



# Kerry Social Farming Newsletter

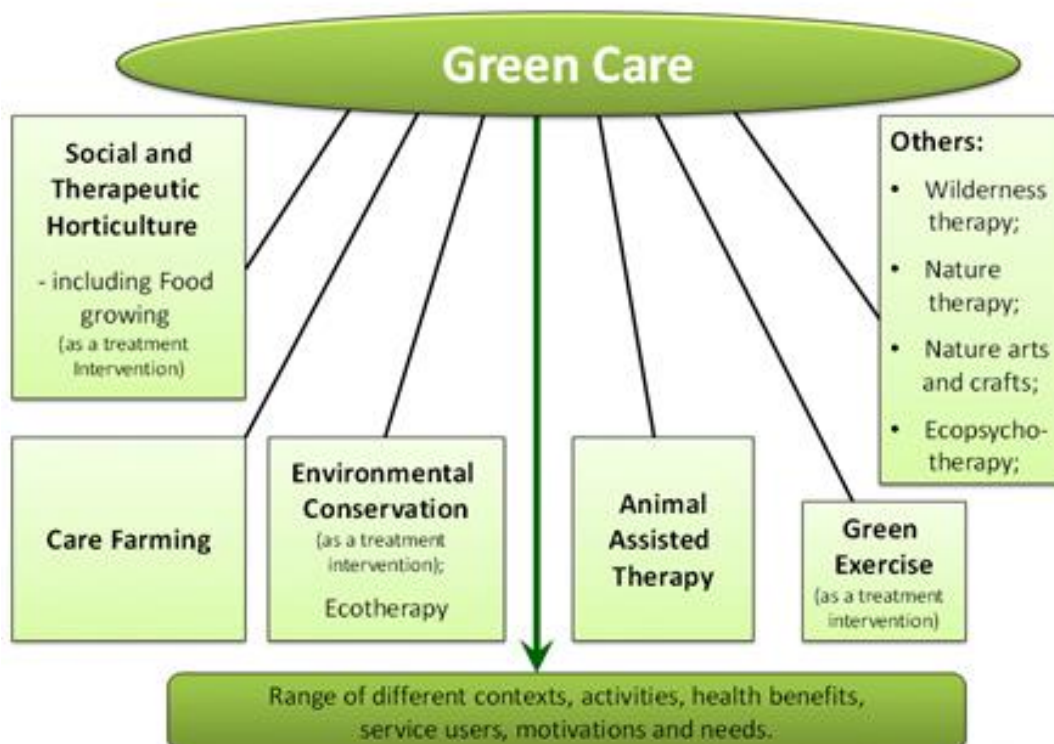
9<sup>th</sup> Edition January 2021

## Wishing everyone a Happy and Heathy New Year and all the best for 2021

Welcome to our first Newsletter of the year. We hope you all had a safe and peaceful Christmas and we look forward to better days ahead. Although social farming activity is on hold for the moment, there is still lots happening in Kerry Social Farming. Students on UCC Practice Support in Social Farming course continue their studies and we have news of other interesting courses you might like to avail of from home. We find out about social farming on Gortbrack Farm, Ballyseedy, near Tralee and how Bryan, Kevin and Tomás have been working on many activities with host farmer Ian. We hope they, and all our participants, will be back safely soon and thanks to Geraldine Egan, St. John of God for the article and photographs. There's also news about new initiatives and resources on how to keep well in these difficult times.

## Green Care

This spring KSF hope to promote a project as part of a green care initiative. Green Care refers to structured programmes that take place on our farms and their natural surroundings and recognise the instinctive connection between farm and animal care, and the nature environment on health and wellbeing for us all.



Source: Adapted from Hine et al., 2008; Bragg et al., 2013 and Bragg 2014

## Spring into Action!

Our days are getting longer and daffodils and snow drops are starting to peep up now. Our farms are starting to wake up from their winter slumbers. New born lambs and calves are making their debut around our all our farms at this time. We can feel that Spring is just around the corner.

### Bird and Bat Nesting Boxes



We have 80 bird and bat box to be distributed on our farms before nesting season begins this spring. These boxes have been made by Tralee Mens' Shed over the winter months. They are exceptionally well made and a lot of work went in making of the boxes. It will be great to monitor the use of these nesting boxes throughout the year and report back later in the autumn.

If any host farmer feels they will have good locations (tall trees, sheds, barns) you can let Evelyn or Rena know and will get these boxes out to your farms. As there are only 80 boxes at present it will be on a first come, first served basis so do let us know ASAP, thank you.



## St. Brigid's crosses

St. Brigid's crosses are associated with Brigid of Kildare, one of the patron saints of Ireland. The crosses are traditionally made in Ireland on St Brigid's feast day, 1<sup>st</sup> February, which was formerly celebrated as a pagan festival (Imbolc) marking the beginning of Spring. Many rituals are associated with the making of the crosses. Traditionally they were set over doorways and windows to protect the home from any kind of harm. There are lots of videos online showing you how to make them and it could be a fun activity at this time.



## NOTS and Skillsnet online course

**A great on-line course that people might enjoy and benefit from...Starting soon.**

### **Growing in Polytunnels 2021**



Following on from the incredible success of our inaugural Growing in Polytunnels course in 2020, Klaus Laitenberger is back with a more in-depth, “next step” course that covers more material over a longer growing season. As the pandemic gave us little time to prepare in 2020, this year’s course will follow an accurate meticulous growing season pattern, and will include additional material around growing your business, selling to customers and wholesalers, and much more. Growing in Polytunnels 2021 will allow you to grow in real time along with the tutorials and Q&A sessions.

The course will be a minimum of **14 ALL NEW tutorial videos**, with Video 1 being released on Wednesday February 10th. **The course will also include live, interactive Q&A sessions each week with Klaus Laitenberger** focusing on the topics of the videos, and answering the burning questions of our participants. Link for website: <https://nots.ie/courses/growing-in-polytunnels-2021/>

- **Start Date:** Wednesday February 10th 2021
- **Format:** 14 Video Tutorials + Live & Interactive Q&A Sessions
- **Cost: NOTS Funded Rate:** €50

Note: Rena attended this online course last year and found it very helpful.

## The Kerry ETB Community Education Programme

Courses are aimed at adults in Kerry who are living alone, adults who have underlining health issues that have resulted in them cocooning and adults who are caring for a vulnerable adult or child.

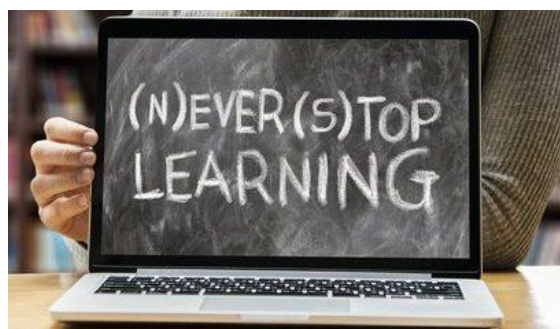
**All courses are free of charge to these groups. Register your interest on [www.fetchcourses.ie](http://www.fetchcourses.ie) using relevant course codes below.**

Many of the courses have been filled but some places are available on the following courses:

- Home gardening tips online, course code: 324017
- Beauty and Skin Care, course code: 324920
- Creative Writing, course code 324919
- Sugar free living, course code: 324947

For further information please email Michelle Anne,  
[mhoulihan@kerryetb.ie](mailto:mhoulihan@kerryetb.ie) | 087 2486070

Or Tracy Corridon,  
[tcorridon@kerryetb.ie](mailto:tcorridon@kerryetb.ie) | 086 0753059



## Looking after wellbeing during these challenging times

Unfortunately social farming along with many of our usual daily roles and routines are not available to us at the moment. Until such time as we are all able to engage in our meaningful occupations and activities again, we encourage you to look after yourself and those around you.

Mental Health Ireland have many suggestions for wellbeing during these challenging times, these include minding your mental health and family wellbeing. The poster below is taken from this website and there are many more similar resources. The link for this website is:

<https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/>

The HSE website also has a dedicated section titled; minding your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the link;

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>





# MINDING OUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING A NEW "LOCKDOWN"

For many of us, this "lockdown" feels different. Our energy levels are lower than in March. We are adapting again. Taking time and being kind to ourselves will help us recharge.

## Reflecting on the 4 As can help us to recharge



Right now, we might feel angry, confused, worried, insecure, unsafe. We might have racing thoughts, difficulty focussing, feel tired, drained, & weary. These are all natural responses to uncertain times. Awareness is taking time to tune in with kindness to our thoughts, feelings & actions. Pay attention to your breathing and how you feel in your mind & body.

**AWARENESS**



Acknowledging what comes up for us is an opportunity to express and validate how we feel and what we're thinking. We might talk to a friend, write it in a journal, paint, draw, dance, cry, have a nap, go with it, listen to others who are going through similar experiences on podcasts, radio, or through music. Give ourselves permission to say, 'Yes, this is hard'.

**ACKNOWLEDGE**



Acceptance is an opportunity to recognise what is within our control and what is outside of our control. We can then redirect our energy into what we can control. For example, we can choose to put our energy into nurturing ourselves and limiting our exposure to news and social media. This process involves patience, willingness, openness and time.

**ACCEPTANCE**



Action is about taking what we have learned and acting on it. This might look like reaching out to create a support bubble, asking for the help you need, setting boundaries for your life/work balance, going for a walk, adding healthy food options to your shopping list, or revisiting online social activities like quiz nights. There will be days where this looks like sitting on the couch. We can only walk the mile we're in. Do what works for you.

**ACTION**



## Gortbrack Organic Farm, Tralee

Kevin Mc Namara , Bryan O Shea and Tomás Fitzmaurice attend Gortbrack social farm every Thursday prior to Covid 19. They have been attending Gortbrack since 2019. The host farmer Ian Mc Gregor always greeted us with a smile. On wet days there is always work to be done in the tunnels. It is always a pleasure to attend the farm as there is always a different variety of tasks such as sowing seeds, planting bulbs, harvesting Kinoa etc. Acorn staff and participants are looking forward to attending Gortbrack farm soon.



The participants enjoy a variety of tasks such as digging up potatoes, planting seeds, picking raspberries , raking leaves, feeding the donkeys etc. Tomás enjoys digging up potatoes and planting seeds. Tomás has worked to his full potential on the farm.



Kevin enjoys feeding the donkeys Maisy and George and enjoyed digging up soil. Kevin enjoys a variety of tasks , it gives him a real sense of purpose.

Bryan O'Shea joined the farm in September 2020. Bryan enjoys feeding the donkeys Maisy and George and raking up leaves. Bryan is delighted to be placed on the farm. Bryan can't wait to attend the farm again soon.

Bryan, Kevin and Tomás miss the social interaction and the work on farm. They are looking forward to meet up with Ian again soon and working on the farm.





We hoped you enjoyed this first newsletter of 2021 and we look forward to sharing many more of your stories and pictures with you all.

We welcome your input into this newsletter, if you would like to write or share something please get in touch with us; Rena, [renablake@newkd.ie](mailto:renablake@newkd.ie) Evelyn, [eoconnell@skdp.net](mailto:eoconnell@skdp.net) and Julie [jbrosnan@skdp.net](mailto:jbrosnan@skdp.net) .

Visit our website [www.kerrysocialfarming.ie](http://www.kerrysocialfarming.ie), follow us on Twitter @KerrySocialFarm or find us on Facebook!



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

