

## CASE STUDY UK-4 CARE FARMING

### BRIEF PROFILE OF THE CARE FARMING CASE STUDY

- There are over 200 care farms (CFs) in the UK. The majority are members of a national support network called Care Farming UK (CFUK). This case study explores CFUK but considers four English CFs in detail.
- CFs provide therapeutic support to people with physical, mental and social challenges, such as excluded school pupils, elders with dementia, those suffering substance addiction and ex-offenders.
- CF services are commissioned by public health and educational authorities and social services, which increasingly recognise the efficacy of CFs in terms of behaviour change and well-being.
- Despite this, there is spare capacity in the still emerging CF sector and many care farmers struggle to remain financially viable without grants.
- An expansion of CF utilisation in health and social care is likely to have a limited but positive local effect on the rural economy.
- Key environmental and social benefits associated with CFs are well-being and rural vitality.



### KEY FACTORS IMPACTING THE PROVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

The system considered in the care farming case study is a sub-set of agriculture focused on providing health and well-being. Although the natural 'resource system' of each farm is locally delineated, the social resource system is much broader – usually linked to a district or county, especially where care farms provide services for local councils or health authorities. While the resource underpinning care farming is land, the extent and characteristics of this land varies depending on whether care farms are rural or urban, or are based on livestock or horticulture. As public authorities make more use of care farming, CFUK has established itself as a professional membership association with a code of practice. A recent challenge has come via national agri-environmental reforms, especially limitations in terms of subsidy support for educational access to farms.

### EMERGING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



Care farming is a highly effective approach to social and health care for a wide range of people in an outdoor environment. There is some potential to expand care farming in light of the delegation of public services and the personalisation of health care choices. However, many care farmers see themselves principally as working in the agriculture sector and the environmental distinctions of care farming compared to other types of agriculture are not clear. This means that care farms may need support in embedding themselves in public health as well as (or instead of) agri-environmental policy arenas so that their particular approach can be supported. In some cases, agricultural productivity is not the principal objective of the care farm, while in other cases the 'story' of the farm represents an opportunity for realising added value from products.

