



# RURAL ACCESS TO SERVICES INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK FOR YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

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Supported by:



Authors: Rob Hindle & Alison McLean  
Checked: Michael Lough 28/03/07

## Executive Summary

Fair access to health and social care, education and training, banking, shops and cultural facilities is recognised as an essential part of every day life in the UK. The fact is that some people enjoy better levels of access than others. The reasons for this are complex but relate to the types of place that people live, the way that they live and very often the ability of people to travel to the surgery, school or shop.

The things that stop people getting fair access to services begin with the individual; how far away is he / she from the place that delivers the service, how easy it is for him / her to cover that distance, does it rely upon a bike, a car or a bus? Will the individual be able to get to the service outlet at a time when the service is available? These issues are the same for everybody, regardless of whether they live in the city or in the country, in a market town or a remote hamlet.

Where an individual lives **does** make a difference to their ability to secure fair access to services however; not because their needs are any different necessarily, but because of the distances involved, the relative availability of public transport and the limited choice of alternatives in more rural and sparsely populated areas.

### Quality of Life

It is not just the **sort** of place that you live in that dictates how good access to services will be. After all, everybody that lives in a small village theoretically experiences the same level of access to the nearest GP's surgery - it is a similar distance away, its opening hours are constant, the bus service that connects the village and the market town is the same. What matters is not the level of access experienced, but the *quality* of that experience.

This quality is best measured in terms of the impact that accessing the service has on the individuals quality of life; what impact will making the journey have, what impact will failure to access the service have? Those denied access, and those for whom it represents a major physical, mental or financial challenge should be considered to be disadvantaged, especially in comparison to those able to exercise personal choice in the manner and place that they enjoy access (to the same services).

### How to Improve Accessibility

Evidence shows that communities and individuals across rural areas of Yorkshire & Humber often suffer from poor access to basic services, and can be inherently disadvantaged by the way in which publicly funded services are delivered. Improving access to services for rural areas is considered to be a public policy issue at national, regional and local level. Whilst there is consistent recognition of rural service inequity as a strategic issue and priority, the subsequent policy response has been predominantly focused through local accessibility planning and has tended to be 'transport centric'. No attempt is made within the strategies or documents to develop a consistent approach to improving access via non-transport solutions or through local determination.

Solutions to improve access to services for rural communities need to be determined at **local** level, where they can address local characteristics and target hard to reach service consumers. This Framework is a regional document; it cannot possibly cover the myriad range of issues and priorities relevant to the diversity of rural communities in Yorkshire and the Humber. Indeed, it would not be appropriate for a regional document to recommend or promote solutions to access to service challenges; these are specific to local situations and must be addressed accordingly.

What the Framework can do however, is to help stakeholders and practitioners operating at all levels of geography (regional, sub-regional, district and local) better understand issues around access to services. The intention therefore is that this Framework will act as a 'bridge' between regional, sub-regional and local levels and in so doing will support all those engaged in improving access to services for the region's rural communities.

The Framework offers a new insight into issues around accessibility, reaches conclusions and raises key policy actions for consideration within the region. These are summarised below:

#### **Those Suffering Poor Accessibility to Services are Socially Excluded**

- The majority of people living in rural areas are capable, and willing to make choices which allow them to access services in a manner acceptable to them. Those who cannot are placed at a serious disadvantage and suffer from social exclusion.
- Access disadvantage affects some rural residents as individuals (particularly those with limited personal mobility i.e. older people, younger people, people with disabilities or health issues, people on low incomes, migrant workers) , but does **not** affect all those who live in rural communities

#### **Rural Social Exclusion is Hidden**

- The ability for many rural households to mitigate relatively poor levels of access to services tends to mask the way that the 'fairness' of access to services across rural areas is assessed by service delivery planners at local level. The result is that the needs of those who rely on local access to maintain their quality of life are ignored.

#### **Improving Access to Service Issues is the Responsibility of Mainstream Service Deliverers**

- In order to secure investment to improve access to services in rural areas, local practitioners will need to work within the 'mainstream' service delivery continuum; this means working within and through the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership.
- Opportunities may arise to leverage short-term 'regeneration' funding to pilot innovative solutions and to improve evidence and understanding and so influence service planning within the LAA. These opportunities are likely to be increasingly limited, and cannot be relied upon to maintain, or more accurately to sustain, rural service delivery.

#### **Addressing Rural Social Exclusion will require the use of Local Service Standards**

- In order to be effective, service standards need to be developed at a local level, and to take into account the particular characteristics of the service user, service provider and spatial context in which service delivery takes place. It is important for service deliverers to understand the issues and characteristics influencing access to services at the appropriate locality, and so factor them in to service planning. The best way to do this is via effective engagement with service consumers at the appropriate local level.

#### **Getting the Right Solution**

The Framework then goes on to develop an approach towards building, assessing or reviewing an access solution. This approach can be applied by any organisation, (i.e. local authority, service deliverer or community organisation), and can be used for both transport and non-transport solutions. It is not prescriptive, and does not seek to advise whether it will be more appropriate to move the 'service to the people' or the 'people to the service'. Rather the approach allows the user to determine how best to address a specific access challenge based upon all relevant circumstances.

This approach has been developed into a 7 step Practitioners Guide, a stand alone document available separately. In a sense, the Framework is the technical appendix to the Guide, but it is also a policy document, applicable at Regional, Sub-Regional and Local Level.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

Rural Innovation has been commissioned by a Steering Group comprising of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly, Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Network of Rural Community Councils, Action for Market Towns, Bradford MBC (Rural Services Beacon Council), North Yorkshire County Council and the Humber Rural Delivery Pathfinder to develop a Rural Access to Services Framework for the region.

The objective is to create a strategic 'Intervention Framework' (and related Guide for Practitioners) to address the current level of service inequity experienced by rural communities across the region. This work will build on the successful Strategic Rural Transport Framework (SRTF) published in November 2005, and address the 'other side of the coin', looking at non-transport access solutions.

Moving people to the service is only one way of offering accessibility; as recognised by the Sustainability Appraisal of the Region's Rural Delivery Framework:

*'Accessibility needs to encompass all modes, both physical and virtual; it is not just about transport but about linking services to people'*

For many residents of rural areas, especially those with higher incomes and access to a car, the inconvenience of having to travel to access the services they need are more than outweighed by the attractions of living in a beautiful area, with low levels of crime and a strong community spirit.

For those on low incomes however, and especially those without access to private transport, inability to access services has a significantly detrimental effect on their quality of life and is a key cause of social exclusion. Service equity is therefore an important contributor to social justice, but it is also an issue of sustainability. That is to say, the disparity of the impact of service inequity on different groups has implications for the individuals affected but *also* has implications for the future sustainability of rural communities. Besides the environmental costs of increased car use, declining rural services will make it more difficult for those on low incomes, and especially young people to live in rural areas and so exacerbate the challenge that many rural communities face to offer equity of choice and opportunity for all, both now and in the future.

The unit cost of provision of services in rural areas is significantly higher than in more populous areas, and as recent research undertaken by SPARSE<sup>1</sup> proves, increases as population density reduces. There are now already fewer viable service outlets in rural areas compared with a few years ago, and this exclusion is being compounded by their increased centralisation.

This gap in the cost (and ease) of delivering services to rural and urban, accessible rural and remote rural, metropolitan and coastal fringe communities is at the heart of the challenge faced by policy makers, service deliverers and consumers.

### **Purpose of the Rural Access to Services Intervention Framework**

The primary objective of this work is to create an 'Intervention Framework' to address the current level of service inequity experienced by rural communities across the region. The Framework is designed to provide an evidence based and 'future proofed' strategic context. It examines the challenges of improving access to services for rural residents, offering a clear and common understanding of issues and solutions and so promoting improved co-ordination by 'mainstream' delivery organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sparsity Partnership of Local Authorities Delivering Rural Services

The purpose of the Framework in operational terms can be summarised as follows:

- To establish a **common understanding** of rural accessibility issues that is driven by a need to address social exclusion.
- To provide a common approach to addressing rural accessibility at a **local level**.
- To enable organisations to identify **situation-specific solutions**.
- To improve the **coordination** of solutions across geographical (physical and administrative) and thematic (service delivery) boundaries.
- Over time, to provide a structure to collect and share good practice - a **regional resource for finding the best local solution**.

It is also important to be clear about what the Framework is not: specifically, it is **not** a regional blueprint; or a "one size fits all" solution; or a list of additional regionally-defined targets.

### Practitioner Guide

In addition to the overarching Intervention Framework, the 'companion' Practitioner Guide is intended to offer more accessible, simple and practical advice to those planning and implementing access to service related interventions at sub-regional and local level. It is anticipated that the guide will bring together transport and non-transport interventions and so support a common and integrated approach to improved accessibility.

If adopted by practitioners and stakeholders, the Framework and Guidance Notes can be used in a variety of different ways:

- For local organisations, the use of the Framework and Guidance Notes will provide a route into the complicated issue of access to services, and generate evidence about the scope of potential interventions. It will also provide a checklist to help delivery partners to identify local priorities and effective solutions.
- For regional organisations, they will provide a means of checking that funding proposals have been specified in the light of operating experience and over time this ought to improve the effectiveness of interventions.
- At a regional and sub-regional scale they should provide a more consistent basis for identifying - for the purposes of strategy development and resource prioritisation - the key dimensions of access related social exclusion in rural areas and so inform policy development.

This Framework acts as a 'sister' document to the Strategic Rural Transport Framework, and as background, evidential and technical support to *'Getting the right solution - A practitioner's guide to improving access to services for rural communities'*.

The Framework will be a working document at regional level, and so will contribute to reviews and refresh of Regional Spatial, Transport, Housing, Rural Delivery and Sustainable Development Strategies.

### Framework Structure

The Framework is set out in six main sections, and mirrors the structure of the Strategic Rural Transport Framework.

**Section One** considers the strategic public policy context around rural access to services at national, regional and local levels. It offers conclusions on the strategic context and sets out the need for a regional Framework.

**Section Two** considers the existing structure and resources within the region through which interventions to improve access to services are channelled.

**Section Three** identifies issues around service accessibility for rural communities and sets out the resulting approach of the Framework. The section considers wider research and analysis developed by the authors and by other studies and applies its conclusions to the Framework.

**Section Four** considers the issues affecting the development of solutions to improve access to services for rural residents from a regional perspective; it offers analysis leading to, and supporting the conclusion that effective solutions must be developed at local level to address local characteristics.

**Section Five** seeks to offer value for stakeholders at a regional and local level through a common approach towards local determination of (appropriate non-transport) access solutions. This section includes analysis on the 'access characteristics' within the region and introduces the companion Practitioner Guide.

**Section Six** follows the example of the Strategic Rural Transport Framework and offers advice on the use of Sustainability Appraisals.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Project Team would like to acknowledge the support and input of members of the Steering Group (set out below) and those in the sub-regions who engaged with and helped to develop the Framework and Guidance Notes during the course of the study. In particular we would like to thank Yorkshire Rural Community Council for setting up and facilitating sub-regional workshops in North Yorkshire and South Yorkshire and all those who submitted practice examples.

Action for Market Towns  
City of Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council  
Humber Rural Delivery Pathfinder  
JMP Consultants  
North Yorkshire County Council  
The Regional Network of Rural Community Councils  
Yorkshire Forward  
Yorkshire & Humber Regional Assembly

## SECTION ONE - NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

### 1.1 National Policy Context

Government is committed<sup>2</sup> to providing *modern and efficient public services driven by the needs and choices of the public*. Following up on this commitment, the Local Government White Paper<sup>3</sup> seeks continued improvement in these public services and (consequently) in the quality of life of (our) communities. It builds on what is described<sup>4</sup> as a guiding principle that *no one should be disadvantaged because of where they live* and aims to give local people and communities more influence and power to improve their lives.

The challenge faced by many living in rural areas in securing equitable access to services is recognised throughout Government's rural policy. It was highlighted in the Rural Strategy 2004 and forms part of the key issues identified by Defra as a constraint to their strategic objective (2006) of achieving 'strong rural communities' and the Secretary of State's commitment to the Prime Minister<sup>5</sup> to 'develop a positive approach to "places" that works for rural communities'.

Defra has a responsibility to represent the interests of rural service users across Government, and maintains 'Rural Services Standards' in an attempt to highlight the level of services that rural residents can expect to receive.

Defra's responsibility to address rural disadvantage is clearly set out in a speech given by Mr Gardiner soon after the appointment of Defra's new ministerial team in June 2006.

*The Government as a whole is working to tackle disadvantage to promote equality of opportunity. This means recognising the differences within and between rural areas as well as the differences between rural and urban. And we need to recognise the common ground. In this context, Defra needs to be an active, influencing department ensuring that mainstream delivery meets rural needs - mainstreaming rural within government.*

*Closing statement from speech by Barry Gardiner MP on "A New Rural Agenda: Moving in from the Margins" at the IPPR North conference, London - 8 June 2006*

It is clear therefore that the objective to improve access to services for rural residents remains a national policy objective for Government.

### 1.2 Regional Policy Context

#### 1.2.1 Mainstream Policy

Advancing Together - the Yorkshire and Humber region's strategic framework document - sets out a vision of partners helping create a 'world class and international region where the economic, environmental and social well being of all our region and its people advances rapidly and sustainably'.

The Regional Spatial Strategy aims to '*improve access to services in rural areas by improving transport provision and innovative service provision.*' It is interesting to note however that the RSS places this objective within the Regional Transport Strategy. In so doing it assumes a transport led approach to improving access to services that is repeated across Local Transport Plans and their related Accessibility Strategies.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Releasing the resources to meet the challenges ahead: value for money in the 2007 CSR'

<sup>3</sup> Strong and Prosperous Communities, DCLG, October 2006

<sup>4</sup> Para 2.6

<sup>5</sup> David Miliband's letter to Tony Blair, July 2006

The primary objectives for the Regional Transport Strategy are to integrate transport and land use planning to support regeneration and economic growth, to support sustainable development, to reduce the need to travel especially by car, to reduce the impact of traffic on the environment and to improve access to **opportunities**. It is reasonable to assume that the use of the word opportunities includes public services.

It is interesting to note however that the criteria used to determine Transport Priorities for the Region<sup>6</sup> do not appear to take account of improving access to services (either for rural or urban service consumers).

The Regional Economic Strategy also seeks to improve access to services for rural residents; RES objective 6 (Ciii) is key to accessibility issues and investment in rural areas for both transport and non-transport solutions. The 'creating better places priority' within the Regional Housing Strategy recognises the link between successful communities and access to services (*Rural Communities - where investment in affordable housing will maintain mixed and successful communities by meeting local needs and safeguarding services*)

### 1.2.2 Rural Policy

The Regional Rural Delivery Framework for Yorkshire and the Humber (2006) identifies the importance of the availability of key public and private services to rural communities in Priorities Five and Six.

- Priority Five: Access to services - ensure that rural communities are characterised by high levels of inclusion and equitable access to quality services that recognise demographic trends.
- Priority Six: Rural transport - understand and addresses transport needs in rural areas through private, public and voluntary sector provision, to promote rural regeneration and tackle social exclusion.

Between them these priorities seek to ensure equitable access to services (so securing high levels of social inclusion) and work towards 'benchmarked standards of accessibility'.

Evidence<sup>7</sup> suggests that many rural services are on the decline and that across the region there are marked differences in accessibility, with ease of access decreasing as the population becomes sparser.

Tackling this decline is accepted within regional policy as vital to the sustainability of rural communities across the Yorkshire and Humber region. Over 22% of the region's population lives in rural districts, and over three-quarters of the land area is rural. Countryside issues and the quality of life for rural communities are therefore prominent in taking forward the development of the region.

There is evidence of worsening isolation and social exclusion for rural people in the region, particularly those who do not have access to private transport, the elderly, young and those caring for the very young, and those suffering from poverty and the impact of low pay.

### 1.3 Local Policy Context

At a local level (i.e. sub-regional and district), policy statements and objectives relating to access to services can be found within Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements and Second Local Transport Plan Accessibility Strategies.

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<sup>6</sup> Identifying regional transport priorities for Yorkshire and the Humber and the evidence base in support of these priorities; JMP for Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, 2006

<sup>7</sup> Regional Rural Evidence Base

Analysis of these documents across the region shows that poor access to rural services, or the intent to improve access to services for rural residents, is a priority, or at least 'on the agenda' for the majority of districts across the region.

Statements around accessing services in these documents include:

*Good access to jobs, services and facilities is crucial for (our) wellbeing and for the delivery of prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities.*

*Accessibility is being able to access those services, which are essential to social inclusion (education and training, jobs, healthcare, shops and leisure), where and when you need to at a price you can afford.*

The documents consistently identify rural areas as a priority for improving access to services, and identify target and vulnerable groups such as the elderly, those caring for pre-school age children and those with limited personal mobility.

The response to improve access is however dominated by transport led solutions. No attempt is made within the strategies or documents to develop a consistent approach to improving access via non-transport solutions or through local determination.

These approaches focus on:

- Increasing the proportion of households and businesses within an 'acceptable' proximity of key service outlets by the use of accessibility criteria within spatial planning
- Improved provision of public transport solutions
- Movement of people to fixed service points

#### 1.4 Need for the Framework - Providing a 'Bridge' from Regional to Local Level

Public sector response to improving access to services in rural areas has not been **exclusively** transport focused; there are examples of innovative non-transport solutions at local level across the region (for example the Police and Community Access Points pioneered in Bradford MBC, outreach services delivered in and in partnership with Extended Schools, community buildings and village halls, and co-location of services).

The (limited) use of non-transport solutions tends to be championed at a very local level, as an extra intervention in response to a specific issue or opportunity. There appears to be little consistent intent within the actions and outputs defined within the mainstream route for strategic service planning, Local Area Agreements and Local Transport Plans, to invest in non-transport led solutions to improve access for rural residents.

The Framework is a regional document, which seeks to improve awareness and understanding of access to service issues and priorities as they affect rural communities across the region. A regional document cannot possibly cover the myriad range of issues and priorities relevant to the huge range and diversity of rural communities in Yorkshire and the Humber. It is also not appropriate for a regional document to seek to recommend or promote solutions to access to service challenges; these are specific to local situations and must be addressed accordingly.

What the Framework can do is to help stakeholders and practitioners operating at all levels of geography (regional, sub-regional, district and local) better understand issues around access to services, and offer a common approach to defining appropriate (non-transport) access to services responses and solutions.

The intention therefore is that this Framework will act as a 'bridge' between regional, sub-regional and local levels and in so doing will support all those engaged in improving access to services for the region's rural communities.

### Section One Conclusion

Improving access to services for rural areas is considered to be a public policy issue at national, regional and local level. Whilst there is consistent recognition of rural service inequity as a strategic issue and priority, the subsequent policy response has been predominantly focused through local accessibility planning and has tended to be 'transport centric'. Solutions to improve access to services for rural communities need to be determined at local level, where they can address local characteristics and target hard to reach service consumers.

## 2. RURAL DELIVERY IN YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER

This section of the report considers the way that rural services are planned and delivered across the region, and the implications that this has for the development of non-transport access solutions at regional, sub-regional and local level.

### 2.1 Making Best Use of Existing Delivery Mechanisms

#### 2.1.1 Planning Rural Service Delivery

Public service delivery in rural areas is the responsibility of a range of statutory organisations, government agencies and related organisations. The relationship between Government and service deliverer is governed by a 'Tasking Framework'. This 'deal' is implemented through use of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and monitored via Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Audit Commission reports.

Recently the policy directive from Government has been to bring together service providers (from the statutory and voluntary sectors) at local level through Local Area Agreements. These generate a partnership approach between service providers (including Local Authorities), bringing a range of publicly funded services together under thematic headings (Safer & Stronger Communities, Children's and Young People's Services, Older People and Healthy Communities, Economy and Enterprise) with the intention that service providers will 'pool' their objectives and collaborate to ensure integrated and joined up service delivery.

Service providers are expected by Government to take account of the needs and requirements of their 'customers', the service users. The approach from central Government is to maximise choice and wherever possible to address service users individual needs.

Increasingly Local Area Agreements are intended to operate as an enabling process, with service delivery and publicly funded interventions aligned to, and targeted by the objectives and priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategies developed by Local Strategic Partnerships.

The continuum for planning and delivery of public services is therefore theoretically as follows:

- Government Policy Objectives (via legislation and White Papers)
- Public Service Agreement, Tasking Framework and budget defined by Department of State
- Service deliverer / commissioner (i.e. RDA) receives tasking and budget (and may commission others in public and voluntary sectors to deliver)
- Regional Policy Context (Transport, Housing, Sustainable Development, Economic , Rural)
- Local Area Agreement (LAA) led by the appropriate Local Authority, engages Service Deliverers and wider stakeholders in relevant 'thematic blocks'
- Sustainable Community Strategy developed by Local Strategic Partners influences the development of outcomes and targeting in the LAA

However, lessons from research<sup>8</sup> and emerging conclusions from Defra's Rural Delivery Pathfinders are that the impact of Local Area Agreements in terms of improving the integration of service planning and delivery, and their ability to improve access to services for rural communities is thus far fairly limited.

For example, the Lancashire Rural Delivery Pathfinder has reported as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> Local Context Testing in the North West, Rural Innovation for GONW, 2006

*'The majority of delivery activity still takes place within 'silos' which invariably do not connect with other service functions. These silos start with Departments of State and are perpetuated by individual Public Service Agreements and 'top down' Tasking Frameworks. This structure is then reflected at regional and sub-regional level (and within Local Government). This means that when service providers are brought together (within an LAA for instance) instead of working collectively to create an integrated set of solutions they bring with them existing PSA driven imperatives so maintaining the siloed approach.'*

In Yorkshire and the Humber, strategic service planning is structured within local authority administrative boundaries. Local Area Agreements are in place, or in development for implementation in April 2007 in:

The Humber: East Riding, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire

South Yorkshire: Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield

West Yorkshire: Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield

York and North Yorkshire: City of York and North Yorkshire

Sustainable Community Strategies and Second Local Transport Plans including Accessibility Strategies are produced at this 'district' level of geography<sup>9</sup>.

Issues around access to services for rural communities should be addressed through this strategic service planning structure. It has long been the case however that the 'base' level of service provision to rural communities is often supported or subsidised with short term grant funding, delivered through 'rural funding programmes'.

## 2.2 Modernising Rural Delivery

Public funds<sup>10</sup> to support rural communities in England have been available (in addition to mainstream public service delivery budgets) through a variety of routes in recent years.

Historically some of these funds have been used to support access to service solutions, both transport and non-transport. In the last couple of years there has been significant change in these funding regimes, with consolidation of Defra funding through Regional Development Agencies and Local Area Agreements.

In the future relatively limited additional 'rural' funding is likely to be available for intervention in rural access to services solutions. The existing Defra Rural Social and Community Programme runs until March 2008 and is fully committed. The 'PSA4' programme developed by Yorkshire Forward with the legacy funding from the Countryside Agency runs until March 2009 and may offer some opportunities for specific intervention during the latter stages of the programme. The new Rural Development Plan England includes access to services as an eligible measure with support being provided to the more remote rural communities through the LEADER community economic development approach.

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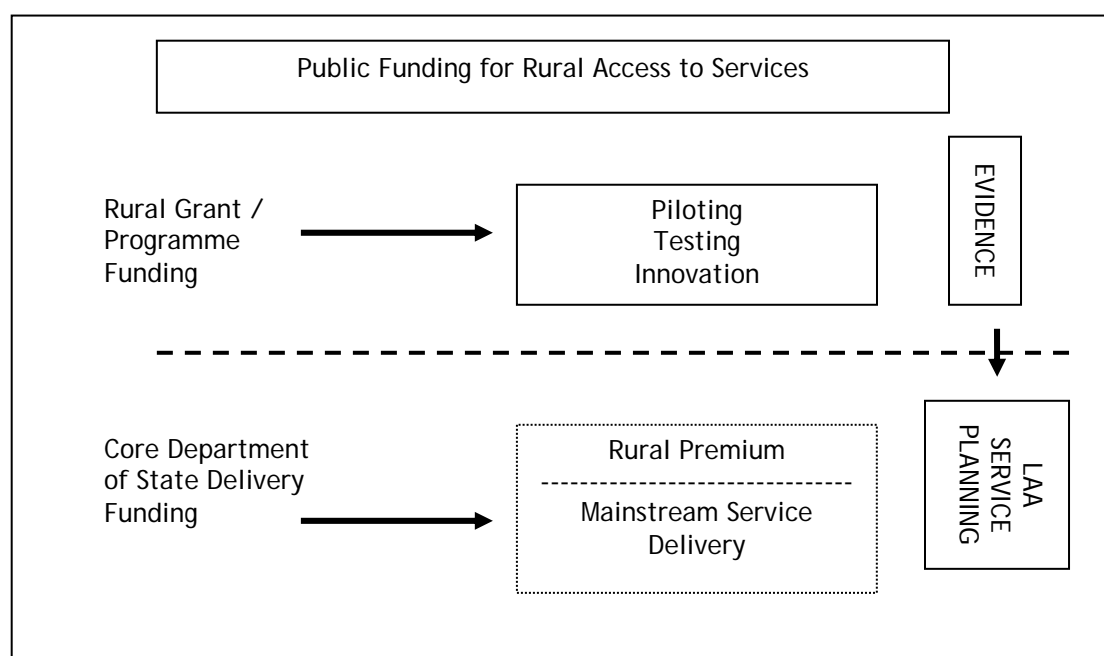
<sup>9</sup> In West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire, second Local Transport Plans have been produced at sub-regional level

<sup>10</sup> European Funding Programmes such as Objective One, Objective Two, Leader and Leader Plus; European funds channelled through Defra such as the England Regional Development Programme; National Government funds channelled to develop agencies and organisations such as the Single Regeneration Budget, RDA Single Pot and previously Countryside Agency funding

Evidence and experience tells us that too often grant funding has been used to 'prop up' rural services, thus excusing the mainstream service provider of the responsibility to deliver comprehensively in rural areas. In other instances solutions have been developed locally by communities, supported by voluntary and community organisations. This reliance on grant funded solutions has often resulted in a legacy of pilot initiatives, limited continuity of service and an inefficient focus on securing ongoing funding rather than meeting customer needs.

In the future access to dedicated 'rural' funding is likely to be limited. The transfer of responsibility for investment of monies routed through Defra to the Regional Development Agencies means that it is likely to be more difficult<sup>11</sup> to secure funding for access to service solutions. Practitioners must look to mainstream service providers to effectively address accessibility issues in rural communities. This does not mean that grant funding should no longer be used to support access solutions, but ideally this form of time limited funding should be used to develop and pilot innovation solutions which can then be used to improve an evidence base and to promote new approaches to mainstream service deliverers

The diagram included below seeks to illustrate this position.



### 2.3 Future Direction of Policy

Government is committed to local determination, increased choice in accessing public services and in addressing service needs of individuals.

The Department of Communities and Local Government's Strong & Prosperous Communities White Paper (and subsequent Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill) sets out a commitment to local determination and increased partnership working between service deliverers and consumers. It tells us that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are the forum which must take the lead on joining up a response to community needs<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> RDAs focus is on their Tasking Framework with the DTi which is looking for transformational activity to secure material economic outputs (new jobs, development of brownfield land, research and development etc)

<sup>12</sup> Through Sustainable Community Strategies; Local Area Agreements and Local Development Frameworks are key to delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Local Strategic Partnerships are currently constituted at both tiers of local government (district and county); the relationship between LSPs and rural communities will vary across the region, but only in very few instances will an LSP have an inherently rural focus.

It will therefore be important that those with an interest in improving access to services for rural communities understand how best to engage with the LSP, and how to promote the interests of rural communities within the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

#### Section Two Conclusions

In order to secure investment to improve access to services in rural areas, local practitioners will need to work within the 'mainstream' service delivery continuum; this means working within and through the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership.

Opportunities may arise to leverage short-term 'regeneration' funding to pilot innovative solutions and to improve evidence and understanding and so influence service planning within the LAA. These opportunities are likely to be increasingly limited, and cannot be relied upon to maintain, or more accurately to sustain, rural service delivery.

### 3. PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### 3.1 Access Issues and Challenges

It is clear from research, consultation with practitioners and local experience that the 'accessibility continuum' as a whole is incredibly complex; in reality the level of access required and enjoyed by different people in different communities is affected by any number of issues including:

- The resources & approach of service deliverers
- The location of service points
- The state of ICT infrastructure and capacity of both service providers and the local community to use it.
- Population density (Sparsity)
- The mobility of consumers (via private and public transport)
- The needs and demand profile of consumers
- The culture and capacity of the community
- The availability of additional (i.e. non-mainstream) interventions

Access to rural services is affected by much more than simply proximity to service outlets; rather it is affected by individual, physical, spatial, political, policy, financial and even cultural characteristics.

Demographics and social conditions are a key influence on the way in which rural residents demand, consume and access services. The work by Gloucester University on the Future of Rural Services<sup>13</sup> cites demography and prosperity as key drivers for change in the way that services are demanded; it highlights increasing levels of disposable income for many rural households, and a shift towards an older population profile as critical elements affecting this future. Defra are currently working with population projections (prepared by NOMIS based on current in-migration and population change) that show the proportion of residents over 65 years old reaching over 50% in the most rural districts by 2050. This has potentially massive implications for service demand and consequently on some service deliverers.

The manner in which people access services; and to a material extent the way in which they demand and prioritise services is also hugely influenced by their ability to move around; often defined as their mobility. Realistically for most residents of rural areas (other than those living centrally within well serviced market towns), mobility is delivered through access to a private vehicle.

What is becoming clear is that for many rural households this personal mobility allows them to make choices in how they access public services. Increasingly people from all areas are choosing to access services (i.e. doctors surgeries, shops, pharmacies, post offices) where they work or where they shop rather than in their local (and nearest) community. This trend is as apparent in rural as in urban residents.

The impact of this is that for many rural households, the location of services, and way in which they are delivered has little impact on their quality of life. They can and do exercise choice via personal mobility to mitigate poorer levels of access.

This position is not true however for those suffering disadvantage (households with on low incomes or with limited personal mobility for what-ever reason), or for those for whom local access is important (carers of young children and the ill, the elderly and infirm, the mentally ill).

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<sup>13</sup> Future of Services in Rural England - A Scenario for 2015 June 2005

Research<sup>14</sup> has shown that these groups are the most common users of services located within local communities (post offices, village halls, shops); for example research by ERM Ltd for Postwatch and the Commission for Rural Communities (2006) showed that rural post offices are used by older people (over 65), carers, those on low income and disabled people more than other groups, and that the incidence of use by this group is increasing.

### Section 3.1 Conclusion

The ability for many rural households to mitigate relatively poor levels of access to services tends to mask the way that the 'fairness' of access to services across rural areas is assessed by service delivery planners at local level. The impact is that the needs of those who rely on local access to maintain their quality of life are ignored.

### 3.2 Local Accessibility Planning

Accessibility planning is a process defined by Government which encourages Local Authorities and partner agencies (including voluntary and community sectors), to focus on promoting social inclusion by tackling the accessibility problems experienced by those in disadvantaged groups and areas. It provides the framework for partners to work together to develop and deliver solutions to accessibility problems depending on the particular needs and priorities of local areas. It is described in detail in the Strategic Rural Transport Framework (Section Four).

Accessibility Planning is therefore the route through which 'mainstream' public service providers approach improving access to services in their territories. As such it is a critical element of improving access to services for rural communities. A high level analysis of Accessibility Strategies across the region carried out as part of this research shows that (inevitably) the solutions identified and actions recommended are focused upon improvements in public transport, and are more often than not relatively urban centric.

#### Example actions identified within Accessibility Strategies for Yorkshire and the Humber

- Extended public transport routes and services
- Improved awareness of post 16 education services and transport options
- On-going partnership working; further consultation with service users and community groups in order to develop solutions.
- Work with (public transport) operators in reviewing networks and to encourage investment in modern, physically accessible vehicles.

The transport centric nature of local accessibility planning means, from what can be seen so far at least, that the process is unlikely to comprehensively address rural access to service issues, and will be very unlikely to promote non-transport solutions.

The apparent limitations of Accessibility Planning as a comprehensive means of addressing rural accessibility are compounded by the difficulty faced in accurately defining just what the issues are affecting access in rural areas, at sub-regional or district level.

This problem is apparent within the Accessibility Strategy for North Yorkshire. The issue of access to services for rural communities is defined as a priority for the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement by 6 of the 7 district Local Strategic Partnerships. The seventh, Scarborough defined access to the workplace and training as a key priority.

In response to this, the North Yorkshire Accessibility Group carried out a survey with users of the five Department for Transport 'indicator' services (Employment, Education and

<sup>14</sup> Fair Access to Rural Services in the North West, Rural Innovation for GONW, 2006  
Customer Needs Research, ERM for Postwatch and Commission for Rural Communities, 2006

training, Healthcare, Shopping, Leisure facilities), and mapped the access of households to outlets for these services.

The conclusions were that the level of access to services across North Yorkshire ranged from fair (in the deeper rural areas) to good (in the key service centres) on the basis of survey responses and the fact that a viable range of service points for all five services is available within the proximity and travelling times as recommended by the Regional Transport Strategy and Department for Transport core indicators.

As a result of this the focus on improving accessibility defined within the Local Transport Plan and Local Area Agreement is on Scarborough for 2007- 2008 and the relatively deprived areas of Selby, Catterick, Skipton and Northallerton from 2008. This focus has been chosen in preference to actions addressing the target groups identified as priorities (those over 60, between 14 & 19 and without access to private transport) across the whole of the county, including rural communities.

The difficulty in effectively defining accessibility that this response suggests is unlikely to be restricted to North Yorkshire; indeed if the Accessibility Planning process delivers this sort of outcomes in an inherently rural territory like North Yorkshire, then it is unlikely that outcomes will be more relevant to rural areas and access to service issues in other districts and sub-regions.

### Section 3.2 Conclusion

To date it appears that those responsible for assessing and responding to accessibility have struggled to effectively identify and understand the challenges faced by the socially excluded, particularly those living in rural communities.

Where accessibility issues have been identified, the *response* of Accessibility Planning has normally been via investment in public and other transport services. Evidence suggests that criteria used for deciding investment priorities results in a relatively urban centric programme of activity.

### 3.3 Accessibility Standards and Indicators

The Accessibility Planning process uses indicators developed by the Department for Transport to measure access level. These indicators are based upon the proportion of households within a certain geographical proximity, or travelling time, of a service point (i.e. post office, GP surgery etc).

The 'proximity based' approach is commonly used throughout Government; for example the acceptable standard of library provision in rural 'counties'<sup>15</sup> is that 85% of households should be within two miles of a fixed library outlet (and the proposed access criteria for the Post Office review). Even Defra uses 'proximity' indicators to measure changes in access to services for rural communities. The PSA4 'accessibility' indicator includes the core Department for Transport indicators.

<sup>15</sup> As defined by Department for Culture, Media and Sport

- % of a) pupils of compulsory school age ; b) pupils of compulsory school age in receipt of free school meals within 15 and 30 minutes of a primary school and 20 and 40 minutes of a secondary school by public transport
- % of 16-19 year olds within 30 and 60 minutes of a further education establishment by public transport
- % of a) people of working age; b) people in receipt of Jobseekers' allowance within 20 and 40 minutes of work by public transport
- % of a) households b) households without access to a car within 30 and 60 minutes of a hospital with an outpatients' facility by public transport
- % of a) households b) households without access to a car within 15 and 30 minutes of a GP by public transport
- % of a) households; b) households without access to a car within 15 and 30 minutes of a major centre by public transport

The conclusions of recent research<sup>16</sup> into the impact of 'proximity' indicators on improved access (to services for rural communities) are that they are an unsophisticated and simplistic approach to accessibility. This is supported by consultation with communities and practitioners and leads to the following position:

- Distance / proximity does not effectively define access - it is only one dimension which fails to take into account the ability of the user to cover the distance and to do so at a time that the service is available, the user's requirements from the service, the type, form and quality of service that is available once the distance has been covered, or the relative impact on the user's quality of life of covering that distance.
- Any standard that is set at less than 100% of the population will inevitably disenfranchise the most vulnerable; i.e. where a standard is set at 95%, the 5% left out will be those with the most extreme (in this instance proximity) disadvantage

The work has also demonstrated that application of 'generic' service standards and indicators across an entire service territory (i.e. the operating catchment of an Ambulance Trust) will be unlikely to address access to service issues of individuals in specific areas. Put simply, a single 'standard' when universally applied across a service area will tend to work against the most disadvantaged.

An example of this is the way in which Lancashire County Library Services can continue to meet the DCMS service standards whilst effectively reducing the level of standard delivered to rural areas of the county. The DCMS standard is that a minimum of 85% of the population has access to a fixed library service point within 2 miles (3.2km) of their home. LCC library services report that 94% of households are within 2km of a fixed library. If however, the population is split into urban and rural areas of the county, only 57%<sup>17</sup> of rural households are within 2km of a fixed library point, and a further 28% within 4km making 85% of rural households within 4km (i.e. further than 2 miles) of a fixed library point. Effectively therefore whilst the county performs well above the national minimum standard when measured against the national standard in overall terms, it falls some way under actually delivering against that standard to a specific element of its constituency when data is disaggregated to allow for urban / rural analysis.

In order to improve on this position it will be necessary not only to focus separately on rural and urban areas of the county, but to understand which parts of the rural area have

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<sup>16</sup> Fair Access to Rural Services in the North West, Rural Innovation for GONW, 2006; Lancashire Rural Delivery Pathfinder Access to Services Thematic Working Group; Humber Rural Delivery Pathfinder Access Pilots

<sup>17</sup> Defra Evidence Base for Lancashire Rural Delivery Pathfinder

'acceptable' access, and which do not, and *critically* which people across the rural area suffer from access disadvantage. This will require targeting at a more local level.

Even when this is done, it is likely that some residents of the area where service levels are deemed to be 'acceptable' will not be able to enjoy that access due to their personal circumstances.

### Section 3.3 Conclusion

In order to be effective, service standards need to be developed at a local level. They must take into account the particular characteristics of the service user, service provider and spatial context in which service delivery takes place. It is important for service deliverers to understand the issues and characteristics influencing access to services at the appropriate locality, and so factor them in to service planning. The best way to do this is via effective engagement with service consumers at the appropriate local level.

## 4. DESIGNING APPROPRIATE ACCESS SOLUTIONS - A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

### 4.1 Identifying the right solution - People, Places and Services, a three way analysis

Arriving at the most appropriate solution requires a three-way analysis of the specific issues and characteristics which define the local context. That is to say an analysis of:

**People** - the needs of the local community (or community of interest) and individual service users within it,

**Place** - the characteristics of the place where the service is to be delivered

**Service** - the nature of the service(s) for which access is to be improved

It is important that both practitioners and policy makers are aware of, and understand issues that affect accessibility, particularly those around social exclusion and disadvantage. Information on these three dimensions is therefore critical to effectively understand the challenge that an intervention seeks to address, to defining an appropriate solution, and (where necessary) to securing the resources and policy support to implement and maintain the solution.

### 4.2 Evidence

This information will be needed at local level in order to feed into strategic policy and service planning. It is helpful however if those interested in the issue of access to services for rural residents from a regional or 'strategic' viewpoint also consider these three key dimensions. The Strategic Rural Transport Framework offers a snapshot of access issues (section three) and highlights the reduction in service points in rural areas, issues of personal mobility, social inclusion, car dependency and environmental impact. Practitioners will find this information useful.

In addition there is a great deal of evidential and data work done at regional and sub-regional level across Yorkshire and the Humber. The Regional Rural Observatory publishes an annual Regional Rural Evidence Base report; this is available [online](#) and includes a range of maps and tables that offer evidence relevant to access to services including:

- Population density (2P)
- Resident population over 65 (2R)
- Age profile of resident by district (2T/U)
- Population change; % by age and rurality (2AA)
- % of population over 60 in 2005 by district (2BB)
- % of population over 60 in 2030 by district (2CC)
- % change in the over 60 population 2005 - 2030 (2DD)
- % workers who travel more than 30km to work (7K)
- Proximity of % of households to service points by district (7D)
- Number of service outlets and % change by rurality (7E, 7G)

In addition to the Regional Rural Evidence base, 'data observatories' in the sub-regions maintain a series of 'Progress in the *'sub-region'* reports. These monitor the impact of sub-regional strategies and offer a range of indicators and data. Much work has also been done by Local Area Agreement partnerships to develop specific evidence bases to support and monitor their activity. Investment is also being made in rural evidence bases at sub-regional level, led by the Rural Partnerships of Technical Officer groups.

Practitioners seeking to better understand the regional background to access to service issues should find much to inform them across this collective resource.

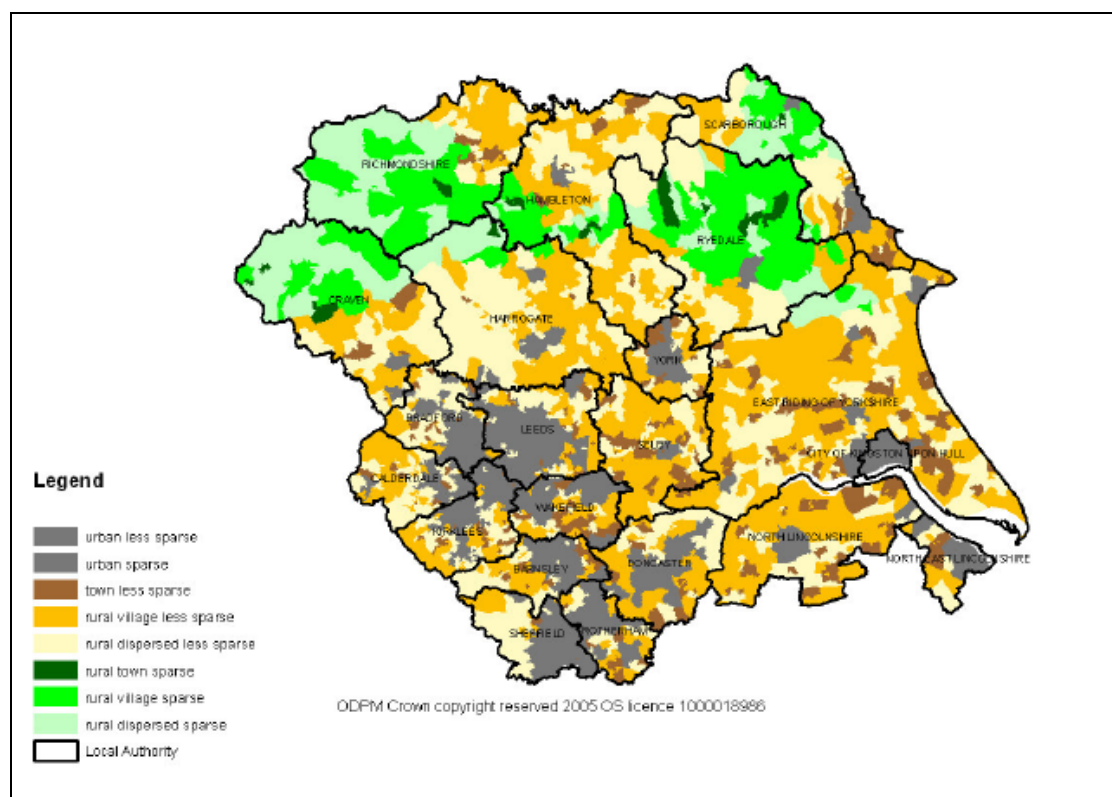
What this evidence base is very unlikely to do however, is to offer data that relates specifically to the service, service users or service catchment. This level of evidence will need to be secured at local level, based on specific analysis of data at Super Output or Ward level, from Community and Neighbourhood plans, and from the experience of local practitioners and communities.

The Framework has developed and offers a 'process' for developing this evidence base; this is set out in Section Five below.

#### 4.3 Spatial Definition - A Regional Perspective

The Framework addresses access to services for *rural* communities; it therefore is targeted at those areas of the region defined as rural by the DEFRA / ODPM Urban Rural Definition (July 2004). This area is shown in Figure X below.

Figure 1: Rural Definition at Output Area Level



Unfortunately this level of definition does not help us properly understand the impact on accessibility issues of the spatial context. It defines those parts of the region considered to be rural, and offers a finer grain of understanding in terms of 'sparse' and 'less sparse', and the influence of urban conurbations and smaller rural towns and villages.

In order to understand access issues from a regional perspective, it is necessary to add some more information to these definitions. The Strategic Rural Transport Framework examined the need to consider the impact of diverse geographical, topographical and socio-economic characteristics on accessibility, and to do so at a *spatial* rather than administrative level. The Framework has been developed as a 'sister' document to the Strategic Rural Transport Framework; it therefore adopts the same approach.

The Transport Framework set out a number of descriptions of different parts of the rural area, (based on analysis of definitions provided by Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber and the Regional Spatial Strategy), and applied these to specific parts of the

region. The Transport Framework then assessed and applied high level 'access characteristics'<sup>18</sup>, in order to support analysis of appropriate transport based interventions across each type of rural area.

This was effective for transport led interventions; these are mainly planned and defined at regional and sub-regional level and effectively relate to activity taking place on one dimension, i.e. movement from point to point. The conclusions of research and analysis (during development of this (non-transport) Framework) are that this approach will not work so well for non-transport interventions. These must operate across three dimensions (the people, the place and the service) and often need to be considered at a more local level.

Figure 2: Spatial Analysis and Accessibility Characteristics

Rural Area	Accessibility Characteristics
Accessible rural areas where social and economic indicators are generally positive i.e. Leeds City Region	Key challenge to secure equality of transport opportunity for those without cars; commuter pressure
Remote rural areas with a high quality environment including the Dales and North York Moors National Parks	Poor access to a range of basic services and facilities; protection of high quality environment; key challenge to secure equality of transport opportunity for those without cars
Pennine West (and South) Yorkshire and the rural coalfield areas that contain some of the worst deprivation levels in the region	Economic and social deprivation; poor access to employment opportunities; poor access to a range of basic services and facilities
Coastal areas, including some parts of the Humber sub-region, where the problems of social exclusion in means that the area differs significantly from other "accessible" areas	Poor access to a range of basic services and facilities; protection of high quality environment; key challenge to secure equality of transport opportunity for those without cars

Source: Strategic Regional Transport Framework; JMP 2005

Whilst an understanding of the spatial context within which accessibility solutions are developed is important, it is best defined and articulated at *local* level. The responsibility to effectively define and articulate this context to regional and sub-regional stakeholders will lie within those involved in developing solutions.

This Framework therefore does **not** seek to match profiles to places - that is a matter for those involved in determining the solution. Those involved locally should match their place to the profile that best describes it. In this way all those engaged in, and all those who view (or review) the decision making process will see the issue and the proposed solution through the same lens.

This process is further described in Section Five below.

#### 4.4 Service Themes and Priorities

The Framework seeks to help practitioners and policy makers across the region better understand which services are especially important to rural communities and residents, which 'target groups' have been identified as being of high priority, and what the most appropriate 'non-transport' solutions are likely to be.

<sup>18</sup> (See Figure 2 below)

In practice, identifying specific priorities and defining appropriate responses is a matter for local determination. It is possible however to get a sense of what is considered to be important across the region from analysis of Accessibility Strategies, Community Plans and Local Area Agreements.

High level priorities which can be applied consistently across the region include:

Service Users:

Groups for which personal choice in their ability to access services is limited

- Pre-school age children and their carers
- 14 - 19 year olds
- Over 60's
- Those with limited personal mobility (for what ever reason including poor access to private transport, disability, fear or lack of independence)

Service Types:

Generally across the region healthcare and social services are identified as the services to which equitable access is most important. In areas of deprivation as measured by the IMD (national or 'rural on rural') the emphasis tends to be on access to work and training. In smaller and the more remote (or peripheral) communities, key services identified are those which underpin the 'sustainability' of the community i.e. Post Offices, village halls and food shops.

#### 4.5. Existing Service Delivery and Access Solutions.

Examination of existing 'access to service' activity shows that there are a wide range of solutions in place across the region<sup>19</sup>. These include mainstream provision from core service providers, outreach provision by core service providers, as well as specific local interventions to improve access or target specific disadvantaged user groups. In order to better understand this range and diversity of provision it is helpful to consider the background to public service delivery in rural areas.

Publicly funded services are delivered by a combination of mainstream providers (i.e. Primary Care Trusts, Local Education Authorities, Social Services Departments), Local Authorities (i.e. Leisure Services, Library Services), local organisations, community and voluntary groups. This mainstream delivery should be the default provider and the core responsibility for ensuring equity of access remains with the organisation that is either tasked or contracted to deliver services.

In the rural context we have got used to this core provision falling short, and have intervened to prop it up with additional, and mainly short-term, interventions. Short term grant monies can be used to develop and pilot innovative solutions with a view to these becoming incorporated into mainstream provision. This has worked well in practice in some instances, the MiBUS service in East Riding is a good example).

Very often however grant funded interventions have proven to be unsustainable. Table One (page 27) illustrates the range of service delivery solutions across the region and identifies those which are delivered through core resources and those which have been developed locally (often in partnership with mainstream providers) and are reliant upon short-term grant funding.

The conclusions from research undertaken for this and other projects, and particularly that emerging from Defra's Rural Delivery Pathfinders<sup>20</sup>, is that the best way to achieve and

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<sup>19</sup> Examples are included in the Range of Interventions Table below

<sup>20</sup> Lancashire Rural Delivery Pathfinder Outcome Manifesto

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/ruralpathfinder/manifesto.asp>

maintain equity of access to services for rural residents is to help extend the core service deliverer's reach, to help them find a way of getting services to those that need them, in a way that meets an individual's requirements.

The Regional Rural Delivery Framework proposed a range of actions to develop physical, community based and virtual interventions:

- Promote the concept of rural hubs at both village and market town level within community plans and through funding criteria
- Ensure that Local Transport Plans connect customers to service provision
- Encourage co-location through partnership working
- Develop innovative means of delivering services through mobile services, ICT, telephone support, outreach etc
- Encourage local ownership of village services, through parish and town councils

Part of the role of the Framework is to identify this range of activity, and to do so in a way that will support the development of appropriate solutions in the future. Part of the process of working up new solutions is to understand what is already going on, (so as to ensure that activity is not duplicated) and to take up whatever lessons are available.

In order to support such analysis, and allow for the approach to be replicated, existing interventions have been categorised by the way in which services are delivered.

We have therefore defined four different categories of service delivery:

**Fixed Service Point:** mainstream services delivered from a permanent and dedicated outlet (GP surgeries, Libraries, Pharmacies, Schools etc). This form of service delivery will be wholly funded by the core public service deliverer and is unlikely to rely on local intervention to improve accessibility.

**Hosted / Embedded:** services delivered (either permanently or temporarily) from an outlet whose primary purpose is some other form of activity; post offices in pubs, libraries in shops, advice points in libraries etc.

**Mobile & Home:** services delivered from a mobile unit and / or delivered at home.

**Virtual (ICT / Phone):** services accessed remotely via telephone, video link, computer etc.

These last three types of service delivery may be offered and totally funded by mainstream providers as part of an 'outreach' provision, or alternately may rely upon local intervention and grant funded subsidy.

The table overleaf shows the plethora of active examples offered during the period of the study; these are distributed across the four service delivery types and allocate across four 'service themes'.



Table One: Range of Interventions across Yorkshire & the Humber to Improve Access to Services for Rural Residents

	Health & Advisory	Education, Training & Employment	Retail, Postal & Financial	Local Authority
<b>Fixed Service Point</b>	Citizen Link (East Riding) GP Surgeries, Pharmacies, Dentists, Childrens Centres, Barton Viking Resource Centre National Children Homes Centres (NCH)	Nursery, Primary, Secondary Schools, Childrens Centres  Colleges, Conexxions, Youth Clubs Learn Direct Centres Barton Viking Resource Centre, Shores Centre in Withernsea	Post Office, Banks, Building Societies, Supermarkets, Cash Machines, Retail Outlets, Garages, Pubs	Citizen Link (East Riding) Customer Service Centres & Local Links, Libraries, Town Halls Business Centres (ERYC) One Stop Shop for Advise and Services (Penistone) Community Access Points, Herefordshire*
<b>Hosted / Embedded</b>	Community Access Points* (North Lincolnshire); 4 currently in Barrow (VH), Barton (Viking Resource Centre), South Killinghome (Meth Chapel) & Ulceby (VH)  Northallerton GP consulting in Appleton Wisk and then prescription drop off; Schools, (East Halton Village Hall & Wilberfoss) hosting GP surgery once a week  Post Natal clinics in village halls in Ryedale Bainbridge volunteer project - first assessment resource  Heath Advisory clinics in Extended schools -  Exercise on prescription gyms in village halls* (Chipping Village Hall, Lancashire)	IT centres in Community Halls Cawthorne  Extended Schools  Parent & Toddler groups in village halls	Community Resource Centres in Libraries  Satellite post offices e.g in Black Swan at Wistow	Library in Haxey Village Hall Community Resource Centres in Libraries and other community buildings  Police and Community Access Points (West Yorkshire)
<b>Mobile / ICT</b>	Fresh Start centres in North Lincolnshire hosted in village halls in Bonby, Brigg, Barnetby etc	Parent and Family Drop in (East Riding)*  Youth drop-ins in Driffield School weekly	Rudston Village Hall PO each Thursday  Community Cafes / Info Access Points in North Lincolnshire villages including : Ulceby, S Killinghome, Barton host credit	Fresh Start centres in N Lincs hosted in village Bonby, Brigg, Barnetby etc

	Health & Advisory	Education, Training & Employment	Retail, Postal & Financial	Local Authority
	<p>Health Drop In within Schools</p> <p>North Yorkshire 'Discovery Bus' offering virtual access to NHS direct</p> <p>Baby&amp;U - hosted teenage parent and parent to be support group hosted in Driffield School</p> <p>Parent and Family Mobile Drop in (East Riding)*</p> <p>Practical Family Support - 5 - 13 support delivered in village halls in N Lincs</p> <p>Blood Transfusion / Breast Screening to market towns</p> <p>Connexions Bus offering Choices clinic (i.e. sexual health)</p>	<p>Surestart and Adult Education outreach hosted in village halls</p> <p>Drop In youth services for disabled children</p> <p>Surf &amp; Snack* (South Yorkshire)</p>	<p>unions on a regular basis</p> <p>Primary schools hosting credit unions</p> <p>Financial advice offered in village hall</p> <p>Burton Agnes Hall Farm Shop</p>	
Virtual	<p>Rural Advice Link</p> <p>CAB proposal put video links in Community buildings to link to CAB office in Northallerton</p> <p>Video link to Consultants at Airedale Hospital being provided from GP Surgery in Settle</p>	<p>Mobile Library service; Library buses; ICT buses (13 - direct workbase training); Home Library &amp; Information Service</p> <p>Connexions Bus</p> <p>Parent and Family Mobile Drop in (East Riding) including toy library</p> <p>Mobile Media Van - ICT and multi-media</p> <p>Radio Humberside Bus</p>	<p>Proposal for RBS bank bus;</p>	<p>East Riding Mobile Library service</p> <p>Community Broad Places, Shropshire*</p>

\* Benefits from short-term grant funding

#### 4.6 Learning from Existing Access Solutions

A quick review of this table shows us that there is a wide range of activity going on across the region, and that very often there are similar approaches in place in different areas; library buses, extended schools, visiting GP clinics, advice points in libraries are all common themes.

It seems to be apparent that outreach and mobile services are used to target the more peripheral or remote rural areas in each of the four (administrative) sub-regions. It is interesting to note for example the commonality of mobile library, connexions and ICT buses in use across all four sub-regions. One wonders whether communities in South and West Yorkshire served with mobile resources would be considered eligible were they situated in North Yorkshire.

It seems clear however that where the scale and incidence of settlements reduces, service providers and local stakeholders are working together to develop local solutions which improve access to services. It is not possible, nor does it appear particularly helpful, to seek to define which sort of solution is likely to be appropriate in which sort of area. In reality the design and development of solutions needs to be done from the 'ground up'.

#### 4.7 Analysis of Existing Activity in Planning New Access Solutions

The Transport Framework used analysis of existing access solutions to assess which type (i.e. wheels to work, demand responsive transport) were more likely to be appropriate in different spatial contexts.

In order to assess whether such detailed analysis is useful in a non-transport context, we have reviewed some of these access solutions in more detail. We have concluded that no real value can be added by seeking to apply lessons from individual initiatives or projects from a regional perspective. With the transport interventions it was possible to focus on a consistent indicator; the level of the public subsidy per trip. The Framework then considered the factors affecting this subsidy and consequently which form of intervention was likely to offer appropriate 'cost / benefit' in which access scenario.

When considering non-transport solutions, there is simply no common denominator; just because a mobile parenting and family health advisory clinic may be fantastically successful in one area does not mean that the things that make it successful will be available, or relevant somewhere else. The appropriateness of any particular solution relies upon the specific circumstances and context of the place, time and objectives of the stakeholders involved.

We have therefore developed our analysis so that rather than offer an assessment of which form of intervention is likely to be most appropriate against each service and spatial type, it scopes the lessons that can be learned from assessing a practice example and considers how these can be best applied to defining the best access solution for a specific set of circumstances.

This analysis is set out in detail in Annex A; Using Practice Examples.

#### Section 4 Conclusions

There are a wide range of access solutions across the region. There is some commonality of solutions to place (i.e. mobile libraries) and service but essentially solutions to address rural social exclusion through improved service access are best defined locally where they can address specific circumstances and conditions. Whilst there is value in understanding other solutions, these lessons should be applied to the local situation and not simply imported.

## SECTION FIVE DEFINING THE MOST APPROPRIATE INTERVENTION

### 5.1. Logic Flow and Common Approach

The solution to an access problem is best provided by those people who are close to it, the people on the ground. This means that it is very unlikely that effective solutions (especially relating to particular target groups) can be achieved from headline outcomes set within Local Area Agreements.

During the period of the study, consultants, steering group and local practitioners have worked together to develop a logical and common approach to publicly funded access solutions

This approach does not seek to define the *need* for intervention; the context for this is already set by national, regional and local priorities and will be proven with local evidence. Instead the approach is 'solution focused'; it works towards the appropriate intervention.

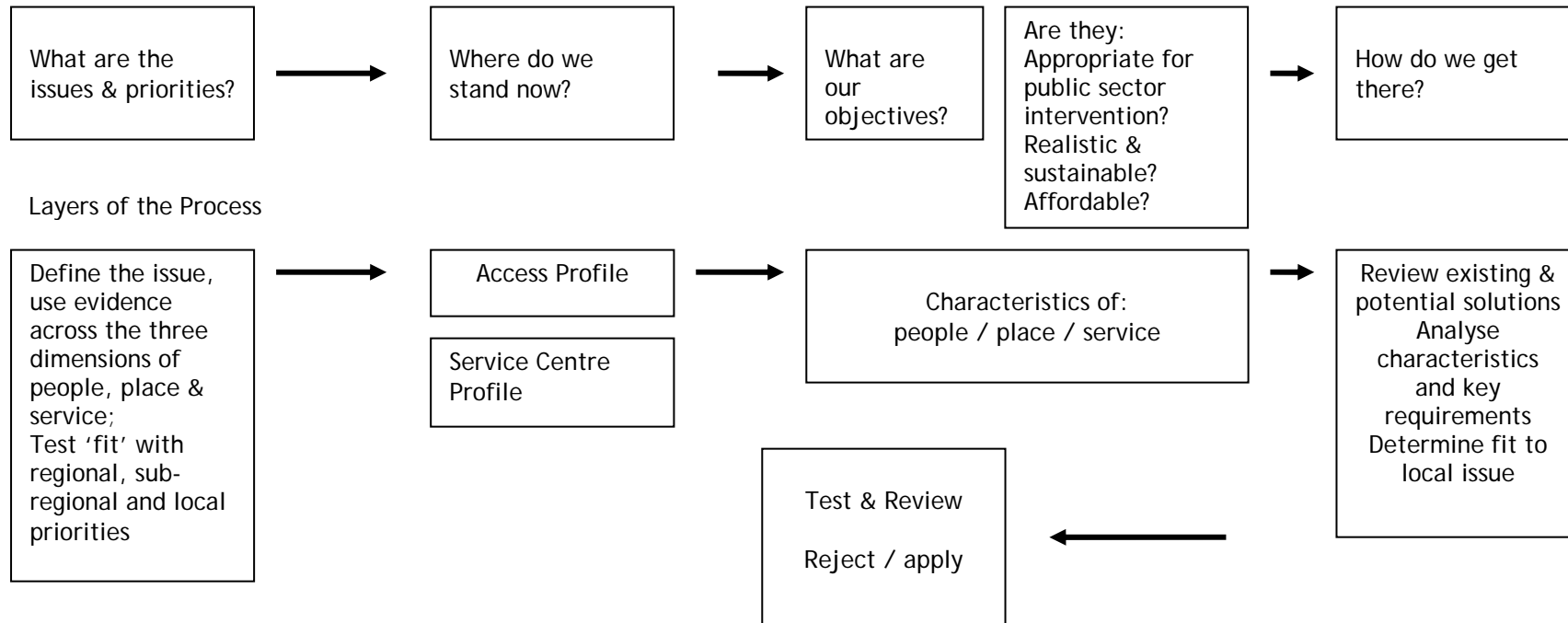
It is hoped that such a 'common approach' will help those involved (local practitioners and communities) find the best solution. As a result of greater clarity and consistency, the approach should also allow investment decisions and monitoring in a more effective and balanced environment.

The approach (or logic flow) is shown in the diagram below (Figure 3). This shows the different bits of information needed to design a solution. These bits of information can be considered as pieces of a jigsaw; as each is put in the answer becomes a little clearer.

It is important that the information used is chosen by those involved in determining the solution rather than imposed from above. The choice of which 'access profile' and 'service centre profile' to apply is for those involved in defining the solution to make.

The Framework does not seek to match profiles to places - rather the group involved in determining the solution should match their place to the profile that best describes it. In this way all those engaged in, and all those who view (or review) the decision making process will see the issue and the proposed solution through the same lens.

Figure 3: Logic Flow of Common Approach to Defining Appropriate Solutions





## 5.2 Gathering the Necessary Information - the Pieces of the Puzzle

### a) Spatial & Demographic Access Characteristics

As has been explained in the Strategic Rural Transport Framework, there is substantial range and diversity in the spatial, topographical and demographic characteristics of the region. These characteristics do not follow sub-regional administrative boundaries, but they do affect the way that the communities within them function, how people access services and how service providers operate. It is therefore important that those involved in determining access solutions, and those who may wish to assess or learn from them, can factor in the particular spatial and demographic context.

Clearly these characteristics will change with different levels of locality; the specific characteristics of one community within a district will differ from another within the same district. In order to provide a spatial context that makes sense from a regional, sub-regional and local point of view it seems helpful to offer a limited range of 'access profiles' - bite size chunks which are recognisable from a regional perspective, but which can also be applied to a specific locality.

This is the approach taken within the Strategic Rural Transport Framework, and it has been widely agreed that it makes sense to continue with it in this Framework.

The choice of 'access profiles' offered is as follows:

- **Accessible rural areas** within a 'City Region' context which have relatively good connectivity, where social and economic indicators are generally positive. Equality of transport opportunity for those without personal mobility and commuter pressure on the sustainability of communities are key issues affecting accessibility.
- **Remote, (and / or) sparsely populated rural areas** with a high quality environment; these have generally poor (local) access to a range of basic services and facilities and rely on key service centres. Protection of high quality environment; equity of accessibility for those without 'personal mobility' and hidden disadvantage are key issues affecting accessibility.
- **Pennine and rural coalfield areas** - with relatively high incidence of economic and social deprivation; poor access to employment opportunities and limited access to a range of basic services and facilities across small settlements. Protection of high quality environment, capacity and culture within communities are key issues affecting accessibility.
- **Coastal areas**, where disproportionately older residents, low household income, limited personal mobility and problems due to peripherality mean that the accessibility profile and issues differ significantly from other "upland" areas. Consistent incidence of economic and social deprivation; poor access to employment opportunities; poor access to a range of basic services and facilities; protection of high quality environment are key issues affecting accessibility.

### b) Service Centre Profiles

The second 'layer' offered is the service centre profile; this seeks to define how the settlement pattern and the way that the towns and villages function influences the way that services are accessed and delivered.

The choice of Service Centre Profiles offered as the 'second' layer is as follows:

- **Urban connections:** the rural areas have strong links (travel to work, cultural and leisure) with urban areas - many services are accessed within the neighbouring urban

areas with only community facilities and limited other basic services available in smaller settlements and villages.

- **Rural Key Service Centres:** the rural area includes Key Service Centres (market towns) where there is a good level of service provision. People from the surrounding rural area tend to use the Key Service Centres as a focus for accessing services. Smaller settlements and villages tend to have a limited range of service provision requiring residents from these settlements to travel for services.
- **Self Contained Settlement and Villages:** there is no overriding connection with an urban area of service centre, rather each settlement and village has a certain level of service provision. Some settlements work in a network, with a range of services being available across the combination of settlements.
- **Very Limited Service Centre provision:** the area is remote and its settlements have very limited service provision. There is no obvious connectivity to an urban or key service centre and people are pretty much left to fend for themselves.

### c) Critical Characteristics: People, Place, Service

Consideration of the 'higher level' spatial profile provides a context against which regional stakeholders can better understand, and review individual and multiple access solutions. In no way however does it offer the necessary information to effectively define the challenge, or develop a solution, at local level.

In order to do so, it is necessary to introduce a local focus. This can be done by considering the key three dimensions to an effective access to services solution;

- People - the relevant service user group
- Place - the spatial area in which the service is to be delivered / available (the service catchment), and;
- Service - the specifics

Each of these dimensions has its own set of characteristics, but each is influenced and affected by the other. When defining, and subsequently developing a response to a specific access to service challenge, it is necessary to understand the characteristics and related issues of each of these dimensions. Working through these issues provides clarity on just what the problem is, what an appropriate solution needs to address, and how effective it is likely to be in doing so.

As well as being a critical part in defining the issue and developing an appropriate solution, the process of working through these issues should demonstrate whether the group has the information that it needs, and by omission, whether the people / organisations needed to address the issue effectively are involved.

The next 'layer' of the process is therefore the critical characteristics of the people, place and service.

Once these have been considered and understood, and have been added to the two previous layers, there will be a great deal of information available to inform the decision making process. This information will ensure focus on the issue, and will be available and transparent to anyone reviewing, testing or assessing the decision making process.

### 5.3 Defining the Solution

Having determined the issue, ensured that it aligns with priorities for public sector intervention, and assembled all the necessary evidence and information the next step is of course to define the most appropriate solution.

This process is likely to be iterative, and may require the stakeholders to re-visit (in part or completely) the earlier parts of the process to ensure that they have all necessary information and the appropriate organisations and individuals involved. In almost all instances it will be necessary to engage service providers, service users, those that host and those that fund the service if an effective and lasting solution is to be developed.

a) **Blue Sky Thinking** - set aside some time to think as freely as possible; what would the best solution look like if it were working now, what are the key things that need to be in place to make it work, how would you address it if you could control the whole process?

b) **Practice Examples** - consider existing examples of solutions in place or tried elsewhere; apply the learning from these examples to the subject issue; are there parts or elements of the approach that could work? What are the key things that made them work? Are they available and replicable? The use of practice examples is considered in more detail in Annex A below.

c) **Key Requirements** - what are the key requirements of the preferred options / solutions? Are these in place or available? Do you have access to the right information, people and organisations?

d) **Tests for Emerging Solutions** - as options for solutions begin to emerge these should be subjected to a number of tests, will the solution proposed be:

**Efficient & cost effective?**

- Will it meet its objectives?
- Does it represent value for money?
- Could it be delivered more efficiently and effectively if integrated with other services?
- How might existing service delivery and resources be used?

**Customer focused & locally appropriate?**

- Does it meet the needs of target groups?
- Will the solution be used by/within the community(s)?
- Does the solution match the culture and capacity of the community?

**Sustainable?**

- Financial sustainability - will it be viable without short-term funding?
- Sustainability of ownership & management - how will it be supported and sustained in the medium to long term?
- Environmental sustainability - How does it help to reduce journeys, encourage sustainable transport or ensure use of sustainable materials?

**Future proofed'?**

- Have future risks and opportunities been identified which could impact on efficiency, effectiveness, communities or sustainability?
- Does the solution take account of changing demographics and influences on the future demand for services?

Figure 4 below shows the overall structure of the recommended process.

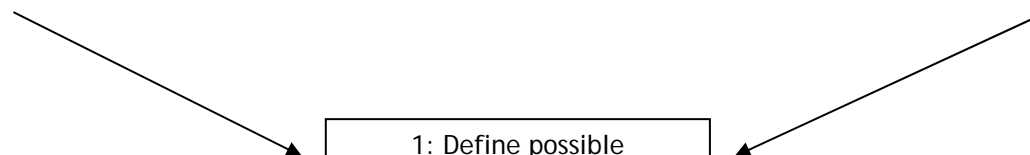
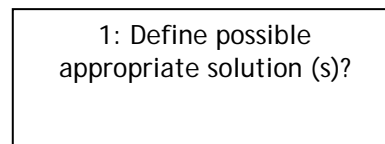
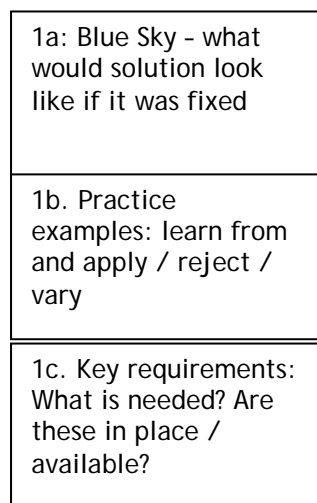


**Figure 4: Defining the Solution**

What is the Issue: Example: Improving take up of education and training by 16 - 19 year olds

Critical Characteristics for Three Key Dimensions:

People	Place	Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 - 19 year olds (how many and where do they live)</li> <li>• What proportion has access to private transport (cars, motorbikes etc)?</li> <li>• Where do those live who do not have access to private transport?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the population density of the target group?</li> <li>• How big (geographically) is the catchment?</li> <li>• What facilities does the most appropriate local service point have (schools, halls, gathering points etc?)</li> <li>• What is the penetration of broadband into the settlements and households?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full time course in working hours, part-time in working hours, flexible hours?</li> <li>• Classroom or distance learning?</li> <li>• Are tutors / teachers equipped to travel?</li> <li>• Is specialist equipment required?</li> <li>• Barriers to delivery</li> </ul>
ANSWERS	ANSWERS	ANSWERS





2: Test these solutions against the key challenges:

Are the solutions:

- Efficient / deliverable - will it meet objectives?
- Cost effective - will it be viable without short term 'grant' funding
- Sustainable: what impact will it have on; other services / service catchments / the environment?
- Customer focused - does it meet the needs of the target group?
- Future Proof - is it likely to continue to meet these tests during the period of delivery?
- Co-location; how does the option fit with existing provision, does it enhance or undermine it? Could the solution be more viable / realistic by being co-located / linked to other services?

3: Test the solutions against culture and community capacity. How well is the solution aligned with the culture, capacity and resources of the local community? Will it encourage or constrain take up?

3: Test the solutions against the culture and capacity of the delivery organisation. How well is it aligned with their activity and approach? Will it work for them, do they need to partner with a local organisation to deliver effectively?

4. Preferred Solutions / Options

#### 5.4 Introduction to the Guidance Notes

The Framework promotes the use of this common approach to rural access to services. It is believed that this offers:

For regional partners:

- A mechanism for testing local access solutions within a shared Framework
- Greater clarity on the relationship between access to services and social exclusion, and the tools to effect change in both

For local partners:

- A shared Framework for identifying issues and defining appropriate solutions
- Shared language / tools for influencing regional and national (funding and other) partners

The approach is set out within a companion set of Guidance Notes for Practitioners. These notes are aimed at all those with an interest in improving service equity and so addressing social exclusion and 'access' disadvantage across rural Yorkshire and the Humber.

The Guidance Notes are offered as a tool to enable local solutions to be developed to address diverse and specific challenges around improving access to public services for rural communities. The intent is that by developing a common approach to improving service equity, stakeholders across the region will be able to reach those in the most need, and so ensure that rural residents can access those services essential to social inclusion, where and when they need and at a cost that they can afford.

We recommend the Guidance Notes to you.

## 6. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

The completion of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is recommended as part of developing policy and strategy within the region. As this Framework is intended to influence future policy and strategy consideration should be given as to how a Sustainability Appraisal of the Framework could be carried out.

Good practice on carrying out Sustainability Appraisals is given in the document 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks: Consultation Paper'. This document provides several stages to completing a Sustainability Appraisal which could be used to appraise the Framework and the process is described here.

### **Stage 1: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope**

This first stage involves identifying other relevant plans and their sustainability objectives as a starting point. With regards to the Rural Access to Services Framework, reference should be made to all key regional strategies including the Integrated Regional Framework, the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy. Reference also needs to be made to other influential regional documents such as the Rural Delivery Framework and the Strategic Rural Transport Framework to ensure compatibility of their sustainability objectives. The East Midlands Regional Assembly recommends the use of a compatibility matrix here to ensure that the objectives of the Framework are compatible with the sustainability objectives of other relevant plans.

Baseline information on the sustainability issues should be obtained and a framework for carrying out the Sustainability Appraisal established. Consultation with statutory bodies is also recommended here to ensure that the appraisal is covering all key sustainability issues.

### **Stage 2: Developing and refining options**

This stage would identify the potential sustainability effects of the Framework and the options contained within it to achieve the objectives set. At this stage consultation with public and statutory bodies is needed to make sure that the Sustainability Appraisal being carried out covers all the main sustainability issues involved.

### **Stage 3: Appraising the effects of the plan**

Appraising the effects of the Framework will identify the predicted effects it will have and give chance for mitigation against any adverse impacts in terms of sustainability. Proposals for the monitoring of the Framework should be set and a Sustainability Report prepared to detail the findings of the appraisal and how the Framework has been altered as a result.

### **Stage 4: Consulting on the plan and SA report**

Consultation on the Appraisal is important alongside consultation on the Framework as it gives the chance for public and statutory bodies to give their opinions on both documents. The stage also allows for any changes made to the Framework to be assessed in terms of their possible sustainability implications and information should be provided on how this has been taken into account in the Framework.

### **Stage 5: Monitoring implementation of the plan**

Monitoring of the Framework should be carried out to ascertain whether the plan is performing well against sustainability objectives. This gives the opportunity for corrective action to be taken if the Framework is failing to meet sustainability objectives.

## Annex A Use of Practice Examples

Practice examples can be very powerful, but it is important that they are used in a way leads towards the best solution for the identified challenge rather than seeking to apply an existing model to a different context.

Analysis of any available examples should therefore be aimed at getting to grips with the key issues and points which will be relevant to your individual solution. Examples of these sort of questions are set out below:

General	<p>How has the local need been identified? Was the community involved in the process?</p> <p>Is the service provision targeted at any specific user group? If so, how was this targeting developed / what is the objective addressed by such targeting?</p> <p>Is the provision permanent, temporary or on trial?</p> <p>Is the service reliant upon short term / programme / grant funding?</p> <p>Is the service maintained by the core provider or in partnership? If so, who is the partner and what is their motivation?</p> <p>Is any support provided to get people with limited personal mobility to the service point?</p> <p>What level of capacity is needed within the community to support the service solution?</p>
Questions around the Service Point facility (i.e. Community Resource Centres, Children's Centres etc)	<p>Does the owner / manager of the service point control the service?</p> <p>Are any costs recovered by the owner of the service point for provision of space?</p> <p>What level of use does the service achieve?</p>
Questions around Embedded / Hosted services (i.e. PICCAPs, outreach consulting rooms, part time Post Offices in pubs etc)	<p>Are the managers of the community building responsible for the service? Where any additional equipment or facilities required? If so, how were they funded?</p> <p>Is any additional insurance required? Do the managers of the community building receive any support to deal with the additional requirements?</p> <p>Are the managers of the community building responsible for promoting the services?</p> <p>Are costs incurred by the community building recovered from the service provider?</p> <p>What level of use does the service achieve?</p>
Questions around Mobile services	<p>What is the running cost of the service?</p> <p>How is take up and value for money measured?</p> <p>Does the service offer any ancillary services beyond its 'core' business?</p>
Questions around Virtual services	<p>Is any support offered to 'train' or prepare potential users? Is any equipment provided for target groups?</p>

By asking these type of questions of practice examples you can build up a 'checklist' of core requirements / conditions needed for solutions to be appropriate i.e.

Service Solution	Core Requirements							
Consulting Rooms in Community Building	Audited accounts for building up to date; Appropriate insurance cover	Proof of need: i.e. Completed Community Plan / consultation / data etc	Trustees / Management Committee formally constituted	Trustees attendance at Training Courses	Separate Consulting and Waiting Areas; offering privacy, heating, hot & cold water	Washing & WC facilities	Disabled Access	IT equipment and connectivity
Part time Post Office	Audited Accounts for building / business up to date; Appropriate insurance cover	Proof of need: i.e. Completed Community Plan / consultation / data etc	Access guarantee - opening times	Commercial terms agreed between host and sub postmaster	Counter area; secure till and storage; signage and equipment, loading and unloading areas	Staff facilities	Disabled Access	IT equipment, network access and connectivity



**Annex B**  
**Analysis of Practice Examples**

**Community Information and Access Points - North Lincolnshire**

*General description*

Service Method	Health & Advisory	Education & Training	Retail, Postal & Financial	'Local Authority'
Hosted provision in existing venues	Yes - professionals visit the venue to deliver services	Yes - e.g. computer classes	Welfare rights and debt counselling	Yes - delivery of health services

Area Profile: Remote Rural

Community Information and Access Points (CIAPs) have been established in two villages to provide services in rural locations that would otherwise not be available. The CIAPs are hosted by existing venues and supported by local volunteers. Service providers visit these venues to deliver a variety of services. These have included sessions for substance misusers to collect prescriptions, yoga classes, parent and toddler sessions (with clinic), computer classes, Women's Group and Chiropody clinic, housing and safety surgeries. Professionals that visit the CIAPs include the District Nurse, Community Food worker, Men's Health Co-ordinator, Learning worker, Community Dental Nurse, Citizen's Advice Bureau worker.

The CIAPs also provide opportunities for community and social activities, including community lunches and other events that are often linked to advice and information sessions (e.g. on energy saving, healthy eating etc.) or general interest talks (e.g. from the local Wildlife Trust).

The project has been well received by communities and service providers alike. As well as delivering services to people who find it most difficult to access them, it has engaged these people in local community based activity, building confidence and cohesion. Service providers have welcomed the opportunity to extend the reach of their services beyond the town based provision.

The project is part of the Humber Rural Delivery Pathfinder.

**Core Requirements**

- Resources of development worker able to identify suitable venues and work with the local community to agree to host and provide volunteers and with service providers to visit the venues.
- Service providers with the resources and management support to deliver outside the towns
- Communities defining their own needs and the services they would like delivered
- Focus on those people who find it difficult to access services in nearest market town
- Funding after the initial trial period to sustain the service provision and the support for local communities in the longer term.
- Using the characteristics of people, place and service to define an innovative solution

Contact: Humber Rural Delivery Pathfinder: 01482 391691

**Police and Community Contact and Information Points (PICCAPS)  
Bradford MBC**

*General description*

Service Method	Health & Advisory	Education & Training	Retail, Postal & Financial	'Local Authority'
Hosted provision in existing community building	Yes - volunteers man the facility and help residents contact advisory groups	Yes - via signposting	No	Yes - direct contact to neighbourhood policing and related services

Area Profile: Pennine and Coalfield

Police and Community Contact and Information Points (PICCAPS) have been established in ten villages to provide a base for neighbourhood policing and as an access point to wider services. Each PICCAP requires the refurbishment of space within community centres for Police 'surgeries'. These are equipped with computers and telephones and manned by volunteers. They provide direct access to the police, other service providers and local groups.

The project has been well received by communities and service providers alike. As well as delivering services to people who find it most difficult to access them, it has engaged these people in local community based activity, building confidence and cohesion. Service providers have welcomed the opportunity to extend the reach of their services beyond the town based provision. It has particularly improved the way in which local neighbourhoods are policed by the Keighley Division and has helped to embed the police as partners in local community activity

The PICCAPs have been developed by the West Yorkshire Police and local communities, working in partnership with Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

**Core Requirements**

- Resources of council officer worker able to identify suitable venues and work with the local community to agree to host and provide volunteers
- Commitment from West Yorkshire Police to equip and provide access to their systems.
- Availability of volunteers within the communities to man the PICCAPs
- Focusing on requirements of the service provider and the community; working together to provide an effective and sustainable solution
- Using the characteristics of people, place and service to define an innovative solution

Contact: The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (dave.melling@bradford.gov.uk)

## Humber Library Services

### *General description*

Service Method	Health & Advisory	Education & Training	Retail, Postal & Financial	'Local Authority'
Fixed, hosted and mobile	No except by increased access to internet	Yes, short courses held in libraries and information/advice	Yes - promotion of on line banking	Yes 80% of households within 2 miles of service

Area Profile: Accessible Rural, Remote Rural, Coastal

Humber Library Services uses a combination of fixed point, hosted and mobile provision to bring core library services to local residents. In addition it actively promotes links with other partners and providers to extend the reach of their services.

The service has:

- 24 Branch Libraries ranging from 49 - 5 hours per week
- Travelling libraries covering the larger villages with a population of 3-5K - offering a weekly full or half day service
- 4 Mobile libraries serving smaller villages with a population of under 3K - offering a fortnightly service
- A Community Services mobile which visits residential homes and sheltered dwellings on a 6 week rota

This enables the Library Service to offer a service to 80% of the households within a 2 mile radius of one of its premises

The Library services include:

- Books - free
- Information via books or on-line - free
- Large Print material -free
- Talking books - free to some groups
- DVDs -small charge
- CDs- small charge

In addition the Travelling Libraries offer 'Citizens Link' - giving the public access to the Customer Service network in more rural locations. Age Concern and CAB also provide services by 'piggy backing' on the mobile network, delivering services at the same time as the library visit, which is a focal point for the community.

The Library service is actively involved in extending access to on-line and other services and are working on the following opportunities:

- a. WIFI -Travelling Libraries use a wireless link for connectivity. This can be used by Council employees or members of the public with wireless enabled laptops
- b. Schools & Village Halls networked to provide a "secure" environment for the wireless equipment; agreements have been made with providers. In Village Halls, as part of the partnership, the Library Service has installed access points within rooms to enable them to develop community IT facilities. A partnership has been

- developed with schools which has enabled the school link to be upgraded and costs to be shared
- c. Adult education possibilities -use of Library PC facilities to develop learning within the community at smaller venues
  - d. Alternative drop off and collection points for lending - schools/village store/public house etc -currently being piloted at a school and considering leisure centres. Potential, when working model established, to offer in other community venues
  - e. South Cliff Caravan Park - weekly morning service provided Mar-Nov 2006. Evaluation has shown it is a valuable service -to be considered for other sites/locations
  - f. Raise profile of online banking/online ordering -facility available via PCs in libraries
  - g. Good practice from other countries - example in Holland where other services, e.g. financial, have space on the vehicle thus provided access in more rural locations

*Core Requirements*

- Ability to use a variety of solutions in combination, depending on the size of settlement
- Active building of partnership arrangements with others (e.g. Adult Education Service, schools, village halls, voluntary sector, private sector - Caravan Park)
- Willingness to build on good practice from elsewhere
- Focus on extending the use of ICT to improve access to services in remote areas
- Sharing of costs with other providers or venues
- Application of different solutions to meet different local conditions and characteristics

Contact: Humber Library Services - Libby.Herbert@eastriding.gov.uk

Parent & Family Mobile Drop-In Service  
East Riding

*General description*

Service Method	Health & Advisory	Education & Training	Retail, Postal & Financial	'Best Value'
Mobile provision in a bus	Yes - proposal for Health Visitor and other health professionals providing advice	Yes Toy Library, used as hook into other advice (parenting)	Yes - sale of craft materials	No - except in terms of sign-posting to other advice

Area Profile: Remote Rural, Accessible Rural

The bus visits three communities chosen following local consultation (questionnaire to assess demand) and a trawl of evidence of need. It aims to provide a service to those who would find it most difficult to access mainstream services, in a setting that is welcoming and on neutral territory.

The bus has a toy library and offers discounted craft materials for sale. Apart from the value in their own right these are seen as 'hooks' to attract parents and carers onto the bus where they can access a broad spectrum of other advice and information.

Despite the multi-agency approach (13 agencies supporting the project) there has been early identification of the need to have a health visitor and welfare rights advisor on the bus for it to be really successful.

The bus acts as a referral point and signposts people onto other services that will help them. The bus is also used for rural advice and as part of the rural transport network at different times (makes best use of a valuable asset).

**Core Requirements:**

- Good working partnership with Bus operator
- Access to necessary resources and equipment (bus and equipment)
- Multi-Agency approach (13 supporting agencies) provides variety of services over time
- Engagement and buy-in from the agencies involved, including local schools to promote the service
- Neutrality of project co-ordinator
- Neutrality of location (offering services from schools and village halls proved difficult)
- High visibility of location
- Consistent management and facilitation from co-ordinator
- Matching the form of service provision to the needs and culture of the customers

Contacts: Angela Wilkinson at Humber & Wolds Rural Community Council: 01482 392140

## INFO in Herefordshire

### *General Description*

Service Method	Health & Advisory	Education & Training	Retail, Postal & Financial	'Best Value'
Fixed point and hosting services. Mobile and with virtual links	Yes - Advise and information for Council services and others	No	Yes - paying rents/Council tax etc	Yes - able to access all Council services

#### Area Profile: Remote Rural

INFO is a customer service initiative that aims to provide easier access to information and services for the residents and visitors to Herefordshire. Primarily, INFO deals with requests for Herefordshire Council services, for example, claims for benefit, planning applications, applications for disabled parking badges and Council housing enquiries etc. In addition to these, INFO can also signpost customers to the following local organisations:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Women's Aid
- Chamber of Commerce
- Sure Start
- Employment Service
- Benefits Agency
- Take-A-Break
- Way to Go (Youth Service)
- Age Concern
- Pensions Service
- Herefordshire ABLE

There are INFO shops in each of the market towns and in Hereford City. These are about to be supplemented by new mobile units, which will combine Info Services with mobile library facilities. Customers can also contact the Info Service by telephone or on line.

INFO deals with access to over 700 Council services, as well as many other voluntary and public organisations. INFO has negotiated a Service Level Agreement with all the service providers, which ensures that all service requests are resolved within defined and consistent time frames. If not, then INFO will follow up on the customers behalf to ensure a resolution to the service requested.

#### Core requirements:

- Staffed trained in customer service ethos
- Excellent information management systems and back office processes
- Service level agreements with individual services
- Multiple access routes (telephone, visit, email, web-based)
- Attention to needs of those with special needs or minority groups (e.g. info in different languages and translation services)
- Centrally based locations with disabled access
- Strong partnership arrangements to signpost to other organisations

More information on [www.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)

Oak Farm - Shropshire

*General description*

Service Method	Health & Advisory	Education & Training	Retail, Postal & Financial	'Best Value'
Fixed point provision with some outreach	Yes - Focus is social care project	Yes - for particular client group	Yes - social enterprises contribute to local economy	Yes - service for vulnerable adults

Area Profile: Remote Rural

Oak Farm is a smallholding situated in a small village and is home to a vibrant and successful day service, providing essential vocational training and work related experience for adults with learning disabilities living throughout South Shropshire. The service also provides benefits to local residents, being a valuable part of the village's financial and social economy.

Oak Farm was established in 1990 in the small village of Ditton Priors, approximately 7 miles south west of the nearest market town, Bridgnorth. The village has a population of approximately 700, with 31% of residents over the age of 60. The service has been rigorous in ensuring both integration of the service users into the local community and also the involvement of the community in activities at Oak Farm. This approach has brought benefits to the local community and service users alike.

Over the years, there have been a number of examples of how this partnership approach has benefited both the community and the service users, including:

- *Parish Council work* - Oak Farm has been engaged by Ditton Priors Parish Council to maintain, clean and plant areas of the village.
- *Grazing* - Grazing land is let out to a local farmer. Service users carry out tasks for the farmer such as health and number checks on livestock.
- *Garden work* - A mini-business has been set up allowing service users to work on local gardening projects.
- *Recycling bins* - The village's recycling bins are sited at the farm, providing a service for the village.
- *Composting workshop* - Oak Farm hosted an initiative organised by Bridgnorth District Council. A variety of compost bins were demonstrated to the public. There are now three demonstration bins at Oak Farm.
- *Farm shop* - As well as the shop on site, a delivery service is offered to people living in the village who are unable to get to the shop.
- *Farmers Markets* - Oak Farm has stalls at local farmers markets. The farm competes alongside other traders as a producer of high quality items, rather than as the outlet of a social care facility.
- *Local primary and nursery schools* - Village school children visit the farm pond, using a walkway maintained by service users. Pupils have also worked with service users to plant seeds as part of a botany project, returning every week to measure plant growth. The nursery school leader often brings the children to the farm to look at the animals and to have a picnic lunch with service users.
- *Work placements* - Two service users at Oak Farm work locally on a part time basis. One works in the local primary school kitchen the other in a local residential home. Pupils from local secondary schools have had work placements at Oak Farm.
- *Dog Show* - Service users completed a small animal care course and decided to hold a dog show in 2006 as an opportunity to use their newly acquired skills. Local response

was overwhelming, with approximately 350 people attending. In future the event may be combined with the church fete to create a "village weekend".

- *Marquee hire* - Oak Farm hosted a number of corporate events in 2006. The service user group decided to buy a marquee for these events, which could also be hired by local people for private functions.
- *Guide Dogs for the Blind brood bitch* - Oak Farm has given a home to a brood bitch. Service users take the dog on walks around the village, providing them with additional social interaction and exercise.

The farm has developed an ambitious social enterprise, *Oak Farm Tea Rooms*, in partnership with Pathways-Shropshire Ltd, a social firm development agency. This partnership has enabled external funding to be levered into the project. Engagement with the local community also formed a key part of the development of the tea rooms, which opened in September 2006. The project involves:

- The conversion of farm buildings into a 35 cover tea room, offering open employment and sheltered work placements to people with special needs.
- The relocation and expansion of the farm shop, an outlet for produce grown on the farm.
- The creation of a village museum in partnership with Ditton Local History Group.

#### *Core Requirements*

- Focus on developing relationships and joint projects with the local community
- Establishing a stakeholder group, which included local people, sponsors and service users and their carers to oversee the development of the Tea Rooms
- Ensuring that activity undertaken by the farm supported rather undermined existing local businesses
- Support of professionals (social enterprise development agency), local councils (County, District and Parish) and funders
- Grant application expertise
- Ongoing communications and profile raising
- Entrepreneurial and innovative approach to development of the project over time

#### *Oak Farm:*

Stuart Toulson  
Locality Manager  
Oak Farm  
Ditton Priors  
Shropshire  
WV16 6SS

Tel: 01746 712352

Email: [stuart.toulson@shropshire-cc.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.toulson@shropshire-cc.gov.uk)

#### *Oak Farm Tea Rooms project:*

Marian Giles  
Pathways-Shropshire Ltd  
Unit 11, Harlescott Barns  
Harlescott Lane  
Shrewsbury  
SY1 3SZ

Tel: 01743 464293

Email: [Mariangiles@pathways-shropshire.co.uk](mailto:Mariangiles@pathways-shropshire.co.uk)