

Developing a common Quality Assurance framework for Green Care

Details of proposed work for potential research partner

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1. Background

The green care sector represents an increasing number of nature-based interventions providing care for vulnerable groups in society using a range of different contexts such as conservation or horticultural projects, care farms and community gardens. There is a growing demand and appetite for green care services from beneficiaries; and an increasing interest in referring to these types of services from commissioners (Mind, 2013; Bragg et al., 2015). Green Care provides exactly the style of community-based non-clinical care which is ideal for social prescribing, yet the number of green social prescriptions remain relatively low.

One of the barriers to increasing social prescribing has been concern regarding the level of care provided and the competence of organisations to provide that care. Being able to demonstrate compliance with a recognised quality assurance framework is one route to addressing those concerns. (Bragg and Atkins, 2016; Bragg and Leck, 2017).

Within the Nature, Health & Wellbeing sector, there is no common quality assurance framework, with several umbrella organisations offering their own standard or code of practice and individual providers choosing to evidence their quality in a variety of different ways.

The Green Care Coalition, of which both Thrive and Care Farming UK are founding members, aims to raise awareness of nature-based interventions for health and wellbeing and to increase the commissioning of those interventions for people with a defined need. Assisting the sector to work towards a common Quality Assurance framework is part of the Coalition's objectives.

2. The Work

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of the collaborative agreement between Thrive and Care Farming UK is to undertake a short piece of work to examine the existing quality assurance frameworks being used by Green Care providers (namely in the first instance: Care Farming UK's code of practice, Thrive's cultivating quality, and Society of Companion Animal Studies' code of practice) and to 'map' commonalities/differences in terms of both breadth of coverage and level of detail.

This desk review would need to be done in the context of understanding the origins and intended purpose of the frameworks and how they are currently being implemented, as well as what other 'standards' a provider may need to be able to meet.

The learning from the desk review will enable an assessment to be made of i) whether it is appropriate to create a common Quality Assurance type framework for Green Care and ii) if so, what needs to be done to create it, to meet the needs of health and social care professionals commissioning nature-based interventions.

Ideally, the study will need to be undertaken by an experienced Researcher with a good understanding of nature-based interventions and of quality assurance at an organisational level.

The Researcher will investigate the 3 key current frameworks in use, interview key personnel from the appropriate organisations involved with those frameworks and complete the comparative studies.

The Researcher will produce a full report (to include an Executive Summary and Recommended Next Steps). This will be a stand-alone report which will then be edited to produce a non-academic report (summary and recommendation) for publication and to be used as a foundation for future work required. A communications programme will be prepared to ensure that the report receives wide dissemination and attention from key audiences.

3. Outcomes, deliverables and Budget

3.1. Outcomes

The following outcomes will stem from the desk-based part of this work:

- An understanding of the Quality Assurance Frameworks available within Green Care (and other nature-based interventions) and their ability to meet the key needs of commissioners of nature-based therapies
- Recommendations as to the appropriateness and suggested next steps for the development of a comprehensive and useful QA Framework for Green Care provision

3.2. Key deliverables

The following key deliverable will stem from this work:

A report that:

- outlines the key needs of a potential Quality Assurance Framework against the requirements of health and social care professionals in the context of Green Care provision.
- reviews current frameworks and other information to clarify:
 - the scope, depth and breadth of the frameworks,
 - when and how they are applied,
 - commonalities and divergences between frameworks
- assesses the ability of the frameworks to address the needs outlined in (a)
- makes recommendations for whether a combined framework is appropriate, and outlines the work needed to produce a comprehensive and useful QA Framework for Green Care provision.

3.3. Timescale

Activity	2018			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Identification of key personnel to assist the work	●			
Recruitment and briefing of Researcher	●	●		
Desk Study, information collation and preparation of Report by Researcher		●	●	
Receipt of Researcher's report;			●	
Preparation & dissemination of Summary report				●

3.4. Budget

Activity	Time	Cost
Desk study, collation of information, preparation of report	10 days	£2,000
Editing work (with rest of the team) on summary report	1 day	£200
Total	11 days	£2,200

Note: The number of days for this work may change depending on day rate of different researchers

4. Project management:

Lead organisation: Thrive
Kathryn Rossiter, CEO

Co-partner: Care Farming UK
Dr Rachel Bragg

Steering Group:

To be confirmed, likely to include representatives from the Green Care Coalition and someone with experience of quality frameworks in other sectors.

Roles:

- Thrive, Care Farming UK, and the Steering Group to develop the specification and work plan for the Researcher, and identify key personnel for the Researcher to contact to facilitate the Desk Study, with specific direction from Kathryn Rossiter and Rachel Bragg
- Thrive will contract the Researcher to deliver the specified work
- Researcher will undertake research and all other work together with report writing
- Care Farming UK will manage the preparation of the Summary Report for publication.

5. Contact

If you are interested in undertaking this work, or if you have any queries, please send an expression of interest to Dr Rachel Bragg by email at rachel@carefarminguk.org by Monday 22nd January

6. References

- Bragg, R., Egginton-Metters, I., Leck, C. and Wood, C. (2015) Expanding delivery of care farming services to health and social care commissioners. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number 194.
- Bragg, R. and Atkins G. (2016) A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care. Natural England Commissioned Report Number 204
- Bragg, R. and Leck, C. 2017 [Good practice in social prescribing for mental health: The role of nature-based interventions](#). Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number 228

Mind (2013) Feel better outside, feel better inside: Ecotherapy for mental wellbeing, resilience and recovery. London: Mind. Available at: <http://www.mind.org.uk/media/336359/Feel-better-outside-feel-better-inside-report.pdf>