

Scrubditch Care Farm

Gloucestershire

Key facts

After years of fundraising, Scrubditch Care Farm has recently moved to a larger site with purpose-built facilities; up from 2 to 4 acres of buildings and a garden area, plus 18 acres of grazing – which has doubled its student capacity.

The care farm caters for a wide range of service users, recently adding people living with dementia.

Our story

Scrubditch Care Farm was set up by Emma Costley-White, after she became frustrated that none of her local colleges could offer her daughter – who has learning disabilities and was leaving education – the opportunity to learn practical, outdoor skills.

In response, she ran something at her home farm, using volunteers. Seeing the demand amongst others, she then decided to pilot a care farm in 2010 – which became fully operational in 2011, and a registered charity, with employees, in 2013.

In 2018 the care farm relocated – only moving down the road half a mile, but with considerably expanded and improved facilities.

What we do

The care farm caters for a wide range of users including: adults with learning disabilities, mental health issues and challenging behaviour currently aged 18 to 65; post education, not independent enough to be able to work or volunteer (fifteen students, three days per week). People living with dementia, plus their carers or family also come to Scrubditch. These sessions are grant funded, enabling free attendance - to maximise everyone's chance of participation (fourteen people, one day a week).

Also attending are children with additional needs in mainstream education, with their Teaching Assistant.



Coming to the farm adds to their curriculum. Students from a special school with a high level of needs (e.g. non-verbal) – who enjoy being in the outdoors. During the school holidays, a mixed group of disabled and non-disabled children come along to enjoy the countryside and learn about farming. These sessions are also grant funded and free for the children, in order to be fully inclusive and accessible.

“Scrubditch Care Farm is somewhere that students can do purposeful, meaningful work, in a safe environment – and where they are supported,” says the Manager, Gerry Fouracres.

Care farm activities comprise: cleaning, feeding and looking after the animals (chickens, ducks, sheep and pigs); working in a poly-tunnel and on outdoor raised beds (producing vegetable boxes for sale); and caring for a horse. *“Rounding up the sheep involves a lot of teamwork – and is good for people who don’t usually get much exercise,”* says Gerry.

The care farm has attracted grants for its core funding. The charge of £50.00 per day for student attendance is paid for from Personal Budgets and direct payments or funded by the close relationships that the care farm has established with three local charitable trusts.

Challenges and achievements

Funding, and getting transport to the care farm, are the usual and familiar challenges, says Gerry.

But their achievements are more unusual. The main one is without doubt the new, enlarged premises and facilities. Also worth mentioning, is the broadening of service users to include people living with dementia.

She concludes with the achievements of individual students, and the progress they have made.

“When some people arrive here, they barely speak and won’t eat with others,” she says. “But within a few months, coming to the care farm has become their main activity of the week – something they really look forward to, and a large part of their social life.”

“It’s also nice seeing how much volunteers benefit from being here – and it’s great to see everyone together, working as a team and enjoying each other’s company.”

What people say about us

“I like going to the farm because I feel relaxed up there. I like working with all the animals and staff. The staff at the farm make me feel welcome and when I return from the farm, the staff there can see a difference, because when I return all I do is talk about the farm and what I have done there, for example, feeding all the animals. I feel happy at the farm and when the farm is not on, I miss it, because I always look forward to going to the farm”.

Student

“J has been attending Scrubditch Care Farm for a number of months now. He has really enjoyed attending and gets a lot of self-worth out of knowing he is assisting and working hard throughout the day. We have noticed his enthusiasm and willingness to go to the farm and he will spend time talking about his activities when he returns home. The staff onsite at

Scrubditch Care Farm work hard to provide a supportive, caring environment for J. He feels part of the team there and that his efforts are welcomed and valued. It has benefited him greatly and he hopes to keep attending for many years to come”.

Care home Deputy Project Manager



“I have been bringing a group of children with severe learning difficulties to Scrubditch Care Farm for six months and I cannot speak highly enough of the learning environment that is provided there. The children I work with are mostly severely autistic, and the benefits to them have been immense. A wide range of curriculum areas are covered. When I have been completing the regular assessments we do for our children, using the SOLAR online assessment system, I am really struck by the number of skills and the amount of knowledge they have gained at the farm, which allows them to show real progress. And what’s more, they really look forward to going to the farm and have a great time while they are there.”

Teacher

“My husband has dementia. Through attending local memory cafes we heard about Scrubditch Care Farm and have been going there regularly for 2 or 3 months. When I suggested to Ken that we go to the farm, he showed no enthusiasm, but I said we should go once and if he did not like it we need not go again. This charity is amazing and the people who run it do a superb job. The farm days have given Ken new interests and a feel-good factor, he feels part of a community and loves collecting the eggs warm from the henhouse and feeding the pigs, also eagerly awaits the arrival of piglets. I have witnessed the joyful faces of others who battle with dementia and a growing confidence with looking after

the animals and joining in the chat. I am thrilled to have found such a valuable project close to us and recommend it to others when I get a chance.”

Family member

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 for more details.