



HEALTHY WATERFORD CASE STUDY 2025



Section 1: Organisation Overview

Waterford LEADER Partnership CLG. (WLP) was formed in 1991 as one of the four rural based Partnership companies under the national Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP). WLP offers economic, social and cultural services to small businesses, community groups and individuals. WLP's vision is to help create communities that are economically, socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable in which all people can reach their full potential. WLP aspired to aid the development of infrastructure necessary for employment and sustainable living in Rural Waterford, to establish viable enterprises that utilise both the natural resources of the area and or embrace new technology that are wealth and job creating. WLP delivers a number of programmes such as LEADER 2023 -2027, Rural Social Scheme, Rural Recreation and The Walks Scheme, Social Farming, Waterford South Tipperary Local Area Employment Service and Tús Community Work Placement Scheme.

Section 2: Summary of the Action

Social Farming offers people who are socially, physically, mentally or intellectually disadvantaged the opportunity to spend time on a family farm in a healthy, supportive and inclusive environment. While those participating in Social Farming activities may derive therapeutic benefit from it. Social Farming supports people in living ordinary lives, interacting with their community and environment, developing their potential. A growing body of evidence point to the role of nature and “green care” in delivering a variety of benefits and positive outcomes for individuals with a range of needs. In this context, Social Farming provides a planned, outcomes focused, support placement for people on a farm using the natural assets of the farmer, the place, the activities and the community to support a person to achieve their own chosen goals.

A Social Farm remains a typical working farm where people take part in ordinary day-to-day farm activities in a non-clinical environment. It is fundamentally based on spending time with farmers and their families in the natural environment of the farm, but also encompasses two other key elements, valuable meaningful activities and social and community. The aim was to offer this to those living in a disadvantaged community or those with a disability. The placements funded by Healthy Waterford in 2024 took place on two farms in West Waterford and seen 19 participants complete Social Farming Placements. These participants came from a range of services including Mental Health Support Service, Intellectual Disability service and a secondary school. In total there was 131 days of Social Farming completed with support from Healthy Waterford.



Section 3: Impact of the Action and Key Learning

Evidence from the international literature, supported by the growing body of national research, identify significant and wide-ranging benefits of Social Farming, including: Mental Health benefits such as increased happiness and enjoyment from the connection with the farmer and nature; a renewed sense of confidence, achievement, and purpose; an increased sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-motivation; increased feelings of acceptance and belonging; an increased sense of calm and peace.

Social benefits such as developing a friendship with the farmer and the farming family were noted from these placements. Along with active peer support and new connections with other participants; increased capacity and willingness to talk and interact with others. It also gave participants loads to talk about to friends and family. Physical benefits such as increased general physical fitness and vitality and improved sleep were mentioned.

Educational/Skills benefits such as acquiring a variety of skills associated with farming; knowledge transfer between the farmer and the participant; and finding an area of specific interest that can be developed further by the participant. Social Farming can add value to therapeutic and occupational service provision thus it is a placement of choice for many services recognising the benefits for their clients. Without funding through Healthy Waterford the participants would not of had this opportunity to engage with Social Farming. The participants found it to be of great benefit and are very enthusiastic about returning to the farms in the Summer.

*“I like working in the fresh
air, working with animals
and having the craic as
well”*

- Participant

