

The SoFAB Evidence Base

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Belfast Castle

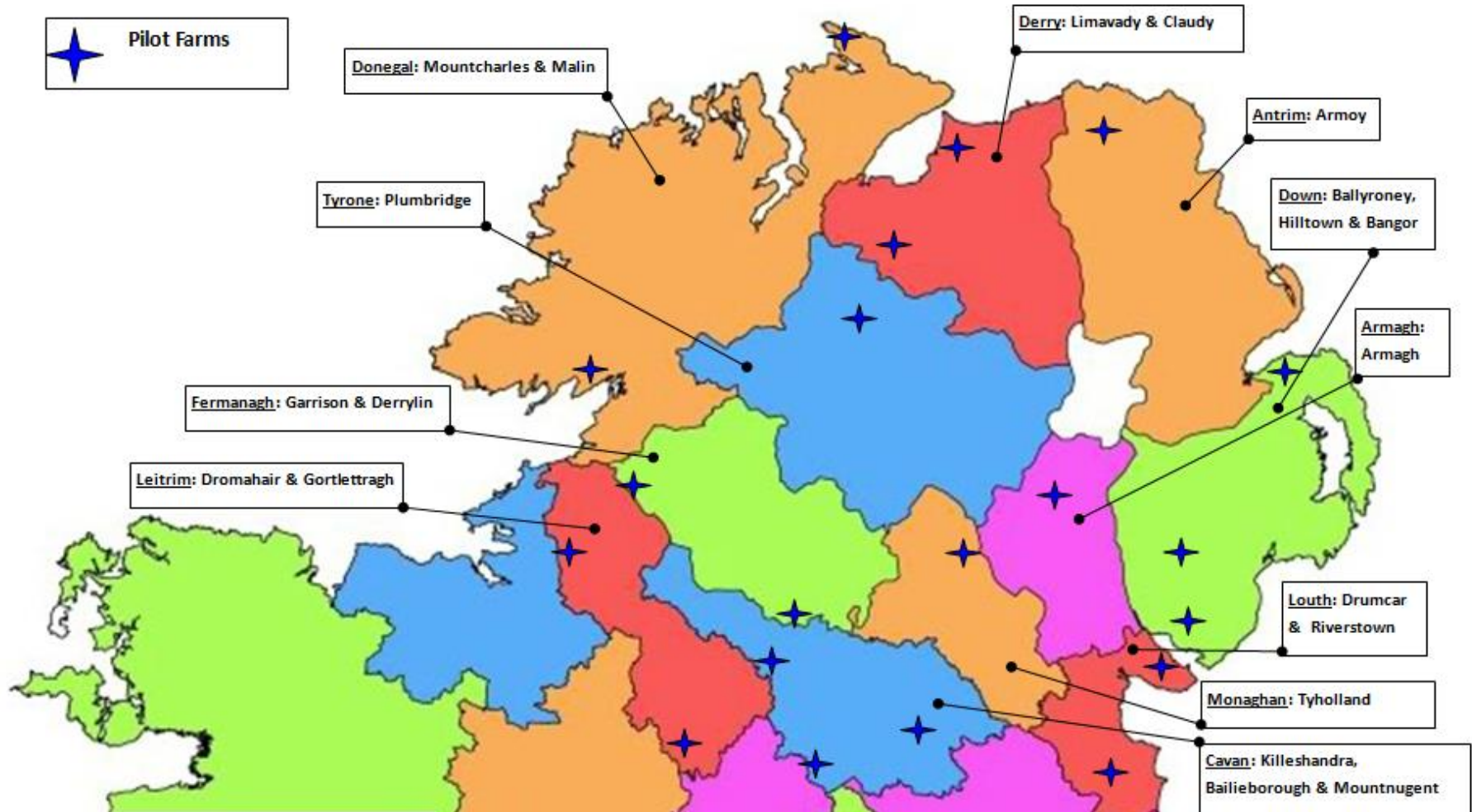
The Evidence Base

- SoFAB Piloting Experience
 - Pilot Farms
 - Participants
 - Farm Activities & Participant Support
- Research Methods
- The SoFAB Experience – Participants & Farmers
 - Benefits
 - Challenges
 - Testimonials
- The Social Farm Model

Glossary of terms

- Participant – individuals coming from a Learning/Intellectual Disability (L/ID) background or individuals on a journey of recovery from a Mental Health (MH) issue who were supported to engage in social farming on the pilot farms
- Pilot Farmer – 20 farmers who were selected to pilot social farming
- Participant Supporter – staff/parent/carer who supported individuals to avail of the SoFAB opportunity

Pilot Farms



Piloting Experience: Farm Location

County	Farms
Armagh	1
Antrim	1
Monaghan	1
Tyrone	1
Derry	2
Donegal	2
Fermanagh	2
Leitrim	2
Louth	2
Down	3
Cavan	3

Health Region	Farms
NHSCT	1
SEHSCT	1
SHSCT	3
WHSCT	5
HSE Dublin North-East	6
HSE West	4

- Involvement of other service providers
- Cross border links on 2 farms

Piloting Experience: Participants

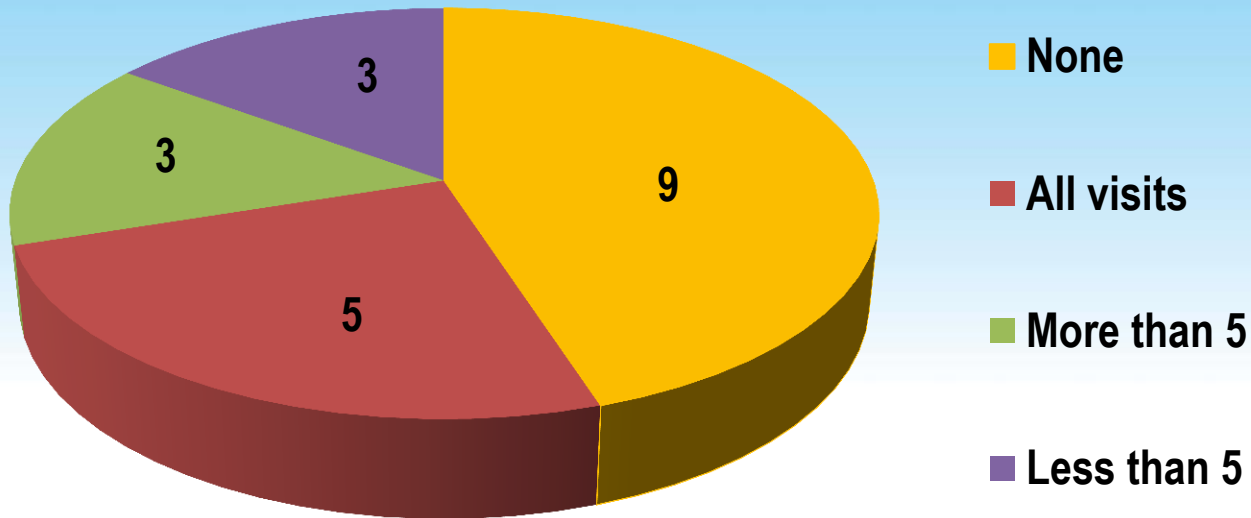
- 66 participants across 20 farms
- **Service:** 37L/ID / 29MH
- **Gender:** 64 Male / 2 Female
- **Jurisdiction:** 38 RoI / 28 NI

Piloting Experience

- 8 farms supported L/ID participants
- 6 farms supported MH participants
- 6 farms supported L/ID & MH participants
- Participants per farm: ranged from 2 to 5
- 12 farms supported 3 participants
- 5 farms operated visits twice a week
- **Duration of visit:** 2.5 to 8 hours; Most common: 5 hours

Piloting Experience

On farm support



Piloting Experience

NI Service Breakdown

Service	Participants
NHSCT	3
SEHSCT	3
SHSCT	6
WHSCT	9
NIAMH	3
Destined	2
Positive Futures	2

Rol Service Breakdown

Service	Participants
SJOG	5
NLN	3
EmployAbility	2
Rehabcare	7
Step Right to Work	4
NWPF	2
HSE Dublin North-East	4
HSE West	11

Participant Attendance

- **Average attendance: 83%**
- **L/ID Average attendance: 88%**
- **MH Average attendance: 76%**

- 16 participants (11L/ID / 5MH) had 100% attendance
- 21 participants (14L/ID / 7MH) had 90+% attendance

- 15 participants had a Period of Absence (12MH / 3L/ID)

Piloting Experience

Activities

- Animal husbandry, feeding and care
- Maintenance and restoration
 - Farm areas
 - Buildings
 - Machinery
- Horticulture
- Conservation and woodland management
- Woodwork/greenwoodwork
- Crafts
- Foraging and baking









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New Opportunities + Connecting People + Improving Lives



Research Methods

- Participants
 - Interview (n=62)
 - Observation (n=49)
- Farmers (n=20)
 - Interviews at 3 stages – Beginning; Progress Report; End
 - Log Book
- Participant Supporters (n=39)
 - Interview

Experience of:

- Participants
- Farmers

Benefits, Challenges & Testimonials

Participant Benefits

- Identified by participants, farmers and supporters
- 1. Empowerment (E)**
 - 2. Inclusion (I)**
 - 3. Self-actualisation (SA)**

Participant Benefits

Self-identified

1. **Personal Health and Well-Being (SA)**
2. **Social Inclusion (I)**
3. **Skill Development (E)**
4. **Purpose/Routine (E/SA)**
5. **Progression (I/SA)**

1. Personal Health and Well-Being

- 23 participants (37%)
- “At some stage my mental health was down, since coming here it’s getting a lot better” [Participant (MH), Co.Down]
- *“I like doing it all, it’s keeping you healthy doing things. And it keeps your mind occupied...you have more confidence when you’re working, other things like that too”*
[Participant (MH), Co.Armagh]

1. Personal Health and Well-Being

- “...you get a great sense of acknowledgement and responsibility for life’s creatures” [Participant (MH), Co.Donegal]
- *“It was good for their Mental Health, doing good physical work, being tired at the end of the day” [WHSCT OT]*



2. Social Inclusion

- 50 participants (81%)
- “I like Barry [pilot farmer], I get on well with Barry and Barry gets on well with me, I’ve no problems with him”
[Participant (MH), Co.Cavan]
- *“I was stuck at home, I didn’t have anyone my own age, any peer to converse with. Yeah I made lots of new friends; it does feel more like family, a tight knit community”*
[Participant (MH), Co.Donegal]

2. Social Inclusion

- “I think it gave them a bit more confidence and ability to talk to other people...our people don't get much of an opportunity to meet new people, to mix with other people” [SEHSCT Support Worker]



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Home Environment

- “You come into the home and you’re made welcome, as soon as you drive in you’re welcomed by Richard and Jackie [pilot farmers], Richard’s mother Susan the far side [of the farmyard], they make you so welcome” [Participant (MH), Co.Cavan]
- *“He became comfortable. His relationship with Natascha [pilot farmer] improved, seeing her home, he was asking questions – “Where’s your room?”, “How many rooms are in this house?”*
[Participant (MH), Co.Leitrim, by proxy]



Key Points in the Day

Dolan's

The sheep were in a field away from Malachy's [pilot farmer] home so we travelled down to be able to walk in from the road. Malachy parked in his neighbour's driveway and his neighbour was very welcoming to M and N [participants], talking to them, taking M into his house to see his CCTV monitor as M was asking about it

Mullan's

The lunch in the bird hut – there was a lot of talk about local news, in Armoy and Ballycastle. Eugene [pilot farmer] said to the participants they would have to have a Christmas party with music and dancing. A [participant] telling everyone it was time to get back to work



3. Skill Development

- 50 participants (81%)
- “Learnt something different everyday out there. How to feed animals, all different stuff just” [Participant (MH), Co.Tyrone]
- *“I did a lot of planting trees, flowers, cutting, cutting grass, I dug laneways, fencing. I learnt a lot” [Participant (MH), Co.Cavan]*
- “Working in a team. How to split sheep up from boy and girl and lambs. Moving them in the fields, raking them up and all” [Participant (L/ID), Co.Derry]





4. Purpose/Routine

- 16 participants (26%)
- “...I’d be more energetic, it’s something to get up for, it’s something to be living, to get up for on a day, coming here. It’s working but you still don’t class it as work” [Participant (MH), Co.Donegal]
- “...you get used to something, you like it. It’s better than having nothing in place, you slip into your old routine, then you’re back to square one again” [Participant (MH), Co.Derry]

4. Purpose/Routine

- “I thought it was great for them, it gives them something to do, something they did do all their lives, getting to keep at it really”
[NWPF Care Assistant]
- *“S and M [participants] get a sense of achievement. The other day, M sat down for tea and said “I can’t wait to get at that orchard”*
[Robert Wilson, pilot farmer]



5. Progression

Away from the farm

- 17 participants (27%)
- “...do a course like Introduction to Farming, a course, more the theory and eventually work, get work out, be sent to a farm, nearby, to get experience. Introduction to Farming and Animal Health, something like that” [Participant (MH), Co.Donegal]

5. Progression

On the farm

- 34 participants (54%)
- “Well the lawnmower would be the massive one”
[Participant (L/ID), Co.Louth, by proxy]
- *“They were very slow at the start getting out to the fields...Then they were changing electric fences, doing everything, once they were in the swing of it, they were doing all jobs” [William McLaughlin, pilot farmer]*
- “They all came out of themselves a good bit. Especially M [participant], initially he was extremely shy. He was meeting people without any difficulty, doing the bit for the radio” [Michael Heslin, pilot farmer]

Participant Benefits: Enjoyment

- “...it’s good craic and it’s enjoyable to go out and have the craic doing different small projects like” [Participant (MH), Co.Cavan]
- “...before I went to the farm I was very in my shell...It’s got me out of my shell, I can chat to other people. The ability to have a laugh with people again, it was good craic, without having to have a drink” [Participant (MH), Co.Derry]

Participant Benefits: Enjoyment

- n=56
- Scale of 1 to 10

	Mean Score
Being outdoors	8.2
Being in contact with animals	7.9
Meeting new people	7.6
Being on a farm	8.3
Horticulture (gardening) projects	7.3



Participant Benefits: Enjoyment

Supporters

- “It was the first time I got to see J [participant] smile and laugh. We went to the top of the hill to feed the cows, he laughed and smiled, I was wondering what was the matter! He was so much more relaxed, he enjoyed working, having that role again was a benefit for him” [HSE OT]
- *“He’s happy enough, he’s pleased with working with Seamus [pilot farmer] and his daughters. He gets on with everyone that works on the farm, he enjoys it” [Participant Parent]*

Farmer Benefits

1. Personal Development
2. Work Environment
3. Farm
4. Farm Family
5. Community



1. Personal Development

- Reward
- Awareness
- Participants' Experience
- Relationship with the participants
- SoFAB Opportunity

1. Personal Development

- “...it’s a very sociable day. Benefit from seeing how they’ve improved. To see how they have actually grown as a person. See some like jobs better than others”
[Dessie Harrington, pilot farmer]
- *“A tremendous help on the hidden values these people have. To their needs, they’re needing a thing to do to make their life easier, to be part of the community”*
[Eugene Mullan, pilot farmer]

1. Personal Development

- “It’s a learning process. I’m coming from a farming background so it’s a different experience” [Seamus Mullan, pilot farmer]
- *“...kind of caused me to be a bit more communicative in myself. Previously when you’re on the farm by yourself you’re not talking to one another, you get used to talking, explaining...It’s good to improve yourself and the way you’re farming” [Liz Hughes, pilot farmer]*

The Journey

- Seaghan McDermott, pilot farmer – Log Book Entries

Visit	Progress on Relationships:
Day 3	Getting to know the fellas better, gives me an insight into what they are really interested in
Day 11	Getting better as fellas are relating back more stories
Day 18	Great: getting lots of suggestions from fellas about what to do
Day 30	Made two new friends

2. Work Environment

- Help on the farm
- Company
- Slowing down



2. Work Environment

- “The extra pair of hands even if it happens slower. It enthuses us to do things – things that you put on the long finger. You could do yourself but if two or three others get involved, before you know it you get the job done” [Dorothy Heath, pilot farmer]
- *“I would look forward to the company, farming is a lonely occupation” [Marie Kelly, pilot farmer]*

2. Work Environment

- “I’ve learnt to slow down a bit...I’ve learnt to enjoy the environment on the farm through taking more time. We’ll walk up, they see something new, I’d usually rush down, on to the next thing” [Natascha Telford, pilot farmer]
- *“Also we work together...More as a structured way, as a couple. For us it works well, for the two of us”
[Malachy & Miriam Dolan, pilot farmers]*

Farmer Benefits

3. Farm

- “For me when it started the farm itself was ticking over for years, in some way it makes it more worthwhile...I’m using the farm for something very different but it’s still very much part of what the farm was about. We’re restoring things that have been neglected, learning new, old skills” [Robert Wilson, pilot farmer]

4. Farm Family

- “The children see them too, not as people with a disability, they see them as farmers coming out...If Social Farming was not here we wouldn’t have got the horse, it gets things done” [Matthew McGreehan, pilot farmer]



Farmer Benefits

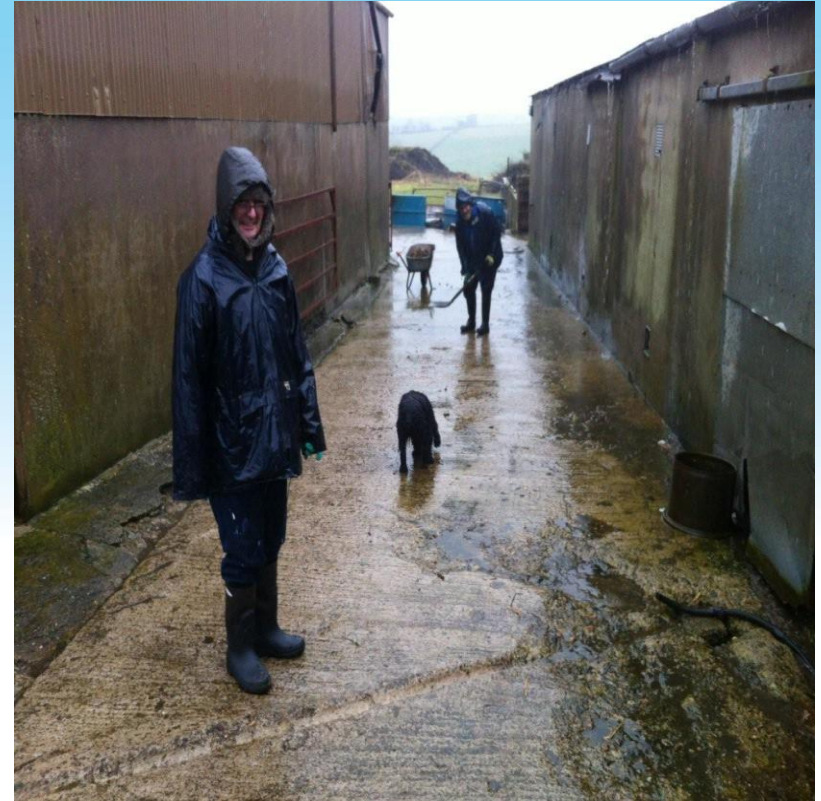
5. Community

- “It’s knitting people in the street – Winifred’s mom and dad, George who’s 90, the guys know them now. It’s great feeling the social connectedness, community connectedness”
[Larry Masterson, pilot farmer]

Participant Challenges

19 participants (31%)

- Weather
- Activities
- PPE
- Muddy ground
- Busy market
- Early morning starts
- Communication
- Payment



Farmer Challenges

- Farming Week
- Participant Attendance
- Balance between farmer and participants
- Participant feedback
- Payment
- SoFAB Project Requirements



Testimonials

- Participants
 - Desire to continue
- Farmer
 - Likelihood to continue
 - Success of pilot
- Supporter



Participant Desire to Continue

- 54 participants (87%) indicated that they would like to continue Social Farming
- Reasons for wishing to continue Social Farming:
 - The enjoyment or 'craic' factor
 - Learning new things
 - The experience
 - Socialisation
 - Improvement in Mental Health
 - Development of life skills
 - The environment
 - Having a purpose
 - Helping animals

"I just hope I continue with what I'm doing because I'm enjoying it. And I feel very proud of myself at what I do" [Participant (L/ID), Co.Cavan]

Testimonials

Participants

- “I think it’s good for my mental health, it’s good having training, work skills together. Obviously to get into a good steady job, employment. Social Farming – this is what it’s all about” [Participant (MH), Co.Down]
- *“...I’d be concerned about meeting new people, new situations, they give me worries, concerns...knowing what we’re doing, how long for, having get outs, that helps. And this had the advantages of not being pressurised, being open, not being a large group. I met D [participant] before and that sort of helps a bit. What we were doing meant that I could do it by myself really and that’s when I feel best”*
[Participant (MH), Co.Donegal]

Farmer Likelihood to Continue

- End Interview farmers were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10
- **9.4 mean score**
- Issues around uncertainty for the future

Success of pilot

- Farmer rating success of project on a scale of 1 to 10
- **8.9 mean score**
- Long-term success

Testimonials

Farmers

- “This is not the same routine as a day centre, it’s individual. It’s letting them have a window on farming life. It’s a uniquely placed job to take that time, to be on the farm. It’s like a half way home and it’s not as confining. The space they’re working in is more open. For people who have a social phobia, it works” [Ruth Morrison, pilot farmer]
- “*Social Farming gives smaller farms an opportunity to become more recognised in the rural community. 100, 70, even 50 years ago small farms were the backbone of the rural community...It gives more weight to the smaller farms, recognition of what’s going on – it was our culture*” [Mabel Campbell, pilot farmer]

Testimonials

Supporters

- “Probably just the whole family being so supportive and tuned in to the clients’ needs and communicating. The Key Workers noticed change; it was meeting their needs. The fact it ran so long was the great opportunity to get involved and develop skills and relationships over a long time” [WHSCT OT]
- *“Positives, I couldn’t say enough about it. It was a niche that needed filled in the community. It was welcoming, relaxed, opening while still being structured. And the link with the person we were referring to was extremely important” [HSE CMHN]*

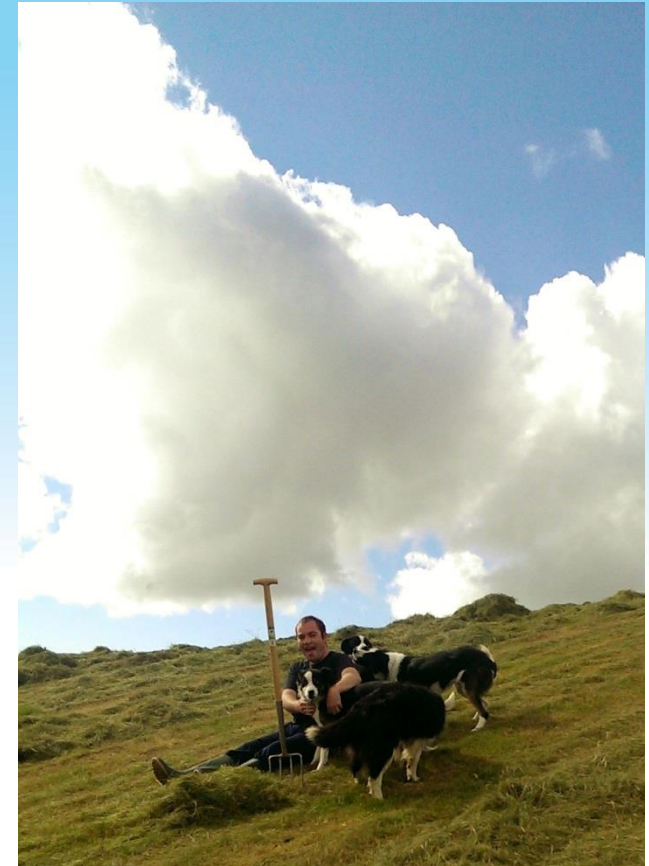
Testimonials

Supporters

- “Just that it has done him good. He gets up in the morning anyway for Drumlin House but he looks forward to it [the farm] so much. It’s been very good, it’s a pity it’s finishing so soon. It does, takes him out for the day, different scenery, even though he enjoys Drumlin House, he enjoys [going to the farm]. I used to say to his daddy, some the students or workers in Drumlin House got to go out somewhere for one day and it suited so well. If it was some place if would be okay but this [the farm] suited him”
[Participant Parent]

The Social Farm Model – What Works

- Participant choice
- Farmer
- Farm family support
- Range of developmental activities
- Routine farm tasks
- Safe working environment
- Community engagement
- Recognition





Thanks

Social Farming – Connecting People, Improving Lives: The SoFAB Experience