

# Hall Farm Eastoft CIC

## North Lincolnshire

### Key facts

The care farm has been operational since 2017, providing opportunities for young people and adults to engage in activities on the working farm; empowering them to develop skills to enrich their learning, wellbeing and social life - as well as being commercially viable and sustainable.

*"We really love our alpacas; their gentle and inquisitive nature, plus their relatively small size, makes them ideal for any handler to work with – and a great way to improve people's all-round confidence."*

Hall Farm meets the care farming Code of Practice.

### Our Story

The family-run arable farm is no stranger to organising promotional and educational events for local people to see and learn more about farming – which it did for many years through the Countryside Stewardship scheme for example. But recently, the family felt they wanted to go much further.

*"We wanted to expand on what we were doing,"* says Mark Coulman, the farm's Director. *"In addition, two of our children were graduating from university, and both were interested in helping children who were either struggling at school or didn't have the same opportunities as others."* So, with their children's nudge, the care farm was born.

### What we do

Hall Farm provides person centred nature-based activities to support adults and children who experience challenges in their everyday life such as mental health issues, autism or social isolation or who struggle with mainstream education.

Mark explains that the care farm's aim is *'to support people who attend to improve their self-esteem, self-*



*confidence and resilience.'* This can be achieved in several different ways, the main one being working with all kinds of animals; walking them, feeding them, and looking after their health and welfare. In addition to 15 alpacas, there are 2000 pigs and some chickens. *"Some children we get from towns have never been on a farm,"* says Mark. *"The only animals they have seen are cats and dogs. Being able to access a farm and experience nature, is worth so much to them."*

Away from the livestock, people can also get involved with market gardening – growing, preparing for sale, preparing meals, participating in environmental or sustainability projects, or other nature-based activities such as nature walks and bird watching.

Hall Farm is one of several care farms that work with alpacas - *"They are gentle, and smaller than they look under all that fleece – which makes them easy to handle,"* says Caitlin Mayhew, who runs the care farm. *"They are perfect for people with special*



*educational needs, or who are scared of animals and want to build their confidence.”*

Alongside the care farm there is also a ‘Farm Club’, which is open to *any* child. Signed up by their parents, the club gives children a fun experience where they can come and learn how to take care of the animals and how a real farm works. They learn about food; how to grow and prepare healthy food, where it comes from and how it is grown and processed. Around 20 children come per week during school term time, and nearer 50 per week during school holidays.

## Challenges and achievements

Caitlin and Mark identify the challenges they have faced, the first of which is the familiar one of working with stakeholders to promote the benefits of care farming –which is still a relatively new concept.

The more people that come here, the more people can see the positive impact that being in this environment can make, says Caitlin. *“The children we get may be struggling at school, but here they*

*are so keen and want to help – it’s a very different and really positive experience for them.”* Caitlin and Mark are also positive about the care farm’s future, hoping for example that access to Green Care may become more widely available in future, e.g. through Social Prescribing.

Among their achievements, two stand out in particular for Mark. *“We’re proud to have got the care farm off the ground within only a couple of years,”* he says. And he’s also proud of their sustainability, which comes from his strong business background. *“I didn’t want to be reliant on grant funding, which has the risk of being ‘here today and gone tomorrow’.”*

## What people say about us

*“Since working with the care farm we have witnessed the enthusiasm of the youngsters that are lucky to attend – their willingness to share their experiences with staff in school and the knowledge that they are gaining about the workings of a farm. The students return to school very calm and ready to engage in learning following their visits and experiences with the animals that are there.”*

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Deputy Head, SEN School

## For more details

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Social Farms & Gardens, in partnership with Thrive, are delivering the Growing Care Farming project. See [www.farmgarden.org.uk/GCF](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/GCF) for more details.