

# Report



## Rural Lifelines

How the voluntary and community sector reaches out to the most disadvantaged residents in Yorkshire and the Humber

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## Commendation by Bill Cross

### Former Chief Executive, Rural Action Yorkshire

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**T**he message of this report is very straightforward and coherent. Despite appearances, people living in rural communities often suffer significant disadvantage. Their needs are similar to those of people living in more urban communities but are often exacerbated to a distressing degree by the effects of personal isolation, isolation from information about support and by the unavailability of services or the costs of transport to reach them.

At the same time, many public service providers focus their provision on urban communities where the cost of delivery is low and disadvantage is more visible. Voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in rural areas have proved to be vital in helping people suffering disadvantage because they are able to identify such people and to support them or help them to access support from public services which they have been unable to do themselves.

A very significant proportion of the “burden of need” which it should fall to public services to address is therefore either badly supported or supported only through the efforts of VCS organisations. This situation has obtained for a very long time but the recent cutbacks in public services have greatly increased the risks. Rural services of all kinds are more expensive to provide than their equivalents in urban areas and so are taking an unfair share of the reductions.

The partners to this report want to highlight the importance of not neglecting rural need and the importance of supporting the VCS groups working in rural areas in order to protect rural communities from deep disadvantage. These communities do respond to their own needs but specialist support is also essential. VCS groups can bridge that gap.

The report underlines these issues powerfully. I’m sure the partners to this report will exploit its content in promoting their concerns with public sector services providers. I hope that the service providers respond in their turn.

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**“The partners to this report want to highlight the importance of not neglecting rural need and the importance of supporting the VCS groups working in rural areas in order to protect rural communities from deep disadvantage.”**

# Foreword by Kate Dale

**Coordinator, Yorkshire Rural Support Network**

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**T**he Yorkshire Rural Support Network is delighted to have been able to work with Involve Yorkshire & Humber, Rural Action Yorkshire and the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council in putting together this report. Rural disadvantage has been well documented in many forms but we would like to think that this document brings home the reality of hidden but very genuine hardship in some of our most rural communities through the real life case studies.

These tell the story of situations encountered by Network members and their responses and actions. There are many examples of joint working and resourceful linked approaches to helping to alleviate genuine hardship, but there are also disturbing indications that many agencies and charities are under severe pressure both physically and financially to meet the demand for help. The need is undoubtedly there and the groups who have contributed to this report remain committed to meeting the challenges of finding innovative and resourceful ways to support those most in need in our rural areas.



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# 1. Introduction

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Each year, the Yorkshire & Humber Rural Network produces a report on the needs, concerns and priorities of rural Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups in the area. In deciding how to structure the 2011 edition of this report, we have consulted extensively with a number of groups.

It soon became clear that rather than simply writing up findings about rural VCS groups, we should instead set out to write a report which would be primarily useful for rural VCS groups. In particular, the groups have repeatedly asked us to demonstrate the ways in which they are dealing with the very high levels of need which they encounter in rural areas.

Indeed, VCS groups can often find it difficult to make the point that more resources should be allocated to rural areas. This is the case because rural communities are too often seen to be “prosperous” when compared to more urban hotspots of multiple deprivation. For this reason, the groups have asked us to produce an account of the real picture of socio-economic deprivation across Yorkshire and the Humber.

In order to do so, the Yorkshire & Humber Rural Network teamed up with the Yorkshire Rural Support Network, Rural Action Yorkshire and the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council in order to design a comprehensive document that would evidence the level of rural need both quantitatively and qualitatively.

We designed a qualitative proforma (see Appendix 3) which was circulated to a number of VCS groups who operate in rural areas in order to find out about the true extent of rural deprivation in Yorkshire and the

Humber. Once the case studies started coming back to us, we also followed them up with a series of semi-structured interviews in order to access some of the deeper insights of our respondents. This qualitative data was complemented by a more quantitative body of work developed by Action with Communities in Rural England (see Appendix 1).

In the process of researching this document we became aware of a number of truly alarming situations in which individual rural residents were simply not “getting by”. Indeed it appears that a great many rural households and businesses in Yorkshire and the Humber are experiencing very high levels of social and financial hardship. These households are also much less likely to access help than their urban counterparts.

In order to address the situation, rural VCS groups run a variety of local schemes that support rural households and businesses through very complex situations. They have an excellent record of empowering individuals and communities and are often able to devise truly creative solutions which are presented in this report.

It is hoped that this document will provide new evidence that will support the groups’ funding applications, help them to target their resources to the right areas and provide local communities with the type of information that can be fed into community and parish plans. This should ensure that statutory authorities, VCS groups and individual communities can continue to adapt their work to the particular needs of people living in rural areas.

## 2. Structure of the report

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### The rural idyll

Over the past few decades, there has been a net influx of new residents from urban backgrounds who have chosen to live in a rural setting, thereby pushing up the price of houses and altering the socio-economic makeup of rural communities. Because of the high visibility of these new residents, one could be forgiven for thinking that a great proportion of rural people own expensive homes and lead very comfortable lives. For this reason, this section explores the concept of the “rural idyll”.

### The other side of the story – evidencing rural disadvantage

This section delves deeper into the issues faced on a daily basis by residents of “prosperous” rural communities. It shows that day-to-day life in rural areas can be made especially difficult because of the lack of services, lack of transport and the social isolation which can ensue.

### The consequences of rurality on the most disadvantaged rural residents

This part of the report presents a vivid account of actual instances of rural disadvantage in Yorkshire and the Humber. Each one of the twenty case studies presented in this report is a fictionalised account of an actual situation dealt with by the various VCS groups listed as contributors (see Appendix 2).

However, any features which could identify real persons, such as names, locations and dates have been changed in order to protect the privacy of those involved and a few case studies are aggregated accounts of several similar stories. Some contributors were happy to be mentioned in the body of text while others preferred

not to in order to further protect the privacy of the individuals they helped.

### A reflection on the nature of rural disadvantage

The case studies presented in this report each highlight huge gaps in service provision and the inequalities that ensue. And yet they also shed light on the strong interrelatedness of many of the issues encountered by rural residents. For those reasons, the section provides new analysis which can bear on the specificity of rural disadvantage. These are important factors to keep in mind for anyone whose work puts them in contact with rural populations.

### The value of small rural VCS groups to rural residents

This section sheds light on the small rural VCS’ extraordinary ability to mobilise resources, including the goodwill of staff, volunteers and supporters. This enables them to become aware of instances of rural need and to design bespoke solutions which address them. In ten short “bullet points”, the section tries to encapsulate the ways in which these groups are able to remain so effective at tackling rural need.

### Conclusion

Most statutory organisations are currently under strong pressure to reduce their level of spending. Yet, this report’s conclusion makes the point that the VCS groups whose action is presented in this report offer tremendous value for money in the fight against extreme rural hardship. It is argued that the loss of these groups (and of their combined years of expertise) would prove genuinely disastrous for people who experience hardship in rural communities.

### 3. The ‘rural idyll’

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**M**any people dream of moving to a country cottage. Life in a rural community is often associated with the ability to take in the landscape, engage in a variety of rural pursuits and benefit from membership in a tight-knit community. Many of the common indicators of quality of life, such as crime rates and the quality of local schools contribute to making life in the countryside a particularly attractive option.

Thus, many people dream of escaping stressful city lives. They believe that rural living provides a better quality of life where they can participate in rural pursuits and community activities. There is an increasing migration of people from towns and cities. The latest figures show that net internal migration from urban to rural areas continues to total nearly 40, 000 individuals per year<sup>1</sup>.

This migration is often made of urban people who have arranged a livelihood before moving to the countryside and who can afford the high prices of real estate in many rural communities. For this reason, the household incomes of these new incomers can be high and push up house prices. Because of the high visibility of relatively affluent residents, one could be forgiven for thinking that a great proportion of rural own expensive homes and lead very comfortable lives.

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**“... many people dream of escaping stressful city lives. They believe that rural living provides a better quality of life where they can participate in rural pursuits and community activities.”**

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) statistics. [www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/rural/rural-living/population-migration](http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/rural/rural-living/population-migration)

## 4. The other side of the story: evidencing rural disadvantage

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**D**espite a common misconception which depicts rural areas as overwhelmingly “well off”, rural individuals, families and businesses can experience very serious hardship in rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber.

This is often made worse by poor health conditions, family difficulties, insufficient levels of income and a lack of knowledge about the best way to handle complex situations. What’s more, day-to-day life in rural areas can be made especially difficult because of the lack of services, lack of transport and social isolation.

Importantly, in almost every case of rural deprivation, *rurality itself makes the situation worse*. The scattered nature of rural populations can make local needs hard to identify. If nobody becomes aware of them, the needs of some rural residents can go unaddressed for a long time. This in turn results in people experiencing forms of extreme hardship which are often assumed to have been eradicated from 21st century Britain.

In rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber, isolated individuals are forced to survive on the cheapest bread available and the food they can forage for in the fields. Elderly women with reduced mobility live alone in unsuitable, unheated accommodation and cannot afford to go out of their home for weeks on end. Today, children under the age of two suffer for months with an undiagnosed (but easily treatable) speech impediment and see their condition worsen with each passing day.

Policy responses to rural instances of deprivation have greatly improved over the past few decades. Most statutory bodies are

now implementing a number of rural proofing measures which are designed to evaluate and address the impact of their policies on rural areas. This renewed awareness of the ways in which “rural is different” has been greeted with an overwhelming welcome and sense of relief by rural populations.

However, to this day, rural VCS groups remain concerned about the way in which public resources are allocated. This is especially the case in those parts of the country which do not understand themselves as “rural”. In many instances, policy makers will increasingly need to question an established tendency to target interventions at (urban) areas of concentrated need while neglecting less concentrated but no less acute levels of need in rural areas.

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**“In rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber, isolated individuals are forced to survive on the cheapest bread available and the food they can forage for in the fields. Elderly women with reduced mobility live alone in unsuitable, unheated accommodation and cannot afford to go out of their home for weeks on end.”**

## Rural Lifelines

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An example of this mindset is the widespread use of the Index of Multiple Deprivations, which ranks lower super output areas (LSOAs) from most deprived area down to least deprived area. Indeed, not many rural LSOAs in Yorkshire and the Humber show up as particularly deprived. Their ranking on the IMD scale locates them firmly among the most prosperous and affluent places in the whole of England!

Yet, in our opinion, it should probably be stated over and over again that *the majority of deprived people do not live in “most deprived areas”*. Analysing the evidence at a more detailed level shows that the plight of a significant number of disadvantaged rural residents is masked by the general affluence of the larger geographic area they live in.

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**“... rural residents are routinely left out of programmes that could help them deal with the issues they are facing. Often, the programmes aimed specifically at areas of concentrated poverty (the most deprived LSOAs) fail to reach a large number of deprived individuals and families who happen to live outside of these hotspots.”**

The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that, across Yorkshire and the Humber, only 3.4% of the most deprived areas are in a rural setting<sup>3</sup>. However when we dig deeper we find that the proportion of disadvantaged people<sup>3</sup> living in rural areas is actually close to 13%.

Meanwhile, rural residents are routinely left out of programmes that could help them deal with the issues they are facing. Often, the programmes aimed specifically at areas of concentrated poverty (the most deprived LSOAs) fail to reach a large number of deprived individuals and families who happen to live outside of these hotspots.

When this occurs, rural VCS groups will often step in and address the issues with a range of innovative and creative solutions. The next section of this document will demonstrate both the level of hardship experienced by rural residents in Yorkshire and the Humber and the imaginative solutions which have been devised by local VCS groups.

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<sup>2</sup> As measured by the number of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) belonging to the most deprived 20% across the region. Sources: *Action with Communities in Rural England* (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and the Humber*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> This is defined as the number of individuals receiving some form of DWP benefit. Source: *ibid*, p.4.

## 5. The consequences of rurality on the most disadvantaged rural residents

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### 5.1 Services and transport

**T**he availability of services is essential to promoting the quality of life for people who live in rural communities. Rural residents are most at risk of experiencing deprivation when necessary services such as local shops and banks, health-care facilities, schools and employment opportunities are not easily accessible to them. Furthermore, the lack of services can be a real challenge for people who do not have access to their own vehicle, whose personal mobility is impaired, and in areas where public transportation is insufficiently developed.

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**“Small rural communities cannot always support the number of services which urban residents take for granted and the added cost of delivering services in rural areas means that providers are increasingly withdrawing their services.”**

Understandably, rural residents wish to have access to all services which can enhance their quality of life regardless of their location. The reality however shows that rural residents experience serious difficulties in accessing services that are often taken for granted in more urban locations.

- In Yorkshire and the Humber, more than 215 000 households are more than 10km from a principal centre of employment<sup>4</sup>.
- In Yorkshire and the Humber 66,400 rural households have no car or van<sup>5</sup>.
- The distance to services in rural Yorkshire and the Humber can be high<sup>6</sup>.
- The travel times needed to access key services (either by car or by a combination of walking and public transport) can be excessively long<sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore, rural communities are experiencing a further decline in the availability of face-to-face services. Small rural communities cannot always support the number of services which urban residents take for granted and the added cost of delivering services in rural areas means that providers are increasingly withdrawing their services.

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<sup>4</sup> A principal centre of employment is defined as a LSOA with 500 or more jobs. Source: *Action with Communities in Rural England* (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and the Humber*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Source: *ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Sources: Four separate statistical reports by Action with Communities in Rural England (2011): *Access to Services in North Yorkshire* (p.4), *Access to Services in South Yorkshire* (p.4), *Access to Services in West Yorkshire* (p.4) and *Access to Services in the Humber* (p.4).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15 (in each report).

### **Case study 1: when Jack could not arrange a meeting with his banker**

Jack has no access to face-to-face banking services in his community. This has meant that he had been unable to negotiate a reasonable overdraft limit when he needed to make payments to local providers. On several occasions, Jack's cheques have bounced back over a few hundred pounds of overdraft which he had not had a chance to negotiate. This has caused Jack much embarrassment in his tight-knit community.

Jack was very disappointed that the last employee at his nearest branch has been removed from post and that he now has no means of arranging a face-to-face meeting. Instead his bank suggested that he call an expensive and anonymous telephone service which he finds frustrating to deal with.

The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber was able to listen to Jack's concerns and to broker an arrangement whereby Jack has a named person he can contact with his banking queries. Jack is now able to negotiate his terms of borrowing as and when he needs to. His financial situation has improved dramatically as a result of the quality advice he now accesses from his bank.

### **Case study 2: when Lucy and Matt had their first baby**

Baby Thomas was born in December 2009 and was Lucy and Matt's first child. His parents soon found out that the provision of children's services where they live was very limited. This in itself was a disappointment but it also meant the couple had very few places where they could meet other parents and develop friendships

The couple could have chosen to attend their "nearest" children's centre but they found that it was miles away. The distance was prohibitive and they could not afford the cost of transport to and from the children's centre. Lucy and Matt found themselves increasingly suffering from the isolation and lacked the confidence about how to care for their newborn son.

Thanks to the intervention of one rural VCS group, the local GP became aware of the issues and offered to make a room available at the GP practice if the council would move activities into it. The council began to hold weekly sessions for new parents during which Lucy and Matt were able to benefit from the help and advice provided. They also report that they continue to benefit tremendously from contact with their peers, who are an additional source of advice and friendship.

In rural areas, there is a strong link between the provision of services and the need for transport. Whenever services are not available nearby, rural residents will need modes of transport in order to access them. However, the cost of travel, the added time

commitment, or in some cases the total absence of suitable transport all contribute to the phenomenon known as "distance decay". The term refers to the tendency for rural residents not to access the services which they would need as often as they would need to.

### Case study 3: when baby Harry's language skills started to fall behind

Baby Harry is the son of disabled parents. Due to a lack of social interaction, his language skills are falling behind those of children his age. His GP believes that social isolation making the issue worse and that Harry would need to attend more nursery sessions if his language development is to improve significantly.

Harry's parents live on a low income and are unable to drive. They rely on infrequent public transport and on the goodwill of neighbours in order to access services for Harry. One rural VCS group became aware of the situation through word of mouth and contacted Harry's parents. With their agreement, the VCS group phoned the County's inclusion officer who was able to fund a taxi to the nearest speech and language development drop in session, which was due to take place a fortnight later.

The language therapist also recommended more time at the nursery for young Harry and, in addition, recommended that a parent support adviser be dispatched on a regular basis to play with Harry in his own home. This assessment led the County to allocate funding to implement both recommendations. This included funding for a taxi which would pick up Harry and a parent in order to enable him to attend nursery twice weekly.

In the absence of suitable means of transport, even the smallest distances can quickly become insurmountable. In some instances where public transport is scarce or non-existent, the inability to drive can leave those who do not have access to private

### Case study 4: when James and his wife Christine lost their ability to drive themselves

James and his wife Christine are a couple of older rural residents who live in a very isolated dwelling in the Yorkshire Wolds with their daughter Natalie who has a mild learning disability.

When they both became unable to drive as a result of their deteriorating health, they effectively became stranded in their homes. Because of health related issues, they were not even able to walk to their nearest neighbours' home. Their only way to get around was to phone for a taxi which proved extremely expensive.

Age UK North Yorkshire was alerted to the situation and was able to fill in the paperwork on their behalf which enabled them to access the benefits to which they were entitled. The couple chose to use the money to pay for a large freezer which would improve their self-sufficiency. They also chose to pay for driving lessons for their daughter, who was likely to need slightly more lessons than other candidates. The couple spent much time helping her to revise for her theoretical exam and paid for lessons until she passed her driving test.

The three of them are now much better off, including Nathalie who has developed a renewed sense of confidence in her own ability and is now able to socialize independently whenever she wishes.

transport exceedingly marginalised and isolated. In the following case study, James, Christine and their daughter were left almost entirely stranded in their own home when they could no longer drive themselves.

### **Case study 5: when Kevin had to drop out of college because the bus arrived there 15 minutes too late every day**

Kevin was pleased when he got offered a place at the college of his choice in October 2009. However, the only bus which offered transport to this college dropped him nearly a mile off. The time at which the bus arrived there also prevented Kevin from making the start of the school day on time, no matter how fast he walked from the bus stop. Despite his best efforts, he was consistently fifteen minutes late.

While some teachers were sympathetic to his situation, his not being there at the start of the day meant that he was at risk of losing his Education Maintenance Allowance. This would have meant that he would no longer be able to afford attending college and would have to look for a job which did not require the qualifications he was so eager to obtain.

Fortunately, one of Kevin's teachers was aware of the wheels to work scheme operated by the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council. Kevin's situation was promptly assessed and he was able to benefit from the loan of a moped in a matter of weeks.

### **Case study 6: when baby Charlotte was born with Downs Syndrome**

Baby Charlotte was born with Downs Syndrome in 2008. As part of the management of her condition, she is expected to attend child development appointments that take place 33 miles away from where the family lives. The trip alone takes  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours one way. If the weather is particularly bad, Charlotte's parents find it impossible to leave their home and have to cancel appointments.

Charlotte's parents are increasingly frustrated with the number of trips they are expected to make (several trips per week) in order to meet with a variety of agencies on different days. While they are aware of the help that is offered to parents of children with Downs Syndrome in other parts of the country, they have not yet been offered any financial package or portage support to help them with the added costs of raising their daughter.

One rural VCS group was able to phone the various agencies and to convince them to coordinate their services and hold appointments on the same day. The groups also negotiated the appropriate support packages with the Council which ensured that Charlotte's parents were in receipt of financial and portage support.

In some of the most extreme cases, the absence of suitable means of transport can prevent rural residents from attending an institution of further education or accepting a job offer. The situation is especially to be deplored whenever public transport is available but insufficiently planned and integrated to be able to connect services, jobs and training.

The close interrelatedness between services and transport is most convincingly evidenced in cases where a number of uncoordinated agencies require rural residents to attend many separate appointments at different times of the week. This situation can be infuriating for rural residents who end up undertaking a very high number of costly and time-consuming trips in their efforts to access the services they need.

## 5.2 Social isolation

**S**ocial isolation is an especially pressing issue in many rural areas of Yorkshire and the Humber.

This is the case because isolation can make issues much worse than they would be if a rural resident was able to benefit from frequent social contacts.

Groups that are particularly vulnerable to exclusion include the 18,000 lone parent households as well as the 54,500 pensioners

who live alone in Yorkshire and the Humber<sup>8</sup>. The experience of social isolation is not limited to these groups however, and households where more than one adult lives can also experience forms of isolation.

The lack of social occasions that are open to the public can mean that individual residents find it hard to meet new people and are subsequently left to cope with a difficult situation on their own. In many instances the situation then worsens because of a lack of outside intervention, as evidenced by the case study below:

### **Case study 7: when Helen was found to suffer from post partum depression after the birth of her daughter Emma**

Helen lives in a rural community with daughter Emma and partner Geoff who is often away from home because of his work commitments. Helen was found to suffer from post-partum depression. On a day to day basis, Helen often feels overwhelmed by her responsibilities and questions her own ability to provide the right care for Emma. While she is objectively able to care for Emma, her self doubts are plaguing her and she wonders whether she is able to provide the best things for her daughter.

Helen has very few family or friends in the area where she lives and finds that the other residents of her rural community are difficult to relate to. Helen's health visitor was of the opinion that she would benefit from accessing adult mental health services. However, these services are not available nearby and neither is adequate childcare available.

In the absence of relevant services, Helen was strongly encouraged by a local rural VCS group to attend her nearest mums and tots group at a children's' centre 16 miles away. Despite the group being very informal and hosting no regular drop-ins by health professionals, Helen is benefiting tremendously from the interactions.

The VCS group was also able to arrange for a volunteer befriender who lives in her community to visit her twice a week to share a cup of coffee and help with chores around the house. This has broken Helen's cycle of isolation and significantly improved her quality of life. However, because of where she lives, Helen has to this day remained unable to access specialist mental health services and she continues to rely on the friendly and voluntary help available nearby.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: *Action with Communities in Rural England* (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and the Humber*, p. 6.

Isolation can be especially difficult to deal with in a farming environment. It often means that an isolated person is slowly becoming overwhelmed by responsibilities as was the case when Oliver's parents took ill and left him in charge of the farm, or when David found himself unable to attend to his herd of dairy cows.

### **Case study 8: when Oliver's parents took ill, he kept the farm running on his own**

Oliver is the only son of a farming couple. When both his parents fell ill and found themselves unable to work, Oliver stopped attending college and attempted to run the farm on his own while also caring for his parents at the same time.

The workload was much more than Oliver could manage. He was working 16 hours a day and was unable to socialise with his friends or to keep up with the paperwork, meaning that farm records were getting neglected. A few months after taking ill, Oliver's father died.

One local farming charity was made aware of the situation through word of mouth and contacted Oliver. Given the situation and Oliver's own aspirations, it was decided that the best thing was probably to stop the farm's operations. Oliver and his mother were offered help in winding up the farm. The charity also assisted Oliver's mother in accessing the benefits she was entitled to and helped Oliver to make the transition into a new line of work.

### **Case study 9: When David hurt his leg and could not attend to his herd of twenty four dairy cows**

David lives alone on a farm with his mother who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. When he suffered a leg injury, he became unable to milk his herd of 24 cows. Fortunately, David was aware of the existence of a VCS-run helpline for farmers and was able to ask for help. The VCS group which ran the helpline got in touch with another farming help charity on David's behalf. The farming help charity offered to pay for a relief milker to come and take care of the herd while David recovered from his injury. The charity also provided David and his mother with a stop-gap financial loan to cover everyday living expenses for a short while.

In the most extreme instances of rural isolation, a person can die without anyone knowing about it for some time. While this can also occur in a more urban setting, the likelihood is much higher when a person lives in an isolated dwelling.

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**“Isolation can be especially difficult to deal with in a farming environment. It often means that an isolated person is slowly becoming overwhelmed by responsibilities.”**

### **Case study 10: When Paul's body was discovered several days after he had died**

Paul's body was discovered at his home several days after he had died. Paul had been a bit of an oddity in his village community, occasionally doing his shopping on a tractor because he did not have access to car. He would sometimes also drive his tractor to come and buy fish-and-chips on a Saturday evening and he hadn't been seen there for a while.

When the police entered his home, they found that the heating was not turned on despite it being January and that Paul's landlord had neglected to do some very basic repairs to the building for some time. Paul's two cats also had to be fed and re-homed as a matter of urgency.

### **Case study 11: when Mark needed to get online**

One day, Mark received a phone call advising him that he was late in completing a mandatory form issued by DEFRA. The request for information involved downloading maps from DEFRA's website and inputting the relevant data onto them.

Since the area where Mark lived and worked has no broadband coverage, Mark was unsure as to what to do. He contacted the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber's officer whom he had previously met on several occasions. He had also been told by colleagues that she was very knowledgeable and helpful in all sorts of tricky situations affecting rural residents.

The Churches' Regional Commission then liaised with DEFRA in order to clarify actions required and arranged paper copies of the maps to be sent to Mark. He was then able to fulfill his obligations towards the government body.

## **5.3 Access to broadband**

**T**he need for adequate broadband is becoming ever more pressing in rural communities. Indeed, a fast internet connection is no less of an essential necessity for rural households and businesses than it is for their urban counterparts. However, to this day the lack of suitable broadband continues to negatively affect local economies as many services are moving online.

Many rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber are still classified as 'low spots' and 'not spots'. In some cases, this can have serious consequences on the residents' ability to keep up with their responsibilities. The lack of broadband can also deter potential incomers who might bring in new businesses into an area and it reinforces the isolation experienced by current residents.

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**“Many rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber are still classified as ‘low spots’ and ‘not spots’. In some cases, this can have serious consequences on the residents’ ability to keep up with their responsibilities.”**

### 5.4 Financial hardship

**A**s was discussed in the introduction to this report, individuals, families and business in rural Yorkshire can experience serious financial hardship when a household's income is not sufficient to meet even the minimum needs of its members.

- Rural families must allocate a greater share of their income to essentials such as food, transport and heating fuel. In effect, this means that rural residents require more income per week in order to achieve the same minimum living standard as an urban family<sup>9</sup>.
- In our region, over 52 000 rural residents are employed in elementary occupations, 17.5% of all such occupations across Yorkshire and The Humber<sup>10</sup>. A high incidence of low pay in many rural areas increases the risks of in-work poverty. Furthermore, the cost of getting around frequently means that being in employment is barely worth it.
- According to the latest figures available the number of people receiving 'out-of-work' benefits in rural areas is in excess of 43 500, 12.4% of the total across Yorkshire and The Humber. Of these, roughly 16 000 receive Jobseekers Allowance and 27 500 receive Incapacity Benefit<sup>11</sup>. The conditions that come along with the receipt of JSA, such as taking part in regular work experience placements, are very difficult to fulfill in remote rural areas given the challenges posed by the lack of transport.

- The number of out-of-work residents per available job is also significantly higher in rural areas, meaning that the competition for each available job can be fierce<sup>12</sup>. Some rural residents sometimes find it difficult to re-enter work because they are from the "wrong" background. In close-knit communities they find that they cannot easily start afresh in the way they could if they were residents of a more anonymous large city where nobody knew them.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>14</sup> has evidenced the additional costs of living in a rural area. This report shows that rural residents need on average 10–20% more income than urban residents in order to maintain an adequate quality of life.

The rural VCS groups who contributed to this report that they frequently come across families and individuals who genuinely struggle to make ends meet. This can be linked either with low income or with a sudden rise in unavoidable expenses. These households are often forced to skimp on the basics such as clothing, food and heating. A severely reduced budget for social activities makes rural isolation worse and a household's situation can go unaddressed for a very long time if nobody is aware of it.

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2010): *A Minimum Income Standard for Rural Households*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Source: *Action with Communities in Rural England* (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and The Humber*, p.12.

<sup>11</sup> Source: *ibid.* p.10.

<sup>12</sup> Sources: Four separate statistical reports by Action with Communities in Rural England (2011): *The Rural Economy in North Yorkshire* (p.25), *The Rural Economy in South Yorkshire* (p.25), *The Rural Economy in West Yorkshire* (p.25) and *The Rural Economy in the Humber* (p.25).

<sup>13</sup> Source: Semi structured interview with a VCS respondent.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2010): *A Minimum Income Standard for Rural Households*, p. 8.

### **Case study 12:** when Arthur's mother was placed in a care home

When Arthur's mother became too ill to share a home with him, she was placed in a care home some 45 miles from where they lived. The costs of the care home, associated with the petrol expenses incurred when Arthur travelled to visit her (there was no public transport), meant that Arthur was left with almost no money at the end of each week.

Arthur's weekly budget for food and heating amounted to about five pounds. In effect this meant that the staple of Arthur's diet consisted of the vegetables he could grow and rabbits he could catch, supplemented by value white bread and treacle.

Upon becoming aware of the situation, the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber arranged council tax concessions and housing benefit for Arthur, thereby allowing him to diversify his diet somewhat and enjoy some activities on the side.

Another issue which ties in closely with financial hardship is the likelihood that people might end up dealing with unmanageable debts. In some instances, people go for an extremely long time without reaching out for help. Meanwhile, their situation worsens through unpaid bills, borrowing against equity, repossessions on bad terms leaving them liable for the deficit, and eventually the threat of bankruptcy and total financial collapse.

### **Case study 13:** when Sam's business as an agricultural contractor went bust

Sam suffers from mild difficulties with literacy and finds paperwork difficult to deal with. After working as a self-employed farm worker for 12 years, Sam became an agricultural contractor a few years ago when he chose to acquire his own machinery at a time when farmers were reluctant to invest in their own.

When the recession hit, farmers began to cancel work, leaving Sam with almost no income and unable to make the repayments on the machinery he had bought. His machinery was then sold at auction incurring a deficit for which he remained liable.

Sam went back to being a farm worker wherever he could find employment that came with accommodation. One day, the farmer he was working for withheld a month's worth of wages in order to pay for "council tax and utilities", thus leaving Sam entirely without resources for that month.

Sam approached his nearest Citizens Advice Bureau and it was promptly established that his employer had no right to withhold his wages as this had not formed part of Sam's contract. The employer was contacted and Sam was able to recover the payment that amounted to his wages for that month. Sam was advised to use some of that money to apply for bankruptcy and he was offered help to fill in the paperwork

There is also an issue linked with the insufficient take-up of benefits by eligible residents in rural areas. A 2007 report by the Carnegie Commission for Rural Development<sup>15</sup> indicates that “there is considerable evidence to show that those on low and fixed incomes,

such as pensioners, are unaware of their welfare rights”. A certain amount of acute need also goes unreported because of a tendency for people experiencing hardship to “tighten up their belts and get on with it”.

### **Case study 14: when Jane could no longer afford food, heating, or to pay for her dog’s veterinary bills**

Jane is an older resident who lives alone in private rented accommodation. Before she was offered assistance by one VCS group, Jane’s income totaled less than £50 a week.

As a result of this low income, Jane had quickly used up her life savings and hit the limit of her overdraft facilities. Jane had no money with which to heat her home or feed herself properly. Besides, Jane had racked up large bills at the vet in order to care for her ageing dog.

Perennial conducted a quick assessment of her full benefit entitlement and found that Jane was entitled to much more than she was currently in receipt of, raising her weekly income by more than £200 a week.

Furthermore, Perennial sought to ensure that Jane received more than just benefits. Perennial contacted her landlord who agreed not to put up the rent for two years. A charity which helps people on low income pay for veterinary bills offered to pay her bills in full after the VCS group had been in touch with them.

Jane was also encouraged to make use of her local dial-a-ride when she wished to go to her nearest market town. Perennial arranged for a complete care assessment to be conducted by her local council. The care assessment concluded that Jane could access help with her shopping on a regular basis.

Perennial’s intervention has dramatically improved Jane’s quality of life by ensuring that she receives all the help that is available to her. Because she continues to live fairly frugally, Jane is now able to put some of her money away each month.

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<sup>15</sup> Source: Carnegie Commission (2007): *A Charter for Rural Communities, the final report of the Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development*.

### Case study 15: when Sue's daughter was diagnosed with cancer

Sue has been living with new partner George and daughter Sally Ann for the past two years. George's farm had been badly affected by the 2007 foot and mouth outbreak. Since his stock of pigs could not be moved, George simply had to keep it going for a long period of time. At that time George had needed to borrow against the value of his house in order to buy feed for his pigs. When the bank wouldn't let him borrow any more, it was suggested that he sell his stock as soon as reasonably practical.

However, once the stock was sold, George could no longer afford his mortgage. This forced him into a spiral of over-indebtedness which eventually led to the loss of his home which was repossessed with a deficit of nearly £100 000 for which he remained liable. A tractor he had bought for £25 000 was also repossessed with a deficit of £8000. This came on top of numerous outstanding bills and a £30 000 mortgage on a nearby field. The level of debt created a strain in his relationship with his wife which eventually led to the collapse of his marriage.

In the years that ensued, George has attempted to rebuild his life with his new partner Sue. George, Sue and her daughter Sally-Ann lived in private rented accommodation which was in Sue's name. At this time, George was unable to claim jobseeker's allowance because he was still classified as self-employed. His unclear employment situation also affected Sue's ability to receive working tax credits as he could not prove his earnings. Their landlord had also failed to declare the rent, so George and Sue could not access housing benefits.

Sue was in employment when her 12 year old daughter Sally-Ann became very ill. At this stage, Sue was considering giving up her job to care for her daughter while the couple was already in severe financial need. At this point, Sue approached her nearest Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). She was advised to speak to her GP in order to request a period of stress leave from her employer instead of giving up her employment entirely while another solution was found. A well-known farming charity was able to allocate an emergency grant of £2000 to the couple.

Meanwhile, the Citizens Advice Bureau was able to clarify all the paperwork on George and Sue's behalf and to ensure that they had access to the benefits they were entitled to. The CAB also talked George through the process of applying for bankruptcy. George was reluctant to apply because he thought that bankruptcy reflected badly on his character. He was reassured that the court process would probably be understanding and sympathetic and that the debt burden would in all likelihood be lifted.

### 5.5 Poor housing conditions and fuel poverty

The issues surrounding financial hardship are also closely linked with the type of dwellings available in rural settings, especially in the private rental sector. Nationally, rural housing is more likely to be in non-decent condition than housing in urban areas. In Yorkshire and the Humber, 27,230 rural households lack central heating<sup>16</sup>. Rural residents often live in fuel poverty because they are unable to afford (or their landlords are unwilling to invest in) energy efficiency measures.

#### Case study 16: When previous tenants had failed to upgrade the heating system of Bill's social-rented home

Because of a number of disabilities, Bill stays at home for much of the day. The previous tenants of his council home had failed to take up the offer of an upgrade to central heating five years ago, when the gas mains was being installed in his community.

This meant that, while most of the village was connected to the gas mains, Bill's home was not. The cost of having central heating fitted five years after the surrounding houses had done so was very much higher than having it done as part of the initial scheme.

The lack of adequate heating triggered a number of very serious asthma attacks in Bill. He eventually rang one rural VCS group who applied for a disabled facilities grant on Bill's behalf which enabled him to pay for the upgrade.

**“In Yorkshire and the Humber, nearly 90,000 people in rural areas report themselves as having a limiting long-term illness or disability. This represents 16.8% of all people with a limiting long-term illness or disability across the region.”**

### 5.6 Health and social care provision

The provision of health and social care is important to the quality of life of rural residents. It should also be pointed out that ill health and disability can have knock-on effects on other people. The illness of one resident might force families and friends into providing informal unpaid care for them. This can in turn have indirect effects on a household's income.

In Yorkshire and the Humber, nearly 90,000 people in rural areas report themselves as having a limiting long-term illness or disability. This represents 16.8% of all people with a limiting long-term illness or disability across the region<sup>17</sup>.

However, the solutions that would enable disabled rural residents to retain a good quality of life do not need to be costly. Often the most important factor enhancing an individual's wellbeing can be a very simple and cheap solution, such as the one that was found for Daniel in the case study opposite.

<sup>16</sup> Source: *Action with Communities in Rural England* (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and the Humber*, p.20.

<sup>17</sup> Source: *Action with Communities in Rural England* (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and the Humber*, p.16.

### **Case study 17: when Daniel was refused access to a bus**

Daniel has mild learning disabilities and loves to travel on buses. He is the beneficiary of a free bus travel pass and uses it to travel across the area where he lives. However, Daniel is not always able to plan his journeys very effectively and, as a result; he is often left stranded in a strange place at the end of the day.

A few bus companies have stopped allowing him on their buses for fear of having to make arrangements for Daniel to return home each evening. One solution would be to enable him to travel with a carer as his friends and family are prepared to accompany Daniel on his various trips.

The York Carers Centre was able to take up the case with the Council which eventually agreed to provide a free pass for a carer to accompany Daniel on his bus travel. This provided a cheap solution which kept Daniel safe and dramatically improved his leisure time.

Issues linked with the cost and availability of social care in rural areas can prevent some individuals from entering employment. Women in particular are most likely to give up their professional activity and make up for the absence of services by their own unpaid care in the home. This can in turn have a serious effect on a household's ability to save for retirement.

### **Case study 18: when Rob reached retirement age while still caring for his disabled son**

Recently retired Rob is finding retirement difficult to adjust to and he misses the sociability associated with attending auction marts. For this reason, he still attends them. His wife has been at home for the last twenty seven years caring for their severely disabled son Adam who suffers from multiple sclerosis. Part of the reasons for Rob's decision to retire from farming was so he could help care for his son.

Because his wife Carol has not been able to work for all these years, Rob has effectively supported the cost of caring for both her and his son over a long period of time. This has affected his ability to set money aside in anticipation of old age.

Rob reports that caring for Adam has involved very high costs as the couple had to travel huge distances to access services. On the whole he and his wife have also felt very isolated as there were no support groups in their area and not many options for carer relief. As Rob and his wife are getting older, they are also becoming less able to care for their son and are concerned about what will happen to him in the future.

**“Issues linked with the cost and availability of social care in rural areas can prevent some individuals from entering employment. Women in particular are most likely to give up their professional activity and make up for the absence of services by their own unpaid care in the home.”**

Rural residents often report that the absence of peer support groups can make dealing with a medical condition harder than it would be if they were able to exchange information with other people who experience the same difficulties.

### **Case study 19: When Michael's wife Barbara was diagnosed with Alzheimer's**

Michael's wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2007 and her condition has very much worsened since then. Michael reports that costs associated with caring for her has been enormous. He has had to cut back his hours at work and needs to drive her to hospital appointments on a regular basis, which costs a significant amount of money in petrol and parking fees.

Michael deplores that there are very few support groups in his area that could help him cope with the day-to-day challenges of caring for his increasingly frail mother.

On occasions, rural residents can be very reluctant to ask for help because they fear that they will not like the solutions that will be found for them by external agencies. Many fear that the "social services" will take away a loved one or force their admission into a care home. They may also be concerned about the financial repercussions of a loved one being taken into care and wonder whether this might trigger the sale of some of family-owned real estate.

### **Case study 20: When Andy was caring for his 90 year old mother on his own while running a farm.**

Andy lives alone on a farm with his 90 years old mother Judith who suffers from dementia. Andy was too proud and too worried about her being taken away to ask for help, there were no neighbours and he took her on the tractor with him when he was harvesting so she did not wander away and hurt herself. He feeds her, washes her and generally copes with her every need.

When the situation became too much, Andy did reach out for help on behalf of his animals. That is, he presented the situation as an animal health issue but refused to talk about his mother. One rural VCS group was nonetheless able to help him to work through some legal and practical difficulties thereby making it easier for him to cope. He did not accept help for his Mum and continued to care for her at home until she passed away.

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**“On occasions, rural residents can be very reluctant to ask for help because they fear that they will not like the solutions that will be found for them by external agencies. Many fear that the “social services” will take away a loved one or force their admission into a care home.”**

## 6. Reflections on the nature of rural disadvantage

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**A**s was pointed out in an earlier part of this report, rural communities are often assumed to be very prosperous. This misconception can have strong repercussions on those individuals who do experience deprivation as few specific services are designed with them in mind.

The case studies presented in this report have highlighted huge gaps in service provision and the inequalities that ensue. Whenever services are not available nearby, rural residents have a choice of attending a service at some distance from where they live or attempting to do without the services. As the case studies show, both choices are less than optimal.

In many cases, very high levels of need are left undiagnosed for too long because no-one is aware of the issues. This means that individual situations can deteriorate extremely quickly while, if they had been dealt with early, their impact could have been mitigated.

The rural VCS groups themselves report that, because of a strong attitude of pride and self-reliance, people in rural areas do not ask for help until a situation is critical by which time there are more limited options to resolve issues. In addition rural residents don't always know that they could be accessing help because the services are less visible at street level.

The case studies have also shed light on the strong interrelatedness between many of the issues encountered by rural residents. For instance, the lack of services and transport can compound ill-health and financial hardship. In nearly all instances of hardship reported, isolation and the high cost of life in a rural area are making the issues worse.

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**“In many cases, very high levels of need are left undiagnosed for too long because no-one is aware of the issues. This means that individual situations can deteriorate extremely quickly while, if they had been dealt with early, their impact could have been mitigated.”**

# 7. The value of small rural VCS groups to the wellbeing of rural residents

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As well as documenting various instances of hardship encountered by rural residents, this report has showcased the activities of the various small rural VCS groups who became aware of the need in the first place and who went on to design effective solutions.

The voluntary and community sectors are propping up the rural communities in an organised and ad hoc basis without which vulnerable people would continue to face very challenging situations. As the case studies have shown, small rural VCS groups are often able to provide innovative solutions to rural residents with extremely complex needs. Much of the groups' work is done quietly and without much external recognition but its value cannot be over-estimated.

These small rural VCS groups are often remarkably successful in their attempts to empower individuals and communities. They are often able to devise creative and unorthodox solutions to their users' issues. The following paragraphs provide an attempt to encapsulate, in ten key points, the reasons why these small rural VCS groups are able to be so effective in countering rural disadvantage:

1. The groups' staff and volunteers all demonstrate a deep sense of personal responsibility for the wellbeing of their rural community.
2. The groups' staff and volunteers are very much a part of the community which they serve. They are often to be found in the right place such as farmers' markets, churches or pubs. Their activities are publicised not simply through leaflets but through "being there", shopping locally, joining local groups, using local pubs, etc. The groups will also attempt to be present at neighbourhood events and take the necessary steps to raise awareness of their activities among GPs and schools.
3. The groups' staff and volunteers are both approachable and able to deal sensitively with difficult situations. They understand that it can be a major step for a resident to reach out for their services. They are also careful about who they speak to on the phone because families and business partners may not be aware of a difficult situation which someone shared with them.
4. The groups' staff and volunteers have a deep cultural awareness of the area they operate in. They are often able to guess and understand the needs of an individual before those needs are even disclosed to them. On some occasions, the person being helped will find sufficient support through being able to talk on the telephone anonymously to someone who understands rural life.
5. The groups' staff and volunteers are able to become aware of an individual's needs through a range of social, recreational and cultural activities. The first contact with a rural resident is not frequently one of "helping" but of socialising in a friendly context. In this way, the VCS groups are able to reach out to individuals who would not normally ask for help.
6. The groups' staff and volunteers benefit from an extensive network of informal volunteers who can point people rural residents towards them. In this way, the groups are able reach users who are not

easily reached by usual channels. The VCS groups are also sometimes able to broker in-kind help between residents (within the bounds of data protection law). If they do not officially broker these informal exchanges they can create the social occasions that enable relationships of mutual help to occur naturally.

7. The groups' staff and volunteers are able to offer a significant amount of "face time" when this is called for. They are sometimes able to dedicate a high level of time and effort to improving the situation for an individual or household.
8. The groups' staff and volunteers are able to offer good advice which helps people make better use of the assets they have. In doing this, they rely on their own deep expertise of the issues at hand but they can access good back-up advice through national organisations when this is needed.
9. The groups aim to influence policy and have an effective voice in shaping decisions when they can. When the groups become aware of an issue which is causing problems to many rural residents, they will undertake additional research to demonstrate the issue. The research is then used to influence the relevant organisations.
10. The VCS groups practice joined-up working and work together with others groups to overcome rural deprivation. Because rural communities are not very well served by agencies, the services that are present can often become the "face" of all of a number of other services. This means that the rural VCS group will need to be extremely well informed and to have developed good working relationships with these other providers who are not present at street level.

**"... small rural VCS groups are often remarkably successful in their attempts to empower individuals and communities. They are often able to devise creative and unorthodox solutions to their users' issues."**

For all these reasons, the type of work which these small VCS groups do is extremely resource-intensive and time consuming. Quality relationships are built over time which enable the organisations to become aware of the need in their area and to provide effective solutions.

It is also important to re-state that it is not always possible to parachute new services into a rural area. Indeed, one of the reasons why existing groups are so efficient at finding out about needs is because the relationships are already there. A newcomer would not necessarily be able to achieve the same level of results.

# 8. Conclusion

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**M**ost statutory organisations are currently under strong pressure to reduce their level of spending. The push towards spending restraint is motivated by a renewed awareness of the economic and demographic trends which are likely to shape the future Britain in the decades to come.

Unfortunately, in some parts of the country, cuts in spending have already had repercussions on the level of support which is afforded to small voluntary and community sector groups. This is occurring at a time when these groups are facing a greater than ever demand for their services.

Meanwhile, this report has shown that the level of hardship experienced by rural residents in our region is nothing short of alarming. The authors believe that most readers will agree that this level of need and destitution is unacceptable in 21st century Britain. We believe that the goal of improving fairness between different groups within society involves acknowledging the very real barriers faced by rural residents. In this respect, the case studies are incredibly eloquent.

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**“... in some parts of the country, cuts in spending have already had repercussions on the level of support which is afforded to small voluntary and community sector groups. This is occurring at a time when these groups are facing a greater than ever demand for their services.”**

These case studies also show that small rural VCS groups have in many cases been able to come up with much needed solutions. These small rural VCS groups operate on very low incomes and are highly reliant on the support of their volunteers and supporters. And yet, the case studies in this document have shown that, despite the low budget available to them, they make a huge difference to people's quality of life.

In other words, these small VCS groups offer tremendous value for money. It is our hope that government, both central and local, will continue to promote and protect their work and will not allow rapid and poorly managed cuts to damage it irrevocably.

## Appendix 1: How can rural stakeholders use existing statistics more effectively?

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This appendix intends to draw attention to the availability of a new easy-to-use database which clearly demonstrates the share of rural deprivation across Yorkshire and the Humber. Evidencing Rural Needs ([www.rural-evidence.org.uk](http://www.rural-evidence.org.uk)) was set up as a result of a concern that levels of deprivation encountered by many people living in the most rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber has not so far been fully recognised or acted upon.

The main point of this briefing is to show that the majority of deprived people do not live in “most deprived areas”. Analysing evidence at a more detailed level shows that the presence of a significant number of disadvantaged rural residents is masked by the general affluence of a larger geographic area.

The rural share of deprivation in terms of the number of persons affected is substantially larger than might be expected from analysis of the most deprived super output areas.

**The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that, across Yorkshire and the Humber, only 3.4% of the most deprived areas<sup>18</sup> are in a rural setting. However when we dig deeper we find that the proportion of disadvantaged people<sup>19</sup> living in rural areas is actually close to 13%.**

Often, the programmes aimed specifically at areas of concentrated poverty (the most deprived super-output areas) fail to reach a large number of deprived individuals and families who happen to live outside these hotspots. The issue is made worse by the high cost of living in a rural setting (in terms of transport or heating for example).

While there is a great deal of data available for villages, hamlets and smaller towns, this information had not been previously been brought together so succinctly in a single resource for all settlements in rural England. The database was set up by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) in partnership with Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI).

**Evidencing Rural Needs** provides rural partners with the summary information to effectively represent rural issues in local and regional programme strategy, planning and prioritisation. Through its website, it allows local partners to quickly find the information for their area. The Humber and Wolds Rural community Council and Rural Action Yorkshire are keen to ensure that the database is used for the benefit of rural populations and encourage interest on the part of groups and communities.

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<sup>18</sup> As measured by the number of super output areas belonging to the most deprived 20% across the region. Source: *Action with Communities in Rural England* (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and the Humber*, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.4.

### Some key facts<sup>20</sup>

- 1,025,510 people live in rural areas<sup>21</sup>, 19.7% of the total across Yorkshire and The Humber.
- Among these rural residents, 92,705 people in rural areas are income deprived – this is 10.9% of the total across Yorkshire and The Humber.
- Across rural Yorkshire and The Humber 11.3% of all children live in income deprived households.
- 196,735 adults in rural areas have no qualifications, 16.6% of the total number of adults with no qualifications across Yorkshire and The Humber.
- 17.5% of older people in rural Yorkshire and The Humber receive Pension Credit Guarantee Element.
- 66,400 rural households have no car or van, 10.6% of the total across Yorkshire and The Humber.

### Finding out more

*Evidencing Rural Needs* depicts the real picture of socio-economic deprivation across rural areas of England and will enable groups to influence more effectively. The database was designed in order to help service providers target resources to the right areas, to support funding applications, and to provide local communities with the evidence to develop community and parish plans.

*Evidencing Rural Needs* comprises a series of web-based reports, prepared for a range of geographic scales, which highlight the incidence of deprivation in rural communities throughout England. *Evidencing Rural Needs* is available at a wide range of geographies:

- regional, county, unitary and shire districts
- local economic partnerships
- parliamentary constituencies
- parishes
- “rural place” (highlighting some 5,000 rural communities with populations down to about 300).

Six separate types of reports are available. Firstly, the **Rural Share of Deprivation Reports** are core reports populated with data which identifies the proportion of people experiencing one of a number of aspects of deprivation for any given locality.

Secondly, the **Most Deprived Rural Areas Reports** pick out the most deprived areas that are rural by undertaking the analysis of data at Output Area level (average of 300 people). They also look at what those areas are like in terms of their broad characteristics e.g. having higher levels of unemployed, lone parents, children, social housing, long term illness, etc.

Thirdly, the **Rural Place Profiles Reports** are available for each Rural Place included in the system. These are not parishes but settlement and hinterland areas with populations from about 300 upwards. These reports provide data and charts about that place’s population including its health, employment, housing, access to services and levels of deprivation and low income together with a map showing the boundaries of the area concerned. Each can be extremely useful for informing local community activity such as community planning or for evidencing funding bids.

Fourthly, the **Who’s there in the Daytime Reports** look at the characteristics of the day time population in each local authority area, which is a very useful tool for targeting day-time services. This report takes into account

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<sup>20</sup> Source: Action with Communities in Rural England (2010). *The Rural Share of Deprivation in Yorkshire and the Humber*, p.4–18.

<sup>21</sup> The term “rural” is defined by the ONS / Countryside Agency as referring to all areas outside settlements with populations of more than 10 000 people.

## How the voluntary and community sector reaches out to the most disadvantaged residents in Yorkshire and the Humber

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commuting flows both to and from rural areas and among other things can help to highlight the significance of home working in some rural areas. It is only available at local authority level.

Fifthly, the [Rural Economy Reports](#) provide an insight into the number of VAT-registered enterprises, micro businesses and large businesses, employment rates, wellbeing of the various industry sectors, level of qualifications of the workforce, income levels and the intensity of competition for jobs.

Finally, the [Access to Services Reports](#) document the rural population's access to financial services (banks, cash points...), health services, schools and colleges of further education, job centres etc. Because of the strong connection between access to services and travel, the reports also show statistics that include rural residents' travel time to their nearest service. The travel times are calculated for car journeys and for journeys by public transport.

The data can be accessed by groups and organisations who are interested in working in close partnership with Rural Action Yorkshire and the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council in tackling the issue of rural deprivation.

*Evidencing Rural Needs* provides robust data to target programmes to the right areas, support funding applications, and help local communities with the evidence-base to support the development of community and parish plans. Together, we can ensure that persons experiencing hardship in rural settings receive all the attention and support needed to overcome the difficulties which they face.

# Appendix 2: About the contributors

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### **Yorkshire and Humber Rural Network**

The network is funded by the Big Lottery Fund's BASIS 2 programme. It is designed to bring together all voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) that have an interest in rural issues in Yorkshire and the Humber.

[www.involveyorkshirehumber.org.uk/our-work/rural-network](http://www.involveyorkshirehumber.org.uk/our-work/rural-network)

### **Yorkshire Rural Support Network**

Established 15 years ago, the Yorkshire Rural Support Network is a partnership of Yorkshire statutory and voluntary agencies that together promote and provide sources of help – whether practical, financial, medical or emotional. The aim of the Network is to alleviate stress in Yorkshire's farming community.

[www.yas.co.uk/en/about-yas/networks-support/yrsn](http://www.yas.co.uk/en/about-yas/networks-support/yrsn)

### **Rural Action Yorkshire**

Rural Action Yorkshire is an independent organisation established in 1929 working with villages and smaller rural communities throughout North, West and South Yorkshire to help improve the quality of life of the people who live and work there. The organisation works with local communities to recognise and develop the skills and knowledge that exists within the community. Rural Action Yorkshire also aims to ensure that rural issues and 'the rural voice' are heard, acknowledged and addressed by the decision and policy makers at all levels of government.

[www.ruralyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.ruralyorkshire.org.uk)

### **Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council**

The vision of the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council is that rural communities will increasingly take a leading role in ensuring the social, environmental and economic well-being of all their residents. Provide for future and present generations, stimulate their thinking, support their work and turns their aspirations into reality.

[www.hwrcc.org.uk](http://www.hwrcc.org.uk)

### **Involve Yorkshire & Humber**

Involve Yorkshire & Humber supports the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to create a strong society and fair communities, with opportunities for all, throughout Yorkshire and the Humber.

[www.involveyorkshirehumber.org.uk](http://www.involveyorkshirehumber.org.uk)

### **Churches' Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber**

The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber (CRC) is a Christian organisation that is proactive with public bodies and faith partners in promoting regeneration in the region. Its aims are to represent the churches to statutory bodies in Yorkshire and Humber, to challenge social, economic, and educational disadvantage, and promote wellbeing, and to equip churches for social action.

[www.crc-online.org.uk](http://www.crc-online.org.uk)

### **Age UK North Yorkshire**

Age Concern (Age UK) exists to promote the well-being of all older people recognising their right to independence, fulfillment, dignity and choice, working with them to help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. All Age UKs (Age Concerns) in the Yorkshire and Humber region believe that people in later life are entitled to the help they need to improve their own sense of well-being and to have control of their own lives, and that these principles must always be a part of planning services and working with older people.

[www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-services-search/local-services/age-uk-north-yorkshire-england](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-services-search/local-services/age-uk-north-yorkshire-england)

### **Perennial Horticultural Charity**

Perennial is the national charity for people who are working in, have worked in or retired from the gardening trades, providing advice help and support for horticulturalists who are facing need or difficulties. Perennial helps by providing money and services, and by ensuring people get the help they need from government departments, public and private organisations that are there to assist.

[www.perennial.org.uk](http://www.perennial.org.uk)

### **Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution**

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) is a grant-making charity that supports members of the farming community facing need, hardship or distress. It was founded in 1860 and has an unbroken history of providing long-term care and emergency help. The help is provided for retired farmers, farm workers and working farmers and their families who find themselves in financial difficulties.

[www.rabi.org.uk](http://www.rabi.org.uk)

### **Ryedale Citizens Advice Bureau**

The Citizens Advice Bureau service aims to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. The service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/bureau\\_detail.htm?serialnumber=100573](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/bureau_detail.htm?serialnumber=100573)

### **York Carers Centre**

York Carers Centre is an independent body that helps unpaid carers in York find the support they need. Carers provide regular help to a partner, child, relative, friend or neighbour due to frailty, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability.

[www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk](http://www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk)

### **Yorkshire Farm Crisis Network**

The Yorkshire Farm Crisis Network provides pastoral and practical support to farming people during periods of anxiety, stress and problems relating to both the farm household and the farm business.

[www.farmcrisisnetwork.co.uk/Yorkshire](http://www.farmcrisisnetwork.co.uk/Yorkshire)



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