



Children and young people

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Introduction

ACRE believes that children and young people need high quality and fair access to opportunities and services that are focused on their needs and those of their families. This includes access to education, training, employment, sports and recreation and a wider social life

Overview

For many children and young people, the 'rural idyll' of living in the countryside is far from reality. There are no cinemas, clubs, or other facilities their counterparts in urban areas take for granted. This isolation from services is often exacerbated by lack of transport options and hidden poverty.

If a community is to be truly sustainable, vibrant and equitable it needs young people to not move away to access the services and facilities they need. These younger residents can, and should, be a determining factor in the future character of their communities. There is a real danger of communities becoming unbalanced if the population is skewed towards an older demographic.

Unless children and young people live in or near a large market town they — and, by extension, their carers — will need to travel many miles to obtain the services they need. This applies both to services directly for children and young people such as youth clubs, education, and to generic services like cinemas, shops, healthcare and affordable housing. Without access to these services young people may be forced to move away from their communities, often never returning.

Where practicable and affordable, we would like to see a higher number of services and opportunities delivered in rural areas so that children and young people can take advantage of these without the need for travel. However, given the current economic

situation, we understand that this is not feasible in all cases. What is required are considerably improved affordable transport services that work for children and young people. Young people will not then need to rely on parents and more expensive and higher CO₂ emitting cars.

Rural bus services have seen substantial cuts during these times of austerity. The main option that is taking up this 'slack' is community transport. This requires more support to enable these initiatives to become more sustainable, with less need for subsidies, and more able to meet the travel needs of children and young people.

Children and young people should have the option to access age specific and general services in ways that meet their needs and those of their families or carers. ACRE recognises that the level of service provision must be based upon the size of a community to ensure that the services are sustainable.

As such, the ACRE Network delivers activity that supports sustainable rural communities including initiatives developed by the community itself. Using a planned approach, the ACRE Network supports objectives that help develop an appropriate range of accessible services and facilities and the advancement of affordable transport solutions that enable children, young people and families to access services to help meet their needs and aspirations.



For many young people, the rural 'idyll' of living in the countryside is far from the reality





Issue: Young people need jobs or further education when they leave school

The lack of facilities for children and young people is often a problem for those groups and the wider community. Service withdrawal and limited transport means that community members experience problems obtaining services aimed directly at them

Solution: Provide specialist advice and tailored support so that young people have a range of opportunities

During the recent economic downturn, the UK saw a sharp rise in the number of 'NEETs,' particularly in the 16 to 18 age range. The Government coined the term NEET, an acronym of not in education, employment or training, to refer to a young person aged between 16 and 24 who has left school and/or college but has failed to secure a job or placement in some kind of vocational training.

What young people do in the years after compulsory schooling — the qualifications they get, the habits they develop, and the experiences they gain - has an impact for the rest of their lives.

Against this background, many ACRE Network members provide specialist advice and tailored support so that young people have a range of opportunities to choose from.

Cornerstone Angling Skills Training (CAST) is a project run by ACRE Network member Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire, with funding from the Big Lottery Fund, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Connexions, Environment Agency and Nottinghamshire Community Foundation.

The project uses angling as a means to inspire and motivate young people to develop an interest in and enjoy learning by teaching them how to set out to catch specimen-sized fish of a variety of species. This becomes a transferable skill. CAST encourages young people to recognise the merits of learning skills in order to achieve goals and understand the links between education and success.

Schools, Nottinghamshire Learning Centre, Youth Offending Service and Social Services are among the client base.



ACRE Network member The Community Council for Somerset runs the Dairy Careers Project, initially funded by the Big Lottery's Local Food scheme. A one-stop shop for information and resources about dairy careers opportunities, it also provides young people with direct links to the industry.

The project's resources are designed to motivate and encourage young people, teachers and careers advisers to seek out additional information about Somerset's dairy industry. The materials supplied promote both traditional and non-traditional educational routes, targeting 14-25 year olds with any level of education or experience.

Working with businesses, not for profit organisations and other projects, the project is supported by locally run courses, industry visits and workshops.

Schools are encouraged to incorporate the dairy industry into the curriculum and plant the seeds needed to produce new local talent.



Issue: Access to services

Local authority funding cuts and changes to transport subsidies are having an impact on the accessibility of services for children

Solution: Take the service to the people

ACRE Network members provide a range of innovative projects that take services for children and young people out into the community.

Action in Rural Sussex's mobile health project, Your Bus Your Call, was initially set up under the Lottery Healthy Living Centre programme, and continues to provide assertive outreach work to young people living rurally. The project works on all aspects of health promotion, in groups and individually. It also plays a role in reducing tensions between generations and anti-social behaviour.

The team also provides support to volunteers, councils and groups across rural Sussex to help

establish new programmes and projects for, and with, young people, providing training, information and advice as well as one-to-one support for activity leaders and local organisations.

Community Impact Bucks runs the i-Van, a custom converted mobile media studio. For the past few years, the i-Van and its professional team of support staff have been running workshops across the county on animation, photography, music production, film, music mixing and digital art. These are particularly engaging and motivational projects for young people. The van's versatility means it can be positioned in all areas of a community.

Issue: Limited transport options in many rural areas

Lack of public transport plus distance from workplaces poses a challenge for young people in rural areas. Between 2008 and 2012, people living in the most rural areas travelled 50% further per year than those in England as a whole and 63% further than urban dwellers

Solution: Innovative methods of access that meet the needs of young people

Wheels to Work schemes provide affordable transport (often mopeds) to enable young people to travel to work, college or training. It has been estimated that nationally schemes save the country more than £19 million of taxpayers' money per year.

There are over 50 Wheels to Work schemes across England many of which are run by ACRE Network members. Schemes like Shropshire Wheels 2 Work delivered by the Community Council of Shropshire, SCooTS (The Community Development Agency for Hertfordshire) and Wiltshire Wheels to Work (Community First Wiltshire) provide bespoke transport solutions. In addition to enabling



work or college access, they support the strategic and operational objectives of partners such as JobcentrePlus, colleges of higher education and local employers.

As a matter of course, schemes also provide safety training for participants, are instrumental in trialling new innovative transport ideas such as electric mopeds, battery-power-assisted bicycles and enable young disabled people access to work through provision of specialist driving tuition.

Wiltshire Wheels to Work also has a link with local community based saving schemes (Credit Unions) which enables beneficiaries to purchase their own means of transport after returning their Wheels to Work moped.