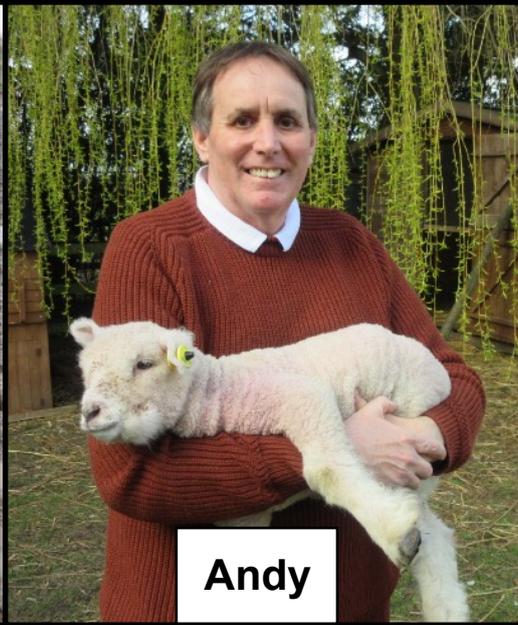


An evaluation of service user involvement at Beetle Bank Social Farm



Jim



Andy



Brian

Background to the evaluation

Justin (staff at the social farm), has been studying dementia studies at the University of Bradford. Jim, Andy, Brian and Claire (our longest serving volunteer) have been helping with these studies. They have been involved in the work for this evaluation and provided a lot of guidance.



Justin



Claire



Glossary of terms

- **Social farming:** farming and socialising
- **Being Involved:** taking part in decisions about the farm and helping with things there.
- **Empowerment:** feeling mentally stronger or confident as a result of helping and being helped.
- **Evaluation:** looking at the social farm and thinking about what works well and what could be improved.
- **Memory aids:** things like prompts, notes and photographs.

Involving people living with dementia at Beetle Bank Social Farm



Why evaluate how to involve people with dementia at Beetle Bank Social Farm?

- There is growing recognition that services for people living with dementia need improving.
- In the past people with dementia were regarded as passive receivers of care who could not contribute to the services they used.
- People with dementia are now seen as active users of the services they use.
- The evaluation process provides an opportunity to improve the service.
- It was also important to find out whether people with dementia could be more involved in the running of Beetle Bank Social Farm.

What research says about involving people with dementia in services



What researchers have found out about helping people with dementia to be involved in the services they use

Justin looked at research about people with dementia being involved in the services they use. Below are some of the findings from the research:

Strategies to help people with dementia maintain their independence

- Sometimes memory aids can help, such as providing information and notes.
- Allowing enough time to answer questions was helpful.

Making decisions together

- Make decisions together with others can help people with dementia to keep involved in making decisions.
- People living with dementia want to shape the services they use and work together.

What research says about involving people with dementia in services

Family care partners can help involve their relative with dementia in the services they receive

- Families sometimes play an important role in helping their relative with dementia to make decisions.
- Family care partners are often more aware than staff about their relatives preferences and habits.
- Family care partners sometimes need help too.

Empowering strategies can help people with dementia to be involved in the services they use

- People living with dementia need to feel involved.
- People living with dementia like having a go at things for themselves.
- It's helpful to have your strengths and abilities recognised.
- Help with building self confidence can be useful.
- Working towards goals can be useful.

Professional skills can help people with dementia to be involved in the services they use

- Staff knew when to support people with dementia and when not to.
- Staff made every attempt to include people with dementia.
- People with dementia were given the opportunity to refuse taking part
- Staff avoided putting people with dementia under pressure by asking questions and waiting for answers.

How we evaluated how much people with dementia are involved at Beetle Bank Social Farm

Methods used to help evaluate the social farm service

During the coronavirus lockdown we needed to find other ways to engage with people with dementia who use the farm and continue the evaluation. So we did the following:

- Interviews with people with dementia over the telephone
- Three way interviews over the internet: the person with dementia, their care partner and a staff member.
- Looking carefully at the social farms documents such as newsletters and staff records.



Using these methods showed us that people living with dementia can be involved in evaluating a service in many ways.

What we found out about involving people with dementia at Beetle Bank Social Farm



Things we found out about what helps to be involved in decision making at Beetle Bank Social Farm

- People with dementia can make decisions and should have opportunities to make them, even difficult ones like when to leave a service.
- If I know something about the decision I am being asked to make, it can help me to be involved
- Making decisions can sometimes be very difficult.

What you said about keeping active and being helpful

- “I like to work... somit to move, not just talk” (Jim, living with dementia).
- “He feels useful again...being out in the fresh air and doing physical work, like you’re actually working. Its like its still a job, he’s still at work”(Sheryl, Andy’s care partner).
“That’s right, feel like I’m working” (Andy, living with dementia).
- We like being helpful however we can
- “Its somit to do and I enjoy it” (Brian, living with dementia)

The type of support that helps people with dementia to be involved at Beetle Bank Social Farm



What we found out about the type of support you want

- Family care partners rephrased questions in a way that helped their relative with dementia to understand the question better.
- Keeping sentences short and simple can help: “You only want one [short sentence] because all that blah blah blah [is confusing]” (Jim, living with dementia)
- Ask us nicely and offer us choices.
- Talking about things from my past and relating it to what is happening now helps me to be involved. It is easier for me to talk about the past sometimes.
- Help us to do the things we enjoy, for example, like being outside and feeding the animals.

Other things we found out about what helps to be involved at the farm

- We like having company and people around us.
- People with dementia can use metaphors to talk about their experiences of dementia. Understanding metaphors can help staff know how to support them.

How well has Beetle Bank Social Farm been supporting its members to be involved before the evaluation?



Things the farm service seem to have been doing well

- Providing lots of opportunities to be involved in the running of the farm
- Written information has been helpful supporting people with dementia to be involved in meetings and to give feedback
- Setting goals has been helpful such as feeding the animals in the morning and doing other things in the afternoon.
- Making decision together has worked well, such as deciding what to spend grants on and other things.
- The pace of the day is helpful for keeping people with dementia involved and useful

Things the farm service could be doing better on

- Being more flexible during meetings and responding to topics as they come up in conversation.
- Improving written information as recommended by other groups of people living with dementia who have worked on this.
- Being careful not to treat the group as incapable of doing things when they don't need it. For example, staff suggested that the farm service buys extra waterproof clothing for wet weather. This was not appreciated by group members:
"Don't you see that's babyish. We don't need that. We know when we want to go out. Even with dementia we know what we're doing" (Jim, living with dementia).
"We come with us. We know what we're doing" (Andy, living with dementia).

Recommendations from the evaluation on involving people with dementia at Beetle Bank Social Farm



The following recommendations may help improve how people with dementia are involved at Beetle Bank Social Farm.

The recommendations below are a combination of what we found out during the evaluation. The recommendations below also include what researchers have found out to be helpful when involving people with dementia

- Physical work and being active are things we need to maintain.
- Helping the farmer by asking her what needs doing on each day we are there.
- Being enabled to try new things and have a go.
- Finding ways to help people with dementia to feel productive and useful.
- Staff and volunteers helping to simplify their sentences and make them easier to understand.
- Staff and volunteers rephrasing and putting things into context for people with dementia attending the farm.

Thank you for helping evaluate how much people with dementia are involved at Beetle Bank Social Farm



Contact details

Please contact Justin Mazzotta for any enquiries relating to the evaluation.

Telephone: 07932 420 726

Email address: beetlebanksocialfarm@gmail.com