental working and another example where farmers contribute to wider society through truly multifunctional agriculture.

The [Growing Care Farming](#) project is part of the Government’s Children and Nature Programme. The programme is delivered by Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive and funded by the Department of Education and Defra and managed by Natural England.





**Appendix B: First Yorkshire and Humber Learning Report**

# Growing Care Farming



**Sarah Marrison**

**Growing Care Farming team, Social Farms & Gardens**

**January 2020**

# Table of Contents

## 1. Overview

## 2. Summary of Learning

- 2.1. Service Users
- 2.2. Scale of Provision
- 2.3 Referral Routes and Funding
- 2.4 Prospective Care Farmers

## 3. Successes - What is working?

- 3.1 Overview
- 3.2 Range of different types of services offered from care farms in the region
- 3.3 Varied referral pathways for care farming services
- 3.4 Funding for care farms and care farming places
- 3.5 Varied and multiple partnerships developed
- 3.6 Positivity
- 3.7 Other

## 4. Challenges – What isn't working so well?

- 4.1 Overview
- 4.2 Complexities and blockages within the referral processes
- 4.3 Funding for places
- 4.4 Capacity
- 4.5 Transport
- 4.6 Other

## 5. Opportunities and next steps

- 5.1 Overview
- 5.2 New referral pathways
- 5.3 New funding streams
- 5.4 Partnership working
- 5.5 Other
- 5.6 Prioritisation of Opportunities
- 5.7 Pledges

## 1. Overview

Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive, is delivering the £1.4m Growing Care Farming (GCF) project, part of the Government's Children and Nature Programme (funded by the Department of Education, supported by Defra and managed by Natural England).

Regional engagement for GCF in the Yorkshire and Humberside region began in September 2019. This report collates the learning gathered in the first active quarter between October and December 2019. Learning has been gathered in a variety of different ways; via telephone conversations with care farmers, discussions at regional care farming network meetings, targeted questions to Care Farming Facilitators (CFF) at an orientation meeting and via a participatory workshop session with guests at the November Going Live event.

To provide an idea of scale, the Social Farms and Gardens (SF&G) database currently lists 21 care farms and seven prospective care farms in Yorkshire and Humberside. The Regional Support Officer (RSO) developed a series of questions with the aim of gathering information on current care farming provision from existing care farmers across the region to present to the guests at the Going Live event. Data was gathered on;

- Current numbers of sessions &/or available places at each care farm
- Existing health, social care & education (and other) referral pathways and payments.

There was also an opportunity for care farmers to raise their own successes, challenges, concerns or opportunities.

12 regional care farms were consulted between October and November by either the RSO or one of the Care Farm Facilitators (CFF) prior to the Going Live event in order to gather information on the current picture to present to the guests.

The Going Live event, which was held on 26<sup>th</sup> November, was attended by 45 guests from a variety of different professions. There was representation from care farmers (n=14), prospective care farmers (10), healthcare professionals (5), social care professionals (3), education professionals (2), one commissioner and a number of other interested parties (n=10) including Natural England, Thrive, farming press, LEAF, McClarrons and several VCS organisations.

After listening to presentations from the Growing Care Farming (GCF) team, participants took part in a participatory workshop. The aim of the workshop was to gather further data from those present on strengths, challenges and opportunities for the sector in Yorkshire & Humberside and to undertake an exercise in prioritising those opportunities. The slides below show the format of the initial questions that guests were asked to think about in six smaller groups.

### Part 1 – Table discussions



Care farming in Yorkshire and Humberside - 40 minutes

On your tables you will be joined by a mix of other 'stakeholders' - you all have experience and expertise in different areas

1. What is working for care farming in Yorks and Humber? Highlight 2 key examples/ successes
2. What isn't working? Issues to face? Highlight 2 key challenges
3. Ideas, solutions, opportunities - Outline 2 key opportunities, ideas or next steps

- Write up all points on flipcharts
- Spokesperson to report back to the rest of the room and highlight your table's suggested next step/ best idea

Growing Care Farming: Transforming the scale of the care farming sector

## 2. Summary of Learning

The current picture of the care farming sector in Yorkshire & Humberside is interesting and complex, due to the huge variations in service provision, scale, referrals and funding sources. This makes comparisons between different service provision difficult.

## 2.1 Service Users

Of the 12 care farms surveyed, most are providing services for several different 'defined needs' rather than specialising in delivering services for one service user group. It is also clear that there is a huge variation in the terminology used to describe those who are benefitting from services (service user, participant, co-farmer etc.) - however, this does not have any effect on service delivery. For the purposes of the Growing Care Farming (GCF) project we tend to use the term service user.

## 2.2 Scale of Provision

In terms of the scale of current provision the 12 care farms spoken to reported running anywhere between 2 - 37 care farm 'sessions' per week. These sessions can vary in length from farm to farm, but most are around 5 hours. They also reported supporting between 3 - 100 service users per week. To put this into context, there are farms who only operate as a care farm one day per week and support 3 individuals per week, but there are also care farms who run sessions 5 days per week, with multiple sessions per day and who therefore support much larger numbers of service users, some of whom attend multiple sessions each week.

Several care farms we spoke to currently focus on educational visits by schools, catering for 40 – 220 pupils per week (on average over a full year). It's these farms who are often delivering small numbers of care farm sessions and many keen to expand their provision, as experience has led them to understand they can offer bespoke services for specific needs to add to their educational visit offer. We also learned that Yorkshire and Humberside offers a diverse mix of care farming i.e. from site-based farms, mobile farms, residential sites, working farms, animal sanctuaries, farm gardens/plant nurseries, etc.

## 2.3 Referral Routes and Funding

From the care farms involved, we have learned that there are a variety of existing referral pathways and funding routes, including:

- service users accessing care farms through Social Services personalised budgets.
- success securing grant funding which can either pay for or subsidise care farming places (i.e. provision for carers groups, people living with dementia).
- good links and partnerships developing with local referral organisations, such as colleges, schools, GPs, social housing providers, other VCSE organisations and charities, who provide referrals, and many will cover the cost of the places too.
- good working relationships with Local Authorities, particularly in relation to education pathways, learning disabilities and alternative provision which each come with payments for sessions.
- school visits paid for through Higher-Level Stewardship or educational access both funded by Natural England.

## 2.4 Prospective Care Farmers

In Yorkshire & Humberside we are aware that there are a number of prospective care farmers, 10 of whom were represented at the Going Live event in November. The GCF project will provide care farmer training and other learning and networking opportunities to assist these potential new care farms over the next 3 years.



### 3. Successes - What is working?

#### 3.1 Overview

When the learning from the consultation work and the participatory workshop at the Going Live event were combined there were several key themes that emerged. These themes form a collective snapshot of the sector in Yorkshire & Humberside in late 2019. The key themes that emerged from the ‘What is working?’ question were:

- Range of different types of services offered from care farms in the region
- Varied referral pathways for care farming services
- Funding for care farms and care farming places
- Varied and multiple partnerships developed
- Positivity
- Other

#### 3.2 Range of services offered from care farms in the region

Participants told us that they feel the diversity of the care farm offer in the region is a key positive. There was a feeling that this diversity enabled the successful support of a wide range of service users, with a variety of needs. Key comments are listed below.

Services offered on care farms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide variety of target groups, offering different tailored opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to help people from many different starting points.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-hierarchical environment is good for those who struggle with authority.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing evidence of results – good outcomes, case studies and personal stories. This success is often closely linked to consistency of attendance/relationships.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on empowerment of service users.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of services that improve quality of life.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse range of skills of care farming staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of CEVAS training helps farmers move into educational visits and care farming.</li> </ul>

#### 3.3 Varied referral pathways for care farming services

Many care farms felt that they had developed good working relationships and referral pathways in their local areas, however there was also an appreciation that these could always be improved upon and extended. Key comments are listed below.

Referral pathways	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good relationships with Local Authorities (particularly with references to Education &amp; Social Care teams).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some strong and ongoing relationships i.e. care farms that have developed close links with local schools for ongoing referrals/visits.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of pathways across the region – social services, education, health (GP's, mental health teams, OT's, etc), VCS organisations, housing providers and self-referrals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some social prescribing referrals already taking place and have been for years.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personalised budgets (social care) are being more widely accessed to pay for care farming services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care farm places can be paid for privately by service users or their families.</li> </ul>

#### 3.4 Funding for care farms and care farming places

Our learning indicates that that funding is a constant source of concern for care farmers (see Challenges section). The majority of those who responded regarding funding successes highlight service users accessing care farm sessions funded via Social Services personalised budgets. There are also other referral organisations who are able to provide funding to cover cost of places. Key comments are listed below.

Funding
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is also evidence of some good links and partnerships developing with local referral organisations, such as colleges, schools, GP's, Housing providers, other VCSE organisations and charities, who provide referrals and will cover the cost of the places.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some evidence of success securing grant funding which can either pay for or subsidise care farm places (i.e. provision for carers groups, people living with Dementia) or be used towards capital improvements on the farm.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several Local Education Authorities pay for services including alternative provision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools can, and do, pay directly for services on some farms.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One or two reports of sponsorship from local or national companies, i.e. Joules, various banks, Utility companies, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational Access and Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) funding from Natural England is being accessed by a small number of farms.</li> </ul>

### 3.5 Varied and multiple partnerships developed

We learned that the care farming sector is proactive and reaches out to develop partnerships and relationships with several other sectors, being open and willing to learn and share from others. Key comments are listed below.

Partnerships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong regional care farm network already exists which can be built on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several new care farms are being developed in, or in partnership with, special schools in Y&amp;H.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some care farms have good links with the voluntary and business sectors in their areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved links to NHS England &amp; collaboration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-operational working – there seems to be an openness in farming/care farming sector and people willing to share learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solid relationships developing with Local Authorities in many areas.</li> </ul>

### 3.6 Positivity

One key theme which came out strongly during the participatory workshop, and which was echoed through comments made by the individual care farms, was that of the overwhelming commitment and positivity of those who work on the sector; the passion of care farming staff based on their experiences of the positive outcomes for their service users. Key comments are listed below.

Positivity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Huge passion and motivation of staff in the sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No one model – flexible to be user led or offer led.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willing and able to help people feel better.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No standard framework – every care farm is unique.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common aim/purpose, but different methods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovative – Y&amp;H seem happy to try new things.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Striving to be inclusive, diverse and integrated.</li> </ul>	

### 3.7 Other

Other positive themes which emerged from the learning but did not fit into the above categories have been collated and listed below.

Other successes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care farms provide re-connection with nature, being self-sufficient and growing produce.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food (growing and eating) unites the group of service users.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good research base which helps to prove the benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching useable skills that can help in future life.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide engagement of volunteers in the sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualifications can be available at some care farms.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service users can transition to volunteers (although there can be challenges with this).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reductions in loneliness and social isolation.</li> </ul>

## 4. Challenges – What isn't working so well?

## 4.1 Overview

We asked participants at the Going Live event to tell us more about what they felt wasn't going so well, or the things they felt were challenges, in Yorkshire & Humberside. These comments were then grouped into key themes. The key themes for challenges that emerged included:

- Complexities and blockages within the referral processes
- Funding for places
- Capacity
- Transport
- Other

## 4.2 Complexities and blockages within the referral processes

A significant number of care farmers we spoke to, highlighted the difficulties in understanding and then dealing with the complex referral processes of Local Authorities. Several reported that although more junior staff were positive and keen to refer, blockages were happening further up the chain of command. Some also mentioned the high turnover of staff within referral organisations. There were also reports of conflicting information being provided to care farmers on the best way for them to become an 'approved provider' for the authority.

Complexities and blockages within the referral processes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistencies in incomes streams across different LA/CCG areas makes it difficult.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity needed – sometimes not clear whether services fall under education or health provision</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented education system (state run schools, foundations, trusts, etc) can mean dealing with lots of organisations separately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not currently fully utilising the potential referrals through Social Prescribing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicting information provided about registering as an approved provider (some say it's required, but then others within same LA say it isn't).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding the required names and contact information is difficult and can be a barrier to developing beneficial relationships.</li> </ul>

## 4.3 Funding for places

Care farms say they are concerned at the number of referrals where there is no budget to cover the places. Examples of this are social prescribing, GPs, community groups, churches, food banks & recovery charities. This is unsustainable for small charities/businesses. This is sometimes presented as referral organisations asking care farms to take on 'volunteers' with complex needs rather than as paid-for service users. Key comments are listed below.

Funding for places	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of referrals coming through where no funding is provided, i.e. from Churches, food banks, mental health charities and even GP's.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties securing funded places</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location on border of 2 LAs - different rates for each area which can be up to 30-40% less per session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge to maintain consistency &amp; ensure longevity with uncertain nature of funding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant applications complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil Premium – could provide opportunity but schools often absorb to cover their costs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities through LA's working with those in supported living – often have resources, but need to link better</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term nature of the funding (sometimes only a term at a time) makes planning and staffing difficult</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many care farms reported having to run other enterprises to help them support the costs of running the care farm, such as cafes, farm shops, Christmas tree sales, CSR events, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential care farms constantly finding LA's going to tribunal to fight parents who want their family member to have a funded place at the care farm. These battles are often lost.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The length of time taken for funding to be allocated can mean that a place is reserved, but then lost as funding has not come through in time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers with complex needs requiring close supervision.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having to manage with very short-term funding, sometimes academic term only, can cause huge headaches for allocating staff and resources effectively.</li> </ul>	

#### 4.4 Capacity

Capacity is a key concern, and this relates closely to staffing. Due to the transient nature of funding for care farm places there is often a high reliance on volunteers. Uncertain income leads to challenges in planning and ensuring care farms have the required staff resources. Key comments are listed below.

Capacity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Length of contracts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linking supply and demand is key – more strategic approach through GCF needed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting complex needs on same income.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion – challenging, time consuming and costly to promote and market to the right people.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keen to ensure no duplication in same geographic areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The push for accredited qualifications for service users can have a huge impact on the resources and skills required (needing to employ staff with teaching qualifications), often for no more money than non-accredited provision.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't have the cash behind them to make the required alterations to their sites to enable a greater number of service users, i.e. capital investments.</li> </ul>	

#### 4.5 Transport

Transporting service users to the farm is often costly. Several have had to arrange and co-ordinate minibus transport from local cities/towns. Sometimes this additional cost can be charged to the Local Authority, but for others, where the Local Authority is unwilling to cover the cost, the care farm has had to absorb the transport costs or risk losing the contract altogether. Key comments are listed overleaf.

Transport	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly in semi-rural or rural areas – no suitable public transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ceiling cost that local Authorities are willing to pay.</li> </ul>

#### 4.6 Other

For some, dealing with the pace of political change, resulting in changing departments, budgets and priorities is extremely difficult. Alterations in expectations from referrers can often cause extra work, worry and additional costs to care farmers but the payment remains the same.

The majority of care farmers we have spoken to had constant concerns about earning enough to cover their costs. Many have other ventures which they use to help subsidise the care farming work they do, i.e. farm shops, cafés, selling Christmas trees, running Corporate Social Responsibility workdays for companies, etc. Without these enterprises they could not sustain the organisation. Key comments are listed below.

Other challenges	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure of risk assessing and ensuring safeguarding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion to commissioner, SP link workers and PB holders</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion is costly and time consuming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pace of political change can have an adverse and quick effect on locally delivered services</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red tape – regulations, DBS and safety; people feeling out of their depth writing policies, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to demonstrate quality provision. Even though we have the Code of Practice the sector is not regulated by an overarching body, although some farms are regulated by Care Quality Commission or Ofsted.</li> </ul>

## 5. Opportunities and next steps

### 5.1 Overview

There are several areas where it was felt that clear opportunities exist which would contribute towards the growth of the sector that participants could help influence or action. Key themes for opportunities and next steps that emerged included:

- New referral pathways
- New funding streams
- Partnership working
- Other

### 5.2 New referral pathways

At the Going Live event and during conversations with care farms, social prescribing was mentioned. Care farmers are keen to connect more with social prescribing local link workers. Growing Care Farming can help with this by connecting them into the care farming regional networks and mailing lists. It seems social prescribing could be a great opportunity for service users and care farmers, but only if further progress can be made to identify how these new socially prescribed places can be funded. Key comments are listed below.

New referral pathways	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational Therapists – need to make more connections.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek information on how to become an approved provider.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links with social prescribing teams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systemic change required; by working together with health and social care teams to change the system.</li> </ul>

### 5.3 New funding streams

The growth of people in receipt of personalised budgets (both in social care and health) is a great opportunity for both service users and care farms, if the farms can successfully market their services directly to the budget holders. Mental health aftercare budgets were also mentioned, and care farmers are keen to find out more about and access. Key comments are listed below.

New funding streams	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need support to know where and how to get grant funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage care farms to share resources with each other or other local community organisations to reduce costs, i.e. minibuses.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GCF Website – could it provide up to date funding sources?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Agri environment scheme (ELMS) – could costs or visits and transport be more widely covered?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Lottery Community Fund – heavy social isolation focus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 117 mental health after care budgets – like social care personalised budgets, so could present an opportunity</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sourcing help from local CVS with writing bids</li> </ul>	

### 5.4 Partnership working

There are opportunities to link experienced farmers and landowners (with an interest in care farming), with health, social care or education professionals (wanting to develop a care farm, but who need support around the practical aspects). If aspirations can be aligned, then partnerships could work well. Both the GCF project and the regional network could help with linking parties together.

One theme which emerged was how smaller care farms are often unaware or uncomfortable searching out and tendering for larger opportunities. If care farmers could be supported in tendering for opportunities

either individually or forming consortia, this could help care farms and other green care providers work as teams to provide locally based services for Local Authorities. Key comments are listed below.

Partnership working	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information sharing – buddy system between existing and prospective care farmers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of consortia to bid for larger contracts – not just groups of care farms, but also wider charities and VCSE organisations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate Social Responsibility – developing relationships with companies for ongoing support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce isolation for care farmers by working together more.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referrals to other farms (where appropriate).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shadowing days for skill sharing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for more networking events.</li> </ul>	

## 5.5 Other

There were also a number of other opportunities which did not fall into any of the above themes and these have been grouped in the table below.

Other opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outreach - take the farm to the care home, school, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted promotion of care farming to health, education, social care and social prescribing contacts – make sure they know the offer.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice on legal set up and COP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with Linking Education and Farming (LEAF) to get all care farms onto their countryside classroom website.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate change agenda and how it links into care farming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GCF website – enhance to be able to drill down and select specific services; different symbols for different service user groups particular services, i.e. equine therapy, etc.</li> </ul>

## 5.6 Prioritisation of opportunities

As part of the participatory workshop, the groups were each asked to highlight one or two key opportunities which they felt should be a priority. Every guest was then provided with ten sticky coloured dots and given the opportunity to ‘vote’ to indicate which opportunities they felt were most important. The table shows the opportunities in order of preference.

Prioritisation of key opportunities	
Opportunity:	Score:
1. Sector system change – by working together with health and social care to change the system.	65
2. Encourage sharing of information – buddy system for start-up and existing care farms.	56
3. Linking supply & demand – develop offering on GCF website to search from provision details for each care farm as well as the location.	46
4. Resources – help on finding sources of funding via information on GCF website so everyone can see.	44
5. Develop more outreach services – take the care farm to the service users.	29
6. Mental Health after care budgets (Section 117) - develop a better understanding of this funding and communicate out to all CF's.	26
7. Help with writing grant applications.	24
8. Tapping into Corporate Social Responsibility opportunities – link to SEMBLE for CSR.	14
9. More networking events.	8

## 5.7 Pledges

In order to help ensure that participants continue to be involved with the growth and development of the sector in Yorkshire and Humberside, each guest at the Going Live event was asked to make one or two pledges.



We received a great variety of different pledges - some around increasing the guest's own knowledge or skills, some related to passing on knowledge or raising awareness with other colleagues, networks or groups, some were volunteering themselves to help provide further support or share learning, some were raising awareness with potential referral partners and others were around getting more deeply involved, setting up a new care farm or attending further events.

Pledges	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To continue &amp; develop my involvement in care farming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking to staff/colleagues about the GCF project &amp; event</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Join Social Farms and Gardens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigating how to begin care farming</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete GCF training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign up for the GCF mailing lists/newsletters</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend shadowing events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review resources on the GCF web page; access more information</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit local farms to gain further information on starting up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback to NYCC mental health services Harrogate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help to develop network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ELMS – see what is being done in the North East in this area</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support networking opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make contact with a Care Farm Facilitator</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take back learning and discuss within the LA commissioning team to help access care farming locally by promoting to potential service users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer a national strategic perspective to the project</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the GCF team as much as possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise the profile of green/care farming options of support to practitioners and patients</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform all green/care farming options in my area about benefits of SDF&amp;G membership and motivate to register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop my own care farming offer with for4est schools/bush craft knowledge</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise a visit from one of the GCF team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share our journey in care farming</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer to 'buddy up' and facilitate shadowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Happy to pilot outreach opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in partnership with a farm in East Riding to set up a care farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collate and FAQ document for new/potential care farmers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote SF&amp;G membership and GCF mailing lists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do more linked up working</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend future meetings and share good practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email other special schools in the Bradford area to inform them of care farms</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help link together SF&amp;G clients with other 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations who may be able to help with grant writing, legal help, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer complimentary insurance and risk management advice for members</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact local GP social prescriber to raise awareness of the sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Join Yorkshire &amp; Humber Care Farming Network</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seriously consider how to embed care farming into our curriculum offer/enrichment programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share what I have learned with local schools and forums</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link with other similar organisations within South Yorkshire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit 2 care farms this spring with our support services manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss membership and time commitment to play an active part with our Trustees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share information received today with wider LA commissioning team</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find out about NYCC Future Agriculture Commission and if they are considering care farming as something for farmers in NY to take on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share knowledge of care farming with any prospective care farmers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support with GCF activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback to Grimethorpe Community Farm and Barnsley MBC</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support others to increase care farming knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Champion GCF project with the NFU</li> </ul>

## Appendix C. Growing Care Farming Yorkshire & Humberside - Second Regional Learning Report



# Table of Contents

- 1. Overview**
- 2. Summary of engagement and key learning points**
  - 2.1 Themed Workshops**
  - 2.2 Awareness Events**
  - 2.3 Regional Network Newsletters**
  - 2.4 Informal Networking & Communication**
  - 2.5 Face to Face Training**

## 1. Overview

Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive, is delivering the £1.4m Growing Care Farming (GCF) project, part of the Government's Children and Nature Programme (funded by the Department of Education, supported by Defra and managed by Natural England).

Regional engagement in the Yorkshire and Humberside region began in September 2019. This report collates the learning gathered in the second active quarter of regional engagement, between January and March 2020. Learning has been gathered in a variety of different ways; via telephone conversations, email exchanges and face to face meetings with care farmers/prospective care farmers and formal feedback forms completed at or after all GCF events during this quarter.

## 2. Summary of Engagement & key learning points

To provide a picture of the progress made during the pilot phase in engaging with care farmers, prospective care farmers, commissioners and other interested parties, the Social Farms and Gardens (SF&G) database shows that the Yorkshire and Humberside network has doubled in size during the first 6 months of regional engagement.

During this quarter the RSO has engaged care farmers, prospective care farmers and other interested parties using the following approaches and activities.

### 2.1 Themed Workshops

From January 2020 the focus has been on continuing engagement and responding to local needs identified by care farmers and commissioners. We responded to feedback from the autumn events by hosting a funding information workshop in February to enable those care farmers/prospective care farmers with little or no experience of fundraising to gain an understanding of the broad range of ways funds can be raised, and some basic skills in fundraising and commissioning for their care farm. The feedback from this session on the content and delivery was excellent, with attendees rating it an average 9.5 out of 10 for usefulness. A further need was identified to provide a more in-depth commissioning workshop, which is currently in development and will be delivered in 2020/2021 quarter 2.

In order to help ensure that as much financial benefit as possible was staying within the care farming sector we held this event at Heeley City Farm in Sheffield, however one piece of learning from this workshop was that due to the chosen venue's room capacity we were limited in the number of attendee places we could offer (10). The wintry weather on the day also hampered attendees travel, meaning we had several dropouts, but were unable to give reserve list attendees enough notice to join us. One or two people also arrived late due to road conditions and traffic, which meant we had to start without them.

It was during the booking process for this event that we first realised the demand from care farmers from outside of the focus region. Of those attending several had travelled from the North West or up from Derbyshire.

It was agreed that all future face to face events should continue to be held at care farm locations wherever possible, but ideally venues need to be able to accommodate a larger number of attendees to ensure the maximum number of care farmers can benefit from each opportunity.

### 2.2 Awareness Events

In March the first Care Farming Awareness Day was held in Yorkshire & Humberside. This was attended by 29 people, of which 22 were prospective care farmers. Unfortunately, a care farm-based venue was not possible for this meeting due to the location and predicted numbers, so a local arts charity hosted the event at their community building in Thirsk and were able to provide for all our requirements.

The programme for the day provided opportunities to hear real life examples of care farming (presented by the Y&H care farming facilitators), shared good practice, ran discussion groups around key elements of care farming and provided great opportunities to network.

9.30 - 10.00am	Registration & refreshments
10.00am - 10.10am	<b>Welcome, introductions and safety information – Sarah Marrison</b>
10.10am - 10.15am	<b>'What is care farming &amp; why is it a good thing?'</b> - Sarah Marrison, including short video.
10.15 - 10.45am	<b>Care Farming in Action</b> - Robin Asquith & Pauline Rabet, Camphill Village Trust; including the development of relationships with referrers and commissioners.
10.45 - 10.55am	<i>Comfort break &amp; Refreshments</i>
10.55am - 11.25am	<b>Care Farming in Action</b> - Justin Mazzotta, Beetle Bank Social Farm; including developing and delivering person-centred care.
11.25 - 11.55am	<b>Care Farming in Action</b> - Rachael Fell Chambers, Densholme Care Farm; including measuring impacts and outcomes.
11.55am - 12.15pm	<b>Ensuring quality service provision: The care farming Code of Practice –</b> Deborah Evans, Social Farms & Gardens
12.15pm - 12.30pm	<b>Questions/Discussions</b> arising from the morning session. <i>Commissioners to complete GCF feedback form.</i>
12.30pm - 1.15pm	<i>Lunch &amp; networking opportunity</i>
1.15 - 1.45pm	<b>Discussion Group - Developing your 'offer'</b> - Your motivation, skills and experience, plus governance.
1.45 - 2.15pm	<b>Discussion Group - Health and Safety</b> – e.g. Risk assessments, first aid, PPE, signage, lone working, etc.
2.15 - 2.25pm	<i>Comfort break &amp; refreshments</i>
2.25 - 2.55pm	<b>Discussion Group - Safeguarding</b> – e.g. What is safeguarding, why is it important, how do we safeguard, who do we safeguard, local support, policies, equality & diversity.
2.55 - 3.25pm	<b>Discussion Group - Activities</b> – e.g. indoor facilities, outdoor opportunities, risk assessment (recap), choice, structure, supervision, mixing groups, staff quals/expertise, etc.
3.25 - 3.55pm	<b>Training and Support</b> - Further training opportunities, events & support available through GCF
3.55 - 4.00pm	<i>Complete GCF feedback form</i>
4.00pm	<i>Thank you &amp; Close</i>

This event brought a significant number of previously unknown prospective care farmers to the project from across the country, as well as enabling us to develop closer working relationships with and between care farmers.

The feedback received from this event was primarily excellent. Overall attendees rated the usefulness of the event at the average of 9.2 out of 10. Feedback highlighted that they particularly appreciated the real-life stories and experiences from our Care Farming Facilitators and the opportunity to ask them questions. They also rated the afternoon group discussion and networking opportunities highly. Some commented that the day 'made sense' and that the group activities in the afternoon complimented the more formal lecture style in the morning session.

Learning from the event was that the format of the day worked well and could definitely be replicated for future events. Other learning also included the importance of the venue again, this time room size.

Although we never exceeded the capacity of the room (according to the venue), at times it felt cramped as we needed to eat lunch, circulate/network and re-arrange the furniture from theatre style to tables in the afternoon. Three attendees mentioned room size on their feedback forms. Had there been somewhere within the building available as a lunch-room or break-out area to enable the room turnaround this would probably not have been mentioned as there room was adequate for the seated elements.

In addition, this event again demonstrated the demand from right across the country, with people travelling hundreds of miles in order to attend the event. It was after this event that the team agreed all future face to face events should prioritise those who operate within the focus region, with spare places being opened-up to those from other regions if available prior to the close of booking.

### 2.3 Regional Network Newsletters

From October 2019 to March 2020 monthly regional network newsletters have been produced and emailed to all GCF regional contacts. Newsletters include regional news, upcoming events, funding and tender opportunities, useful resources and occasionally case studies of care farm users or updates from individual

care farmers. Between the October 2019 and March 2020 issues there has been a 98% increase in the number of individuals signed up to receive the newsletter.

From the 'unique opens' on the database we have learned that between 45 and 51% of those receiving the bulletin each month open and read it. Of the 'click throughs' recorded the most popular items accessed are the GCF event booking links, closely followed by links to training and funding opportunities. This data helps confirm that the monthly newsletters are a successful means of communicating with those on our database.

To date we have had limited direct feedback on the newsletters, but one prospective care farmer described them as "amazing and full of valuable information".

#### **2.4 Informal Networking & Communication; Meetings, telephone calls and Email**

The RSO role is varied and there are frequently opportunities to communicate with potential contacts (care farmers, prospective care farmers, commissioners, etc) via telephone, email or occasionally meeting one-to-one to explain more about the GCF project, the support that is on offer and to encourage further engagement.

During this three-month period the RSO North has undertaken a huge amount of networking and communication with GCF contacts mainly through telephone and email, however the RSO also visited two prospective care farms, both within 15 miles of her home base. All of these opportunities are crucial in raising awareness of the work of the GCF project; helping to develop relationships and trust with those who we are trying to engage. The RSO uses these opportunities to get new contacts 'signed up' to receive the GCF bulletins and relevant regional newsletters and she also highlights suitable events, funding or training opportunities too.

#### **2.5 Face to Face Training**

In February we held the first block of our face-to-face care farming training courses, developed and delivered by Thrive. All four courses were held at Meanwood Valley Urban Farm in Leeds and the topics covered were as follows;

17<sup>th</sup> February – Care Farming for Learning Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorders

18<sup>th</sup> February – Care farming and Mental Health

26<sup>th</sup> February – Developing Alternative Provision on care farms

27<sup>th</sup> February – Nurturing Young People with Anxiety & Depression Through Care Farming.

Each course was delivered as a stand-alone one-day course, although the dates were grouped into blocks of two on subsequent days. Two members of staff from Thrive's training team delivered each course. As this was a pilot the GCF team decided to cover the cost of an experienced care farmer at each of these training days in order to answer any care farming related questions that might arise which the Thrive team might not be able to answer. In addition, the RSO north was in attendance on both 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February to assist with the smooth running of the training and again to answer any GCF related questions.

A total of 15 participants took part in the four courses; the highest number of participants was to the Care Farming and Mental Health day (5), with the other training sessions only having 3 or 4 participants. All participants were required to complete a feedback form at the end of the training. In terms of usefulness, when questioned participants scored the courses as follows;

- Care farming for Learning Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorders – 8.3 out of 10.
- Care farming and Mental Health – 9 out of 10.
- Developing Alternative Provision on care farms – 6.5 out of 10.
- Nurturing Young People with Anxiety & Depression Through Care Farming – 8 out of 10.

The learning gathered from feedback on these four initial pilot courses have been grouped into key themes below;

1) Value of networking/experience – Even when the main focus of the event is training, the vast majority of participants highlighted the value of networking and discussing ideas with other like-minded individuals as the main positive. The presence of an experienced care farmer at each event has helped to ensure there has been an 'expert' in the room at each course and we think this has been reflected in the feedback. One participant also felt that the Thrive trainer's examples and experience were particularly interesting on the Learning Disability and ASD course. Specific comments on the forms highlighted that there should always



be room made (time wise) for this informal chatting and questioning and it helps build relationships and reinforce learning.

2) Resources – Feedback from participants, GCF staff and care farmers present on the courses highlighted that improvements could be made in resources such as the Powerpoint presentation slides and handouts. At times the slides were difficult to read due to the size of type or graphs being presented and not all materials referred to were provided as handouts.

3) Content – Although broadly speaking the scores highlight that people are finding the courses useful there were several comments suggesting that participants felt there could be a greater focus on practical/real examples as opposed to the theory. There was also a feeling expressed by some that there could be a greater balance of indoor and outdoor activities, to enable them to see more of the host care farm and get out of the classroom environment. It was also fed back that due to the content the day could have been longer to enable coverage and spin off conversations.

4) Delivery – Feedback highlighted that delivery could be more dynamic and also that there was a need for the course leaders to close conversations and move onto topics quicker to ensure a better flow.

This pilot phase feedback will be taken into account by the team to ensure the success of future training delivered under the GCF project.

## Appendix D - Plans for the Green Care Quality Mark

The Green Care Quality Mark is replacing SF&G's current QA scheme known as the care farming Code of Practice (the Code). For a while two schemes will be running concurrently before one scheme is wound down and the new one is rolled out. In addition to managing the closure of existing Code scheme there will be a pilot of the new scheme and assistance for organisations who have achieved or who are working towards the Code, to transition to the Green Care Quality Mark system.

The formal 'launch' of the Green Care Quality Mark (and associated comms) will only happen after learning and adaptations resulting from the pilot. There is a feedback process (via Survey Monkey) to allow organisations going through the Quality Mark to feedback regarding the relevance of the QM to their organisation, the application process, the new online form and content.

Thrive and SF&G plan to put in a joint bid to develop the Code post the GCF project to increase its relevance to the wider green care sector. Thrive are piloting the QM with one of their sites that they deliver from to road test QM relevance to other forms of green care as part of this collaborative work.



## About Growing Care Farming

The Growing Care Farming project was part of the Government's Children and Nature Programme. The programme was funded by the Department of Education, supported by Defra and managed by Natural England. Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive, worked together to support and expand care farming services across England.

**Find out more:**

**Website:** <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/knowledge-base/article/what-growing-care-farming-project>

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Social Farms & Gardens is a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together. [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

Thrive is a charity using gardening to bring about positive changes in the lives of people living with disabilities or ill health, or who are isolated, disadvantaged or vulnerable. [www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk)