

Notes for presentation to East of England Rural Forum meeting on Social Inclusion
Nicola Lloyd – Measuring Rural Deprivation
12th December 2008. Woolpit Village Hall, Suffolk

Introduction

CRC (and Countryside Agency before it) has been involved with developing ways of measuring deprivation in rural areas for many years and we are working with the department for Communities and Local Government to identify how a more sophisticated understanding of rural deprivation can be developed so that local bodies can determine how deprivation in their areas can be addressed through regeneration initiatives. We want to continue to work with CLG to give public authorities who have to deal with these issues at local and regional levels the tools to address rural deprivation wherever it might be found.

Why does it matter?

- If it's not identified, it can't be dealt with
- Resources will not be allocated to tackling deprivation
- Issue not understood and acknowledged in policy
- Policy development and implementation needs an evidence base

What has CRC been doing?

CRC and CLG held a seminar on 5th December to discuss the issue of measurement and the CRC has issued today a *State of the countryside Update*, which describes the findings from a rural analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007. There is coverage in today's Daily Telegraph and the Independent. CRC also commissioned a quantitative analysis and socio-economic classification of deprivation in rural areas from the Oxford Centre for Social Inclusion, which was published on our website in June. This uses the method that the Centre first developed to identify rural deprivation in Norfolk. They have also produced analyses for Suffolk and the south-east region.

How does it work?

Previous analyses of deprivation in rural areas have identified that it is not concentrated as in urban areas and involves fewer people in much smaller settlements than in the inner cities. The OCSI method can identify very small areas that are deprived, which the IMD cannot because it is constructed at a higher spatial scale. What this means is that the OCSI method measures a set of

indicators of deprivation for areas of around 300 people (known as 'output areas') and the IMD uses areas of around 1,500 people (known as 'super output areas'). The OCSI method does not combine the indicators in the same way as the IMD because it is not designed to produce an Index – a ranked listing of all areas in order of their levels of deprivation. But the method can be used to map areas and across a wider area, say a county or region, or even across England itself, to identify what the 'rural share of deprivation' is.

How is rural deprivation different?

The CRC is interested in this approach because our work on rural disadvantage (ref Rural Disadvantage Study), which is one of the key parts of the Commission's remit, has shown that rural deprivation is different to urban deprivation.

- Generally dispersed not concentrated
- Smaller numbers of people overall
- Low income rather than unemployment
- Additional costs, so lower disposable income
- Not necessarily coinciding with poor living environment
- Fuel poverty

We are also interested in establishing the evidence base which will help to reveal deprivation which is masked by general affluence in an area. The *State of the countryside* reports have shown great variation in social and economic well-being across rural areas. The poverty of rural areas is related to remoteness, poor housing conditions and social immobility and poverty in rural areas is characterised by low income rather than unemployment, a high proportion of older people and the difficulties faced by many farming families.

As the recent European Community report on poverty and social exclusion in rural areas (2008, p.19) stated:

"One of the main obstacles faced by a strategy against rural poverty is the political irrelevance of the rural poor"

The OCSI analysis for England shows that on a number of key indicators between a sixth and a fifth of all deprived people in England live in rural areas, whereas only 2.4% of areas ranked as within the top 20% of deprived areas on the IMD are rural. The analysis has also allowed us to identify 'hotspots' – small rural places where a majority of the people living there are deprived but the place itself is within a wider area that is classified as not being deprived. We are now conducting qualitative research to gather evidence about the experience of people living in such places.

How can this analysis be used?

CRC wants to use this analysis to raise the profile of rural deprivation and ensure that the bodies responsible for addressing it have the measures that they need because *"what gets measured gets"*

done". The seminar with CLG aimed to develop an understanding of rural deprivation and the limitations of the IMD. The OCSI report and its data has been published on the CRC website, so there is information for all small areas across England publically available. This can be used in rural proofing for example of LAAs.

CRC will be reporting the human stories behind the data following the qualitative research and we will disseminate this as widely as possible. We will continue to press for the IMD methodology to be improved especially so that it uses data on real incomes, rather than benefits data, to take into account the fact that benefits take-up in rural areas is lower than in urban areas. Finally, we will be commissioning some new research which will calculate the minimum level of income required for households living in rural areas.