

SURE START
DRAFT CONSULTATION REPORT

COMMUNITIES
IN THE RURAL
CHESTER DISTRICT

MARCH 2006

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INTRODUCTION

This report explains and summarises the process and main findings of a consultation exercise on rural childcare and integrated services. Headteachers from schools in the rural area of the Chester district were consulted about existing provision and their recommendations for future plans with regard to Children's Centre Services and Partnership working. Thirteen Primary schools and one High school were represented.

CONTEXT

Through the Children Act of 2004 and Every Child Matters (ECM), the Government has set out its policy for all services working with children to collaborate to improve the lives of all children and families, whatever their circumstances or backgrounds. This approach will shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives to preventing things going wrong in the first place.

The Cheshire vision is firmly based on the ECM agenda and is that "All children and young people have the right: to be healthy, happy and safe; to feel loved, valued and respected; and to have high aspirations for their future.

Cheshire Sure Start is responsible for developing an integrated services approach through Children's Centres and Extended Services.

Children's Centres will provide integrated child care (pre-birth to the age of five and beyond), education and family support, including health, employment and training opportunities for parents and carers.

Extended services will develop partnership working between Children's Centres, Extended Schools and Local Authority officers and departments. It is not expected that schools will develop and provide extended services on their own. In many cases schools will find it more effective to work in networks with other agencies to provide extended services.

There is no one model for developing Extended services or Children's Centres and Cheshire Sure Start recognises that the provision in rural communities will need to have greater flexibility. Due to the smaller numbers of children, the dispersed nature of rural areas and the needs of the community urban models will not be as effective.

Cheshire Sure Start wanted to ensure that stakeholder views were included in the planning of strategy for rural childcare and integrated service. The consultation process would involve headteachers of rural schools in the Chester district. Leaders of other services or departments in the Local authority would be asked about previous consultations that could provide additional data.

METHODOLOGY

The consultation process consisted of three parts.

Part 1

Headteachers of all the schools in the Chester rural area were invited to a consultation morning facilitated by a former Cheshire headteacher who now works as a consultant. Thirteen primary headteachers attended and the headteacher from the one High School in the area. The schools represented are listed in Appendix A.

The questions for the session were:

1. What early years or partnership work already exists?
2. What are the issues to consider when planning the provision for rural areas?
3. What is needed for the Chester rural communities?

Details of the group responses from the consultation morning are listed in Appendix B.

Part 2

During the planning stage of this consultation, members of the Senior Leadership Team identified other people, within the Children's Services or Local Authority, who may be able to offer additional data from previous consultations. These people were interviewed separately and a summary of their advice is in Appendix C. Relevant information has been incorporated into the key findings.

Part 3

There are many agencies nationally and internationally who are concerned with the needs of rural families and who are consulting or gathering data from communities to help in the planning and delivery of services. A review of literature and research on other agencies and local authorities is in Appendix D. There are some references to this literature in the key findings.

KEY FINDINGS

Consultation question one

What early years or partnership work already exists?

1. The headteachers of the ten primary schools which form the BFGS network have an existing long-term tradition of working collaboratively on:
 - staff and governor training
 - provision for able pupils
 - arts events
 - being an Inclusion Cluster

They are also partners with the Bishop Heber High School and access a range of facilities including Sport and ICT.

Schools that are not within the BFGS belong to other clusters, some are part of network Learning Communities linked to the National College for School Leadership.
2. The primary Schools already have a range of pre-school provision. Some of the smaller schools share The Rural Outreach Nursery, based at Tilston Primary School. Others have toddler groups and playgroups that hire space on the premises. There is one independent nursery.
3. All the schools have existing links with a range of community groups. Some have strong links with the local church and Parish Councils; a number of headteachers have been involved with the development of Parish Plans. Where space allows some schools are able to offer community groups rooms for meetings and events.
4. Several schools provide after school or breakfast club facilities. Some primary schools have arrangements with health services (e.g. speech therapist and school nurse) where the specialist visits school on a weekly or regular basis. Many schools have provided a range of Family Learning opportunities.
5. The Bishop Heber High School provides facilities and expertise for the community in many ways. It is a Language College, has joint use sports facilities, a community library, On-Line learning centre and is used by the community for adult education classes. They have regular links with other agencies through the South Cheshire Drug Service and termly Multi-agency meetings to support student's needs.

Consultation question two**What are the issues to consider when planning the provision for rural areas?**

1. Parents and the community should be asked about the need and demand for services. Some extended services already offered elsewhere e.g. certain types of parenting classes may not be wanted. Also parent's opinions about where services should be situated as there are traditional allegiances to certain towns and villages. Consequently there are deep rooted perceptions that certain places are too far away. Asking families about their needs should raise aspirations as they often have low expectations about resources and services for rural areas. They need to know how rural deprivation is planned for, in entitlement processes. There is a concern among professionals that there may be fewer referrals from rural areas because there is no provision within the area
2. The community in these rural districts is multi-layered and diverse. The community may centre around catchment areas or parental choice or faith groupings. Some communities are centred around networks of interest, for example sports facilities or community buildings. There are differences in values, attitudes and expectations. However whatever the centre of interest there are strong feeling of belonging.
3. The feeling of belonging to a community, is the characteristic which enables a community to act together in shared interest to achieve a common goal. It can also be activated in response to an outside or inside threat against the perceived needs and values of a community. This characteristic is important for other agencies to recognise as they can use it to work with the community towards a shared goal.
4. The wealth profile in the rural areas is very mixed from families who own their homes to those who live in tied estate cottages. There are numbers of parents who choose private education and care for their children. Some parents who reside in certain rural communities do not want to access childcare or extended services in nearby areas because they are labelled as areas of deprivation. Some parents have deliberately chosen a rural setting and rejected urban lifestyles.
5. The existing funding structures for rural schools mean that headteachers have significant teaching commitments. Individually they have less time to liaise with partners and manage other providers of services, especially when they may be liaising with other agencies on behalf of very small numbers of children. School leaders want to work for their communities and with partners. They are striving to achieve a balance between the inward focus of the standards agenda and outward focus on working with other agencies.

6. Public transport difficulties restrict access and choice and some parents have limited use of private transport. School visits, to support an Excellence and Enjoyment curriculum, involve high transport costs due to smaller numbers in each school.
7. Isolation due to geography and lack of transport creates difficulties in employing part-time staff, for example Mid-day Assistants and Teaching Assistants. This also applies to attracting external experts to work with children on arts and sports projects.
8. As this rural region of Cheshire is adjacent to the border of Shropshire and Wales there are problems relating to the transfer of data between agencies. The ethos of partnership working is also limited when there are disputes about responsibilities connected with providing funding and resources for special needs and transport.
9. Many schools in the Chester rural area are old and small in design. Although extensions have been added there is not spare space for extended or community use.
10. A lack of street lighting and footpaths creates safety issues and impacts on the use of some buildings. For example, access to small schools on winter nights when there is no street lighting or walking children between school and community buildings in daylight hours.
11. Small schools feel vulnerable in the process of Transforming Learning Communities. In the very diverse communities represented in these schools it is recognised by parents and professionals that the school provides a stable centre where staff are committed to engaging with other agencies for the well-being of all children.
12. There are still tensions around rural schools working collaboratively and yet being in competition with each other to increase the number of children on role. If services (e.g. nursery) are based in some schools then these may seem more attractive to parents and schools without those services may lose families. However there are many examples of collaborative activities between schools, including the sharing of expertise through leading teachers based in different schools.
13. It is widely recognised, by all agencies concerned with supporting rural communities, that there are greater costs incurred in the provision of services to families in rural districts. Therefore cost effectiveness measures are different from those in urban areas. Subsidies available for rural regeneration should be used to support extended schools and integrated services. Recently outreach funding for youth groups on school premises has been withdrawn. There was no explanation for this. Stakeholders want a transparent approach regarding funding so that they know what amounts are available and from which sources.

14. As the newly formed Children's Services is still at a very early stage of development in creating and establishing its values, processes and resources the current perception is that it is not yet offering the level of support to schools that they are used to and need. Therefore more dialogue is needed to explain the different roles and possible changes in statutory duties for Local Authorities. Trust needs to build so that the mutual suspicion of the past is transformed into honest and open partnerships that will enable the successful implementation of the ECM agenda.

Consultation question three

What is needed for the Chester rural communities?

1. Plan more time to investigate needs and discuss options with representatives from all agencies and communities (remembering that headteacher management time is reduced due to teaching commitments in smaller schools therefore longer timescales need to be allowed when arranging meetings). Focus groups could be used for the initial consultation on community needs
2. Include young people in the consultation and planning processes.
3. These discussions should include the creation of a multi-agency base in the locality (the governors at Bishop Heber High School could be asked to consider situating this on the premises). Professionals would then work from this base using outreach models to meet the needs of children and families in the rural communities on an equitable basis. A joint governing or management body representing all participating schools and communities would manage the service.
4. Mobile units could be designed for some services e.g, health checks and specialist guidance. For example, CLOWNS is a voluntary organisation in West Somerset that has been providing mobile play sessions for many years. Now with the Sure Start programme it is taking health visitors to isolated homes using a van specially adapted with a play space and separate consultation area. Marilyn Houston from Sure Start has already researched detailed specifications and costings for a mobile classroom. These could be used as a basis for decisions on other adapted vehicles.
5. Recognise individual children's needs and entitlements in providing equitable access to services e.g. EWO, school nurse, speech therapy, training from Educational Psychologists, advice from special needs experts, Extend the Rural Outreach Nursery provision so that all communities have access.

6. All representatives from agencies involved in this process (Appendix C) felt that more could be done to improve the provision of services in rural areas. There is a need for staff from all agencies to collaborate and share data, expectations and good practice. Cross-agency working is challenging and it needs time to build trust and mutual accountability. This means there are two processes to be managed; the delivery of the service and the removing of barriers between services. This will take time and personnel who can co-ordinate and facilitate on behalf of all those who work for children and families. The role of volunteer workers is crucial in so many services and they too need to feel valued and part of all cross-agency planning.

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John Hattersley
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 Terry Jones
 Filip Prevc
 Margo Webb

Finally a thank you to members of the Sure Start team, Ric Turnock and Jane France for providing contact details and additional information.

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APPENDIX A

Schools that were involved in the consultation session

Bickerton Primary
Bishop Heber High
Capenhurst CE Head
Clutton CE Head
Doddleston CE Primary
Duddon primary
Farndon Primary
Harthill Primary
Huxley CE Primary
Saighton Primary
Shocklach Oviatt CE Primary
Tattenhall Park Primary
Tilston Parochial Primary
Tushingham Primary

APPENDIX B

The following notes were collated from the discussions of headteachers, working in groups, during the consultation session on 20.3.06.

What early years work or partnerships already exist?

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Collaboration with Other schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Staff INSET (BFG and Bishop Heber High School) Governor training High School – Partnership Sport and ICT Inclusion Cluster |
| Early Years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Outreach Nursery Toddler groups Playgroups Independent Nurseries |
| Community Links | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church and Diocese Senior Citizens Community use the schools Fire Service -Pilot Community programme - Farndon University Links Some schools involved with Parish Plans Sport clubs in the community – links Some partnerships with local/ business or industry Parish Council – Shocklach, Huxley Village Hall Parent Associations Mini Rural Touring Networks -Shocklach Volunteer groups (BCTV) - Shocklach Local Transport Agreement Village Foundation - Duddon Village events Business in the Community Project -Doddleston |
| Extended Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music For Life Able Children Sessions (BFG schools) Able Children LA project with urban schools AEMS After school clubs wide variety -(external agencies and school based) After school care After school clubs – Sports Partnership Family Learning / Parental workshops /adult support – ICT, drugs, First Aid, Parenting Wrap around care Pre school provision |

Health Services – nurse, speech and language, dentist, O.H.,
IMPS emergency training

Local Authority EWO service (registers checks only in Primary schools)
Local Transport Agreement
Educational Psychologists leading group meetings for SENCOs

Bishop Heber
High School

Community Library
“No Limits” on line learning centre
Scouts/Guides/ATC use the premises
Joint use sports facility
Adult Education sessions
Language College Community Education
Reprographic Support
Special Schools and Academies Trust (MLD Unit)
D of E Award Scheme
Business Partnership (BRAINSELLS)
Parents in Partnership
Involved in the Parish Plan
Music for Life
Connexions
Drugs Service in South Cheshire (PADA, DISC)
Multi-agency termly meetings (AMHS, Ed Psyc, Soc Serv, Sp
therapy, School Health, EWO, Police, Behaviour Support
Team)
Breakfast Club
Child Line

What are the issues to consider when planning the provision for rural areas?

Transport

- Limited public transport – infrequent and not at appropriate times therefore restricts access and choice
- Some parents have limited access to private transport
- School visits always involve high transport costs (fewer numbers) e.g. swimming lessons, evening activities, curriculum visits, galleries, museums, theatres, religious centres all relating to Excellence and Enjoyment and challenging mono-cultural issues
- Safety issues to walk when there are no footpaths, no street-lighting

Isolation

- Difficulty of employing MDAs and teaching assistants or attracting volunteers to work in schools
- Difficulty of employing or being part of projects that use external experts e.g. sports coaches, artists, performers as they need their own transport
- Lack of shops and petrol stations

- Arranging sports fixtures and other collaborations involves more practical problems – fewer children in one setting and transport issues

Wealth Profile

- Many families choose private schools and before/after school care
- Wide range of housing private/council/tied cottage
- Parents living in some areas (Doddleston) would not access services in nearby geographic areas (Lache)

Parents

- Many parents do not want some of the services offered as they feel they do not apply to them e.g. parenting classes
- Does demand for services exist? An audit is needed of local communities to find out what their needs, expectations, values etc. are
- Parent perceptions of travel “Chester too far away”. They have traditional allegiances to small towns e.g. Whitchurch
- Parents are used to the lack of resources and services in rural areas and often do not expect or demand improvements e.g. street-lighting around buildings to make them safer for use in winter evenings

Cross Borders

- Data restrictions
- LA responsibilities e.g. for special needs and transport

Size Matters

- Headteacher’s teaching commitment
- numbers of children in year cohorts impact on the external provision for wrap around care and activities – cost prohibitive

Accommodation

- Lack of physical space – old buildings not purpose built for extended schools

Community

- Is multi-layered e.g. the catchment area, parental choice area, faith choice, children from several village communities in one school
- Dormitory communities they often have chosen rural life so do not want to get involved
- lack of street lighting means that it is less safe to use school building at night
- network of interests rather than geographical communities, can be based on a building (school, community centre, sports facility)
- families live in isolation from each other and services, cultural activities
- fewer businesses and industry in the rural area therefore less business sponsorship or partnerships

Local Authority

- Services during the reorganisation - who to contact re advice for pupils and adults
- Extra provision should be co-ordinated to avoid duplication

- There is a lack of services at the moment e.g. Ed. Psychologist therefore it is not consistent or equal across areas of the LA – poorer quality of provision in the rural areas.

What is needed for the Chester rural communities?

- Multi-agency services based in the High School, being in a central but local base (**not Chester**) will facilitate cross-agency communication with mobile units. Equitable provision for all schools. Lead professional answerable to a joint governing body (members from all participating communities/schools).

This would avoid individual schools becoming centres of excellence in any particular provision. Lead learners in each school become experts. This is currently the BFGS model (Leaders in ICT, KS1, KS2, Admin, Maths etc.)

- Recognise individual children's needs and provide equitable access to services e.g. EWO, school nurse, speech therapy, training from Educational Psychologists, advice from special needs experts,
- Allow time to investigate, negotiate, plan, facilitate and train with representatives of all involved to enable people to feel a part of something worthwhile for their communities. Remember that headteacher management time is reduced due to teaching commitments
- Extend the Rural Outreach Nursery provision so that it is equitable for all communities

APPENDIX C

The following personnel were contacted or interviewed as they provide services related to ECM or because they have been involved in collating information about rural communities. A brief summary of relevant information is included

John Hattersley - Inclusion Manager for Cheshire County Council

John has commissioned a report on Rural Dimensions of Inclusion from an external consultant Derek Wilson of Inclusive Solutions. The consultation involved headteachers from the rural Chester area. At the time of going to print this report was not yet finalised.

Melanie Hind - Barnados Chester, Disabled Family Services

Melanie explained how families with disabled children, in the Chester rural area, had traditionally always needed to travel to Chester to access services. This creates additional pressures on parents and carers. Three years ago a rural youth club for young people with disabilities was established in collaboration with the Youth Federation and LIVE. It is based at Burwardsley Village Institute. Currently there are 7 members, aged between 11 and 16. It is hoped that the club could be extended to younger children. The sessions need lots of volunteer workers. The organisers would also welcome young people who have no disabilities to join the sessions.

Terry Jones – Children’s Service Manager (seconded from Barnados)

Terry explained that the rural Chester district was part of the West Cheshire area and that Barnados and Social Services staff would be completing a consultation in West Cheshire to find about about needs in the area. Open forums and questionnaires would be used.

Filip Prevc – Rural Development Manager Cheshire County Council

Filip provided advice on the following consultations and plans:

Parish Plans are currently being produced by all parishes following guidance from the Countryside Agency. The scope of a typical Parish Plan is not limited or set out in detail - local people can decide for themselves what should be covered - it could be local services; village halls; transport; recycling; and renewable energy;

Parish Plans will link closely with the local development plans produced by a district councils, and can be adopted by the Local Authority as official "Supplementary Planning Guidance". This means that the Plans will have a strong and positive influence on where and how development takes place in a parish.

Cheshire Rural Community Survey 2005 this was undertaken by Cheshire County Council as part a Local Service Agreement with the government in 2002 which set 13 targets for improvement over 3 years. One target is to increase social cohesion in

rural communities. 1060 people were interviewed from 15 rural parishes within Cheshire. The conclusions were:

- Most people liked living in rural Cheshire and feel that they have a good quality of life (97%)
- For the most part people detected a community spirit in their neighbourhoods and felt safe. The access to services and facilities was considered easy and having to travel further for cultural and entertainment facilities was considered acceptable.
- Rurality can prove to be a barrier for a relatively small few, causing inconvenience, and isolation at worst. There were some who couldn't access services and amenities as well as they would like to and who felt that their quality of life was poor.

Margo Webb - Locality Manager, Children's Services Chester

Margo is the chairperson of the Children and Young People's Partnership for the Chester group which consists of people who represent statutory and voluntary agencies. Margo is willing to put the rural communities issue on to the agenda at one of the regular monthly meetings so that all representatives can offer their views and information on current provisions and cross-agency working.

In 2003 staff from the Cheshire County Council - Social Care Family Support Service and the NCH Lache Family Centre held a morning workshop on Delivering Services to Rural Areas. This session identified the barriers, advantages and disadvantages for those in rural communities. This information is still available to support plans for rural services.

Margo provided several copies of case studies from The Countryside Agency. These are listed in Appendix D

APPENDIX D

A review of agencies, relevant research and literature.

Commission for Rural Communities www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

From 1 April 2005, the Commission for Rural Communities was established as an operating division of the Countryside Agency. Resulting from Defra's Rural Strategy, published in July 2004, the Commission will act as a rural advocate, expert adviser and independent watchdog for rural communities, with a particular focus on rural disadvantage. Current studies are about: Choice for Rural People and Rural Disadvantage.

A database holds information on thousands of projects that rural communities in this country and abroad have undertaken to improve their quality of life. There is also information on publications, policy approaches and links to other organisations that promote best practice. The following examples relate to this consultation.

Community Learning & Information Vehicle – CLIVE Case009069

This project is building on a successful pilot, delivering a varied package of community support information and learning opportunities to people in rural West Berkshire. Pilot to finish in March 2003.

The project aims to deliver a multi-reach resource, information and education based community resource which can take a range of services directly to rural communities. This should reduce the need to use the limited public transport network.

Canterbury Rural Mobile Youth Facilities Case009061

To provide a mobile youth facility to engage young people who are socially excluded as a result of rural isolation, who do not have adequate access to other local youth facilities.

The Countryside Agency www.countryside.gov.uk

The Countryside Agency is the statutory champion and watchdog working to make the quality of life better for people in the countryside and the quality of the countryside better for everyone. It is funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Agency has established good working relationships with DfES colleagues in a number of key policy areas including Sure Start, Childcare, Early Years and Schools

Current Work being funded by the Countryside Agency:

- *The Tynedale Youth Outreach* project in Northumberland has successfully established an approach based on young people themselves identifying their own needs. The result has helped involve and engage children who were in

danger of being excluded from schools. It has developed a good practice model to demonstrate how to work with young people.

- *Greenstart* is a 3 year pilot in the North East working on schemes to develop parks and public spaces to improve provision for young people and families
- *A youth taxi share project* which provides a service for two evenings a week for young people in rural West Hampshire so they can access leisure activities

The implementation of Connexions in rural areas: a good practice guide. This was co-produced with the Connexions Service to support the Government strategy of ensuring that young people aged 13 – 19 stay in education or training.

Delivering effective services to Children and Families in Rural Areas: the early lessons from SureStart (CA151 – Nov.2003) National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations. Copies can be downloaded from www.countryside.gov.uk/publications

The report summary (page 5) suggests several factors that need to be considered, including the following:

- The need for early and continuous engagement with communities
- Addressing the reluctance to change
- Being prepared for a slow pace of development and initial low levels of take-up
- Providing a range of mobile and outreach services

Included in the report are many examples of services already provided such as setting up Children's Centres in the Oswestry rural district and outreach provision in Somerset. CLOWNS is a voluntary organisation in West Somerset that has been providing mobile play sessions for many years. Now with the Sure Start programme it is taking health visitors to isolated homes using a van specially adapted with a play space and separate consultation area

Defra www.defra.gov.uk

The Department for Rural Affairs was created in 2001 as a government department to represent the interests of rural areas.

The Delivery of Education in Rural Communities A report by the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee 2002/03. The report recommended that Defra should monitor and report on the effects of education policy in rural areas. Also it should contribute to innovative solutions to the problems and issues in rural communities. Defra urges the government to consider the needs of rural areas carefully as it prepares its extended schools policies to ensure that rurality is a positive criterion for qualifying for available funds. (page 13)

DFES www.dfes.gov.uk

Education Improvement Partnerships Conference 2nd and 3rd November 2005

Kerry de Jager the Extended Schools Co-ordinator from Chalvedon School Basildon spoke about her role in supporting the collaborative in East Basildon which is delivering extended provision in 23 schools. This includes wrap-around childcare, parenting support and community access to facilities. They are encouraging visits and are using a tracking system across agencies

The National Children's Bureau www.ncb.org.uk

Forum for Rural Children and Young People This is an umbrella body for national organisations interested in improving outcomes for children and young people in rural England.

Every Child Matters: A rural response

www.ncb.org.uk/resources/ffrc_ecm_response This consultation report noted how many of the barriers to joint working are created by bureaucracy and regulations that may make sense in urban contexts but need further thought in rural areas. It also stated the need to consider the additional costs, longer timescales to gain trust and problems with sustainability in planning services for rural communities.

National College for School Leadership www.ncsl.org.uk

The college has produced many documents and studies on leading extended schools and the changing roles of headteachers and local authorities. The following are examples of the wealth of literature provided to support change.

Developing Community Leaders This examines different aspects of community leadership and partnerships

Ldr The magazine for school leadership. Jan.2006 No. 20 The future of headship
This issue features articles on new forms of headship to meet the needs of the Every Child Matters agenda and Better Schools For All. Co-headship, joint, federated and executive headship are all featured

Lessons from extended schools This publication explores the complex implications for extended schools and features the need for collaboration between professional groups in identifying the needs of the local community

Local authority in a network-based system How Local Authorities will grasp the opportunity to facilitate networks and re-configure their own functions

Taking the Wide View: the new leadership of extended schools. A summary of work from seminars with 500 school leaders, exploring the challenges headteachers face.

nctl.org.uk/communityleadership This site provides a range of documents to help leaders address the ECM agenda

Save the Children www.savethechildren.org

Children and Domestic Violence in Rural Areas (8.9.03). The Countryside Agency commissioned Save the Children to research this report in 2002. Among the many findings were that Local Authorities should facilitate joint service provision of shared facilities to improve access to support for domestic violence issues.

Sure Start

Cornwall Mini Lizard Rural Sure Start sjphillips@cornwall.gov.uk

Mini Lizards have been out and about in their bright yellow and green information bus for two years now, supporting all the pre-school and childcare facilities throughout the area. They have planned, implemented and evaluated a series of activities such as puppet shows, beach days, outings, craft workshops and music and dance sessions.

The Toy Traveller is a complete toy library on wheels – not just a delivery service. The toys are actually on board and families can take them away there and then. The unit also carries information for families with regard to other Sure Start services.

Mini Lizards are also able to deliver a range of health and welfare services, including paediatric resuscitation, baby massage and toddler gym.

Sure Start Oswestry surestartoswestry@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

The Oswestry Area Children's Centre will comprise a town centre 40 place childcare facility, a base for multi agency teams and childminders, and five purpose-built Family Centres located adjacent to local Primary Schools (three in outlying villages and two within the town).

Due to the added complexity of providing services in multiple settings, specialist groups on offer, such as 'Bumps and Babes', the Incredible Years parenting course, Food for Thought (healthy eating) and Bounce and Rhyme, are rotated around the centres to ensure that each village community has access to all that Sure Start Oswestry has to offer.

Teachernet www.teachernet.gov.uk

Case Studies

Extended facilities save rural school from closure

Clifton upon Teme primary school (with 75 children on role) has found that offering extended services has helped to prevent the closure of the school and attract more pupils.

The school is part of Worcestershire's proposals to become a Children's Centre, acting as a hub within the community, providing healthcare and family support alongside education and integrated care for young children. There is a mobile Toy Library and there are plans for a health visitor 'drop in' and 'stay and play' sessions. Website: www.cliftonuponteme.ik.org

Falling rolls in rural areas Wiltshire County Council

Tackling falling rolls in rural areas by a mixture of reorganisation and encouragement to collaborate

Following some unsuccessful attempts at closing small rural schools, the local authority sees collaboration between schools as a key mechanism for addressing the problem of falling rolls. Its preferred option is amalgamation whilst retaining the individual school bases, as at Wylve Valley and Whitesheet schools.

Wylve Valley Primary School will be formed from the amalgamation of two existing schools 4½ miles apart in Wiltshire: Steeple Langford is a voluntary aided first school with 31 pupils aged four to nine. It has had difficulties recruiting a new head teacher since the retirement of the previous head at Christmas 2003. Codford is a voluntary controlled primary school with 98 pupils aged four to eleven.

Planning extended provision Details which authorities that have mapped current services

Because extended services have often developed without central planning, some local authorities do not have a complete picture of what is already on offer. So it makes sense to conduct a survey to determine the community use being made of local schools as part of the development of an extended schools strategy. Local authorities that have mapped current services in this way include **Rochdale, Solihull and Wiltshire**.

Times Educational Supplement www.tes.co.uk

Babies Before Postcodes 3.2.06 A report about how a community nurse based with the Fenland Borders Sure Start project is helping families in a rural area that covers two counties. Both counties fund the project. The report notes that often

“bureaucratic boundaries can create gaps in public services through which whole families can fall”.

Related literature

A Rural Strategy 2002 – 2006. Supporting the future of Cherwell’s rural communities and countryside Cherwell Community planning Partnership (2001)

This is a working document to be reviewed and amended so that it remains up to date. It includes examples of initiatives prompted by local needs such as health advice in pubs and a mobile healthy living centre for flu vaccinations and footcare.

The document explains how the planning partnership was established, who was involved and what consultation processes were conducted. Action plans are included.

Northumberland Rural Strategy and Action Plan (2003). NSP The document aims to provide a clear and long term direction for the policies and resources of all organisations with the potential to deliver social and economic change in rural Northumberland. One strategy is the Raising of Aspirations project in High Schools.

A Strategy for the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (2004) Preston, P.

An Extended Confederation www.horleylp.org.uk The Horley Learning Partnership, in Surrey, has recently established an Extended Confederation to provide a range of services and activities, beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, families and the wider community. The confederation is a way of accelerating the progress towards achieving the ECM agenda.

Strengthening Community Networks: The Basis for Sustainable Community Renewal (Formative Evaluation) Prepared by Brett Lane and Diane Dorfman June 30, 1997 Northwest Regional Education Laboratory US.

This paper explains how to build upon existing community structures, as well as to create new connections necessary for community renewal. Two distinct techniques are recommended as having great potential for success and sustainability. These are: (1) the integration of school and community activities, and (2) the use of dialogue as a means to facilitate understanding within the community and produce an atmosphere for action. The school, particularly in rural communities, is often the strongest (and perhaps only remaining) community institution. It is a gathering point, a centre symbolising community and a resource that can unite the community.