

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

Dolan's Social Farm, Garrison, Fermanagh, 20 November 2015

Background

As part of its Inquiry into post Special Educational Need (SEN) Provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed, to go on a study visit to Dolan's Social Farm, Garrison.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Phil Flanagan MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

Mrs Cathie White - Clerk to the Committee
Mr Vincent Gribbin – Assistant Clerk

Social Farming representatives:

Malachy and Miriam Dolan, Social Farmers
Margaret Dolan, Service Manager Western trust
Marie and Paul Kelly, Social Farmers
Susan Mullan, Social Farmer
Iolo Eilian, Social Care Commissioning Lead for Mental Health and Learning Disability at the Health and Social Care Board
Aoibeann Walsh, Social Farming Service Co-Ordinator NI
Brian Smyth, Social Farming Support Office, Rol
Parents and Service Users

Meeting

On arrival the Committee had an informal discussion with the social farmers. The Committee then listened to a series of briefings on the pilot projects and then a tour of the farm. An itinerary of the visit is attached.

Issues raised

- Assists with work experience for those in rural areas.
- The approach is of benefit to those young people who find it difficult to fit into a classroom setting.
- The groups on any particular farm are a maximum of 3 and so are treated like family.
- There is a proven track record of social farming in Holland.
- Issues remain regarding access to travel.
- Training is provided in horticulture as well as a range of essential skills.
- Taster sessions at the farms are for 10 Weeks.
- There are 10 Pilot farms in Northern Ireland and 10 in the Republic of Ireland.

Itinerary for Social Farming Meeting in Garrison, Co.Fermanagh 20 November 2015

11.30 – 11.45 Arrive on farm

Welcome by

- **Malachy and Dr Miriam Dolan (Social Farmers)**

Malachy and Miriam with the Western Health and Social Care Trust have been providing day opportunities to individuals with Learning disabilities for over three years including their participation in the University's led SOFAB pilot.

Margaret Dolan (Service manager Western trust) will talk with the group and include the participants (**Michael & Noel**) who are in attendance on the day in that conversation.

Malachy is the Chairperson of the Regional Social Farming Across Boundaries organisation.

Speakers on the day:

12.00

- **Marie and Paul Kelly (Social farmers)** and participants.

Marie and Paul farm in Hilltown, Co.Down and have received support from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust to continue Social Farming. The Kelly's will outline the benefits of engaging in Social Farming for the participants.

12.15

- **Susan Mullan (Social Farmer)**

Susan, her husband Seamus and daughter Clare (Occupational Therapist) were all involved in the SoFAB project. Their farm is in Claudy, Co.Derry/Londonderry, which they have developed into Gortilea Social Farm CIC. Since the SoFAB project, the family have received support from the Department for Employment and Learning and the European Social Fund. Susan will detail their farm's progress as a Social Farming initiative.

12.30

- **Iolo Eilian, Social Care Commissioning Lead for Mental Health and Learning Disability at the Health and Social Care Board**

- Iolo has engaged with Social Farming since the SoFAB project piloting period (2013 – 2014), visiting a pilot farm in Ballyroney, Co.Down and speaking at the SoFAB conference in 2014.

News article: <http://www.transformingyourcare.hscni.net/social-farming-helping-those-with-a-learning-disability/>

Conference speech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIRCLmTjGGE&list=PLdMFIWpmw1gfVU9FBSJYQFrB6w0uFASli&index=8>

12.45

- **Social Farming Service Co-Ordinator NI**

Aoibean Walsh is employed within **Rural Support**, a regional organisation supporting farmers and rural dwellers with a wide range of issues including financial and legal matters, and worries about stress and mental health. The Social Farming Support Service will establish Social Farming as a beneficial day opportunity for individuals within the health and social care system who are living with a learning disability or mental health issue. It will also assist farmers who wish to consider Social Farming as a viable business opportunity. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development have supported this development of Social Farming.

13.00

- **Social Farming Support Office Rol**

Helen Doherty and Brian Smyth of Leitrim Development Company staff this service, which aims to provide advice and guidance to farmers/farm families throughout Ireland who wish to establish Social Farming services; to assist in the development of service users and their families' understanding of Social Farming; and to continue to raise public awareness of Social Farming.

The Social Farming Support Office was opened with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the CEDRA Fund.

13.15

- **Paul Henry (Service user Advocate)**

Paul was the Co-Ordinator on the Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) Project and remains committed to the progression of Social Farming on the island of Ireland. Paul is a Director of the farmer-led Social Farming Across Boundaries organisation and will speak about individual choice and the journey of the participants in their Social Farming experience.

13.45

- Farm walk

14.30

- Group Discussion All of the SoFAB pilot farmers and Social Farming service providers in Northern Ireland hope to be in attendance and are listed below:
- **Eugene Mullan, Armoy, Co.Antrim**
- **Dorothy Heath, Ballyrone, Co.Down**
- **Joan Woods, Bangor, Co.Down**
- **Seaghan McDermott, Armagh town, Co.Armagh**
- **Mabel and John Campbell, Plumbridge, Co.Tyrone**
- **Simon and Jennifer Bullock, Derrylin, Co.Fermanagh**
- **Ruth and Daniel Morrison, Limavady, Co.Derry/Londonderry**

Links to SoFAB Project videos:

Background and Outlook: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mU_Cqi3sr5c

Farmers' experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OD4ogK2zlvw>

Participants' experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZvFcPcQSY8>

Service Agencies' Views: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVnSKWKzi74>

RTE Nationwide: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8F4eQ51vG4>

Gortilea Social Farm CIC

Susan Mullan
Clare Mc Monagle

History

- ▶ Clare Mc Monagle Occupational Therapist working with adults with Learning Disabilities.
- ▶ Took part in the Sofab Pilot Study.
- ▶ As a result of the positive experience during the pilot study Gortilea Social Farm CIC was formed.



Gortilea Support consists of:

- ▶ Seamus Mullan- Farmer
- ▶ Susan Mullan- Background in Community Services/Rural Development
- ▶ Clare Mc Monagle- Occupational Therapist- post funded by UnLTD.
- ▶ Malachy Mc Closkey- farm support
- ▶ Geraldine Bradley- Community Work Programme
- ▶ Farm Support Worker- to be appointed
- ▶ Volunteers

From Pilot to Practice - Research

- ▶ Bamford Report Research Paper “My Day My Way”

“Choice beyond Transition do not really exist”

“Some people spend several years in College repeating the same course”

“Fear of Questioning placements for fear of not receiving any”

“Fear if they give up a one day in a day centre to sample alternatives it may not be replaced”

“Services are based on what is available rather than on individual needs”

“Parents highlighted need for Person Centred Planning.”

From Pilot to Practice - Research

- ▶ Transforming Your Care
 - ▶ “Acknowledgement of need for Multi - Agency Approach”
 - ▶ “Not solely a health issue”
 - ▶ “Issues compounded by lack of transport and independent travel initiatives”

From Pilot to Practice - Research

Post 19 Group

“There is a clear sense that decisions about education, employment and health and social care are often determined by what is available rather than what is in the best interests of the young person.”

The Post 19 Group mention Care Farming as an example of best practice in Post School Provision

Gortilea DEL Supported Programme - ESF

- ▶ Partnership - 2 Social Farms, DEL, DHSCB, RAPID, DARD
- ▶ Programme designed based on research and experience of Pilot
- ▶ Successful Bid
- ▶ 12 Adults with Disabilities per year
- ▶ 40 week programme
- ▶ Training Level 1 LANTRA - Agriculture and Horticulture - Training Person Centred
- ▶ Opportunity to move on to Level 2 in another programme

Barriers

- ▶ Very similar to previous research and comments made by several respondents to the enquiry to date including Post 19 Group, COT, Destined etc
- ▶ Parents - Fear of losing Day Care Place
- ▶ Staff - Fear of Change/Losing Placements
- ▶ Understanding of the Programme
- ▶ Perceived Risk Factor
- ▶ Lack of Person Centred approach in some cases
- ▶ Need to support Choice and Independence of Participant (who is making the choice)
- ▶ Transport - need for integrated approach (Social Car Scheme)
- ▶ ESF Programme - Innovative - Procurement/Quality Audits/Training requirements

Achievements

- ▶ Inter Agency Partnership
 - ▶ 100% retention of those who have been referred
 - ▶ Support at Senior Level within the Trust
 - ▶ Support at Senior Level HSCB
 - ▶ Support of Charities - Destined Ltd
 - ▶ Support from Local Rural Development Partnership
 - ▶ Social Car Scheme working well
 - ▶ Quality Audits Achieved
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- ▶ Greatest Achievement - feedback from participants

Case Studies

- ▶ Client with Challenging Behaviour, recently moved to supported living and a number of profound difficulties.

“After the 40 weeks can I stay on for another programme - I love it on the farm, the physical hard work and working in a small group. I feel I get agitated in larger groups and find it difficult to control my behaviour- this place suits me well”.

Key Worker - “ R is doing extremely well on the farm. I feel the small group and peer support really suits him. We have had no issues with behaviour since starting at the farm, he really likes it and looks forward to a Tuesday”.

Case Study - Destined

“Initially when the Farm was set up Destined referred two of its members to participate in the programmes for a pilot period of 6 months, that was two years ago and the two are still on the Farm. It has transformed their lives and in one particular case has developed a young person from being quiet, shy and introvert to him being animated, talkative about the work on the Farm and wanting a career in farming. This project has had a life changing impact on this young person over a very short period. The Farm uses a one to one person centred support system and group supports based on teamwork. Destined found this particularly helpful when another member who was less able than the original two was referred, he received peer support from his colleagues and one to one support from the staff. Since that first referral Destined has referred a number of other members to participate on the Farm including some young women who had a terrific time and who adopted young lambs.”

Dermott O Hara - Manager Destined Ltd

Conclusion

- ▶ College of Occupational Therapists in their submission to the Review

“COT believe it would be useful to broaden the definition of further education to include physical activity, social and community skills. COT believe the broadened definition should include functional daily activity skills because education, employment and training activities need to be correctly matched for the individual to achieve their goals.”

Other submissions including Post 19 group

- ▶ Health, Education, Social Development , DARD, Regional Development and DEL must work together. Not solely a health issue.
- ▶ Change in attitudes towards Choice for All
- ▶ Person Centred Planning in Practice
- ▶ Transport across NI - learn from Good Practice
- ▶ Professional Day Opportunities Extended/Piloted and Promoted at all levels
- ▶ Support and information for parents and carers
- ▶ Managing the Change - Staff
- ▶ Meaningful engagement with employers

Conclusion

- ▶ The Research is Clear - Need to put Policy into Practice
- ▶ Review Submissions - Clear similarity across responses.

There have been many issues in relation to the delivery of the ESF initiative but all the partners are learning from these and it is only through practice that we can deliver on the Policy.

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

Frances of Assisi

Pictures tell 1000 words!



Planting Pots and Lambing time..



Our own lambs, preparing the sheds and Miss Sasha.



Boys hard at Work

Hedge Laying



Back for lunch



Turf Time

Team Work



Top class transport and lunch facilities



Working with sheep.



Everyone excited to bid for their own calves.



Yum Yum!! Apple Tart.



Its lunchtime- the craic is good!



Above all Friendships made!



Embedding Literacy and Numeracy into Farm and Countryside Activities

**Grundtvig Workshop
2013**



**Lifelong
Learning
Programme**

Growing Rural Enterprise

Activities for Care/ Social Farms- used to embed Literacy and Numeracy

The following list was collated.

It is not exhaustive by any means, but gives lots of ideas, which can be adapted to suit the individual needs of your clients, with the appropriate risk assessment, consideration of health and safety issues and appropriateness of the task to each clients abilities.

It is good to gently stretch and challenge and also to challenge stereotype.

Horses

- Tack cleaning days- (creating posters, calculating how much product will be needed)
- Keeper for the day- like pony days (creating posters, booking forms, writing letters, designing programmes)
- Riding lessons (creating posters, booking forms, writing letters, designing programmes)
- Pony trekking (creating posters, booking forms, writing letters, designing programmes)
- Ploughing with shires (measuring, timing, estimating)
- Animals life story (create story boards/scrapbooks)
- Grooming and hoof care (horse care plan)
- Getting ready to show (application forms, lists)
- Gymkhana (posters, flyers, lists, bookings, costing, letters to judges)
- Selling manure (posters, flyers, pricing, communication)
- Animal assisted therapy (letters, plans, lists)
- Breed identification (research, writing /creating information boards)

Bush craft

- Willow work (estimating, ordering, measuring, angles)
- Making shelters/dens (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Walking sticks (designing, posters, costing, measuring)
- Furniture (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Walking sticks (designing, posters)
- Lighting fires and cookery (reading recipes, doubling ingredients etc.)

Rural Crafts

- Spinning wool crafts (estimating, measuring, cutting)
- Jam/preserve making (reading recipes, doubling ingredients etc.)
- Rag rug making (estimating, measuring, cutting)
- Tie dying- natural dyes (reading instructions, recording results, weighing)
- Furniture (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Wood carving (planning, identification of wood types,)
- Quilting (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Patchwork (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Needlecrafts (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Basket making (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Willow work- garden wigwams, fish, snails,
- Making Pot Pourri (packaging, labelling, listing, writing and reading 'recipes)
- Corn Dollies (measuring, counting, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Bird feeder (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Bird boxes (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, angles)
- Fat balls (measuring, ordering, designing, costing, reading recipes)
- Christmas door swags (posters, costing, pricing, identifying appropriate materials)
- Christmas table arrangements, Candle pots, topiary pots (posters, costing, pricing, identifying appropriate materials)

- Moss sculptures (posters, costing, pricing, identifying appropriate materials, estimating)
- Paintings onto scrap pieces of wood (story boards)
- Junk sculpture (story boards)
- Canal boat paintings (posters, costing, pricing, identifying appropriate materials)
- Creating signs- e.g. Eggs for Sale

Plants

- Buy plugs and grow on (costing, time plans, temperature, volume of compost, multiplication)
- Stall at local show (posters, plans, costs, writing letters, price labels, taking money, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division)
- Cuttings- stem, root division, runners (costing, time plans, temperature, volume of compost, multiplication)
- Cutting flowers, flower arranging or floristry (counting, pricing, costing, posters, price tickets)
- Planning a cutting garden- good winter activity (multiplication, scale)
- Plant identification (research, reading labels, creating labels)
- Creating dish gardens (planning, story boards)
- Vegetable garden (costing, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, angles, volume, writing labels, scrapbook, storyboard, reading seed packets, catalogues, ordering seeds)
- Entering a vegetable show (filling in forms, communication, planning a route, calculating mileage and time taken to get there at various speeds)
- Creating a vegetable show (posters, flyers, costings, booking and communication with judges)
- Growing beans, peas in a jar (counting, weighing, measuring)
- Growing sprouting seeds (counting, weighing, measuring)
- Cress eggheads (counting, weighing, measuring)

- Grow plants for hanging baskets/containers on the care farm (costing, time plans, temperature, volume of compost, multiplication)
- Planting containers/hanging baskets (costing, time plans, temperature, volume of compost, multiplication)
- Growing mint and having mint tea (writing recipes, reading recipes, measuring volume)

Dogs

- Local dog walking service by client group (posters, flyers, writing letters, plans)
- Therapy dogs- pets into hospitals/homes (posters, flyers, writing letters, plans, checklists)
- Dog walking (measuring distance, calculating speed)
- Grooming (keeping records, bookings)
- Checking for signs of good /ill health (reading a tick list)
- Identification of dog breeds (research, labelling gapped hand-outs)
- Foster a dog for a day (communication. Letters, story boards, scrapbooks)
- Dog agility (making equipment, measuring, calculating amount of wood needed, costing)
- Dog show (posters, flyers, costings, booking and communication with judges)
- Nutrition (reading labels, percentages, volume)
- Dogs life story- (create story boards/scrapbooks)

Orchard

- Jams, jellies, crumbles and pies (creating, reading and multiplying up recipes, labelling, costing and pricing)
- Wildlife habitats (identification, reading books, internet research, information boards)
- Tastings (record keeping, charts, plans)
- PYO (weighing, addition, subtraction, division, multiplication)

- Juicing, Cider making
- Wild flowers (identification from books, gapped hand-outs)
- Kindling sticks (counting, measuring, costing, price labels, advertisements, posters)
- Bruised fruit to feed to animals (weighing)
- Dried fruit for eating and decoration (temperature, weighing before and after)
- Wassailing (songs- writing, copying)
- Tree identification (identification from books, gapped hand-outs)
- Arts events linked to the orchard- poetry- painting- performance, song writing

Hedgerows

- Looking for signs of wildlife and identifying
- Looking at them as wildlife corridors
- Plant species- identification
- Collecting fruits and making Hedgerow Jelly- sloes, crab apples, blackberries, rosehips etc.
- Making twig rings and topiary
- Photography
- Planting
- Hedge laying
- Coppicing

Kitchen (weighing, measuring, addition, subtraction, multiplication of ingredients, costing, fractions)

- Grow it cook it eat it activities
- Jams, jellies and chutneys
- Soups
- Scones
- Creating a cream tea
- Cheese making, butter and yogurt

- Sausage making, burgers
- Coleslaw, salads
- Collecting eggs- making cakes, quiches (use premade pastry cases to make it simpler)
- Costing and pricing
- Food miles, seasonality
- Food and Mood
- Ways to get your '5 a day'
- Pates, Pies and Terrines

Pigs, sheep and cattle (weighing, calculating cost of feed, ratios, fractions, volumes, measuring)

- Feeding
- Cleaning out
- Identifying good and poor health
- Breed identification and characteristics
- Routine stick tasks

Fishing (weighing, calculating cost of feed, ratios, fractions, volumes, measuring)

- Fishing
- Identification
- Weighing fish
- Habitat creation
- Water testing

Social Enterprise Activities

Activities that generate income to be ploughed back into the organisation as well as providing meaningful activities for care seekers.

How do you measure success?

- Service users are happy and enjoy the activities
- Participants have a sense of ownership and responsibility
- Making profit and/or covering costs with some contingency/money to reinvest
- Demand for product/service
- Feedback

What are the barriers to success?

- Perception of exploitation
- Weather
- Time to commit
- Enough time to plan- lead up time
- Marketing and promotion
- Commitment to quality
- Wastage
- Balancing the needs of the project with the needs of the service user
- Gathering the right team members

Nick Platt and Julie White

Growing Rural Enterprise 2013