



**Minutes for the Rural Services Partnership
Vulnerability Group Online via Zoom
Wednesday 22 November 2023
11am-12:30pm**

Present:

Kerry Booth, Chief Executive, Rural Services Network
Nadine Trout, Assistant Chief Executive, Rural Services Network
Adrian Brooke, NHS England
Angela Kirk, North Yorkshire Citizens Advice & Law Centre
Cathy Jackson, University of Central Lancashire
Daniel Denning, Citizens Advice Torridge North Mid and West Devon
David Inman, Rural Services Network
Graham Biggs, Rural Services Partnership
Karen Fuller, Digital Mobile Spectrum Limited
Kevin Sawers, Action Hampshire
Lucy Renwick, NHS England
Malcolm Farrow, OFTEC
Phillip Vincent, ACRE
Ruth Noble, Outside the Box
Steph Smith, United Utilities
Wesley Wilkie, Southern Water
Rowan Hedley, Citizens Advice East Dorset and Purbeck
Bethan Aldridge, Rural Services Network (minute-taker)

Nadine Trout, Assistant Chief Executive welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Nora Corkery, Devon Communities
Nik Harwood, Young Somerset
Rita Lawson, Tees Valley Rural Action
John Birtwistle, First Bus
Matthew Byrne, Somerset Rural Community Council
Hannah Perry, Bolton University
Richard Kirlew, Agri Chaplains Association
Clair Raybould, NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board
Kate Robbins, Wessex Water
Anthony Henry, Bridge Interiors
Chris Pinson-Bradley, Platform Housing Group
Jane Day, NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

(See [link to Minutes and Papers](#))

Minutes of the previous meeting 24.04.23 were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters arising were as follows:

Homelessness

Kerry Booth, informed the group that following the [Rural Homelessness Research](#) that a Homeless Coalition has been set up comprising a number of national homeless charities and organisations along with those with a special interest in rural areas. The purpose of the Coalition is to pick up on recommendation made in the research and pull together best practice. Work is ongoing but as soon as it is finalised it will be shared with the Rural Services Partnership Vulnerability Group.

Rural England CIC

Graham Biggs, gave an update on work currently underway by Rural England CIC on looking at the impact of supply outages on those with medical conditions including mental health/ dementia, blind or partially sighted and those who rely on electrical medical equipment. Interviews have been held with people on priority services registers as well as with their carers and groups that are active in supporting people with priority needs. A report on the findings is near completion and will soon be shared via the Rural Services Network news bulletin.

4. Winning the Rural Vote

Nadine Trout, presented the [Winning the Rural Vote Campaign](#) and explained that ahead of the next general election, RSN are campaigning to ensure that all political parties recognise the importance of including rural policies in their manifestos. Rural votes could help decide the election, with 40% of constituencies being in rural areas.

The Campaign sets out the RSN's short and longer term asks for political parties to address in eight priority areas: Fair Funding; Rural Health and Care; Rural Transport; Rural Connectivity; Rural Economies; Rural Affordable Housing; Rural Net Zero; and Rural Planning. RSN asks government to address all these issues together.

Nadine stated that the Campaign is a living document and invited RSP members to contact her at Nadine.trout@sparse.gov.uk if they have anything they would like to see incorporated into the Campaign especially regarding the needs of vulnerable people in rural areas or to supply any case studies.

5. General Discussion

Rowan Hedley, raised that at Citizens Advice people that were struggling to pay their bills last year are this year struggling even more as they have accumulated debt and still struggling to pay bills - the Cost of Living Crisis is being entrenched. Rural homelessness is an increasing issue due to lack of affordable housing. Find out more [Rural Cost of Living Research](#) and [Rural Cost of Living Survey](#) results.

Phillip Vincent, welcomed the Winning the Rural Vote Campaign and shared recent findings by ACRE about lack of transport and housing and loneliness in rural areas. Find out more [here](#).

Adrian Brooke, made mention of the recent [Chief Medical Officer report](#) focusing on health in an ageing society. A large proportion of people move out of cities and large towns before older age, concentrating geographically in coastal, semi-rural or peripheral areas, often with relatively sparse services and transport links. The RSN's thoughts on the report can be found [here](#).

Adrian also referred to the [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#) which is a 10-15 year plan that is intended among other things to address geographic shortfall. One of the considerations will be the distribution and expansion of medical training, looking specifically at geographical considerations and putting the future medical workforce where the population need is now and where it will be in future. One of the important factors determining that will be demographics: the age, the sex, and the reality of different communities which hasn't been factored in previously. Adrian stressed however, that changes will not take place overnight. The National Centre for Rural Health and Care's thoughts on the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan can be found [here](#).

The [Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit](#) was referred to as a useful resource.

Cathy Jackson, signposted the [National Centre for Rural and Remote Medicine](#) and the [Rural Medicine and Health Report](#).

6. Any Other Business

Graham Biggs, advised that Rural England CIC will be producing a State of Rural Services Report which will hopefully be published in September 2024. Previous editions of the Report and other useful research by Rural England can be found [here](#). The report will help highlight trends in rural areas and strengthen rural's case when engaging with government.

7. Close

Nadine Trout, thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 11:55am.