

# Enterprising Camphill

*A holistic approach to care...*

**C**amphill has always been a pioneering social enterprise. It was born near Aberdeen almost 70 years ago out of the belief that everyone has the capacity and unalienable right to develop the social, intellectual and manual skills necessary to enjoy a life that is as independent as his or her abilities will allow.

Today, the 18 Camphill Communities across Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales make provision for children and adults with learning disabilities and other special needs. From the moment a person arrives in a Camphill Community, activity begins to help him or her to gain the experience and develop the confidence and skills necessary to cope with and contribute towards life both inside and outside of Camphill – to function comfortably in an inclusive wider society. Whilst levels of ability vary a great deal, our motivation is to encourage all individuals to take responsibility for their lives and for the environment around them to the best of their ability, and to play an active part in their Communities.

Around 700 Camphill Community members with special needs in the devolved parts of the UK, ranging in age from three years to late old age, currently benefit from this approach, which is the basis of the services that are provided against fee payments and grants, mostly from public authorities. These sources of funding tend not always to provide entirely for the necessary development of services and facilities, so some Camphill places augment that income by diversifying into the production and sale of a range of crafts, dairy products, organic produce and gardening materials.



Cutting edge work in organic land use and on the use of renewable energy sources feature strongly in some Communities. Amongst the better known Camphill products and developmental projects are Loch Arthur Community's deli cheeses (Dumfriesshire), Tiphereth's composting project (Edinburgh), Clanabogan's diverse, developmental use of renewables, in conjunction with the public authorities (Omagh), manufacture of wood products, including toys, and the delivery of therapies (most places). At Coleg Elidyr in Carmarthenshire, further education facilities are provided alongside an innovative trainee scheme for 18 to 25 year olds with special needs. Some Camphill initiatives, like the organic cafes and bakeries at Holywood (County Down) and Newton Dee (Aberdeen), and the café and extensive craft-making activities at Llangadog (Carmarthenshire), have been established as social enterprise ventures and have become deeply integrated in their local settings.

Although some of those social enterprise projects can generate some income, they are undertaken largely for therapeutic purposes and, as such, sit very comfortably within the ethos of Camphill. The Communities across Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales work very closely with their respective government agencies and

regulatory authorities to ensure Best Practice in providing the high quality care and support that is delivered within the Camphill context of social therapy – a holistic approach to care, which includes the provision of training and meaningful work opportunities for people with a disability.

Fundamental to the principles on which the movement was founded, Camphill values all individuals equally, regardless of ability, and strives to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents and skills to their fullest potential. This commitment helps the individual to lead a fulfilled and dignified life, and ensures that his or her contribution is recognised. By establishing work opportunities, frequently in Community settings, adults with special needs can have meaningful work and become more fully integrated in wider society, as well as in their own Camphill Communities.

The information given in this article is intended to be introductory only. Fuller information about the places named and all other Camphill places is accessible at [www.glencraig.org.uk](http://www.glencraig.org.uk) (Northern Ireland); [www.camphillscotland.org.uk](http://www.camphillscotland.org.uk) (Scotland) and [www.camphill.org.uk](http://www.camphill.org.uk) (Wales).

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