

# Beyond the traditional lens: a partnership study of rural disadvantage in Wealden

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Summary report

October 2010



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## **1. Executive Summary**

This project was instigated by the Wealden Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to assist with better service delivery planning for rural Wealden. With the help of LSP partners, community organisations and local residents, we have been able to obtain information at a more local level than is normally available. This has given us a more accurate understanding of rural deprivation at ward level, and of indicators of a range of types of deprivation: economic; health; safety; housing; education; etc. The report considers the findings in relation to the eight themes of the Wealden Sustainable Community Strategy.

### **Understanding rural deprivation**

The project confirmed that deprivation exists across Wealden and in all eight LSP theme areas. The proportions of disadvantaged people are generally higher in Wealden towns than in the rural areas, with some notable exceptions such as private housing condition and fuel poverty. However, purely rate-based comparisons often hide large absolute numbers of people affected by deprivation in rural wards, often more, overall, than in Wealden towns, for example: 3,666 households receiving Council Tax Benefit; 3,005 residents claiming out-of-work benefits; 11,184 emergency hospital admissions; 3,030 rural households without a car; 1,158 out of 1,940 GCSE candidates not achieving 5 A\*-C grades including Maths and English.

Our qualitative research illustrated how specific issues can negatively affect peoples experiences in ways that cannot be captured by data analysis. They also shed light on connections and interactions between different issues. This aspect of the project highlighted the importance of taking account of perceptions alongside data. Perceptions have a pronounced effect on people's quality of life, compounding feelings of insecurity.

The project re-analysed data from "The Rural Share of Deprivation in the South-East" report<sup>1</sup>, finding for example, that 1320 people who claim Department for Work and Pensions benefits live in the 9 most deprived of Wealden's 94 Lower Super Output Areas (in IMD terms), but 5010 (79.2% ) live elsewhere in the District.

### **Housing and fuel poverty**

Around half of Wealden's population live in villages, hamlets and rural areas. There are a significant number of social rented houses in these areas, often accommodating low income households. In the private sector, affordability and housing condition are significant issues. Fuel poverty is a particularly rural problem as many houses are less well insulated and off mains gas, making them too expensive for people with limited incomes to heat properly, which can affect their health. In 2003, 6.2% of households in rural Wealden were living in fuel poverty and the rise in fuel prices over the past eight years will have increased the numbers.

### **Health and Social Care**

Emergency hospital admissions is one of the indicators where the rate is lower in rural areas than in towns, but the absolute number of admissions from rural wards is higher. There are 11,053 people living with a long-term limiting illness in rural Wealden.

Our qualitative research demonstrated issues of sparse provision of day care for vulnerable elderly residents. With the closure of Post Offices and village shops, there is also less opportunity for local service providers to 'unofficially check' on vulnerable residents.

### **Transport and Access**

Car ownership is higher in rural areas than in Wealden towns, but 10.5% of rural households do not have access to a car. The patchiness of public transport provision in rural wards leaves 6,331 households with journeys of over 30 minutes (by public transport) to access the local GP surgery.

## **Prosperity and Business**

In 2009, there were more rural residents claiming out-of-work benefits than those living in towns. However there were a higher number of (short-term) Job Seekers' Allowance claimants in towns. Our interviewees told us that factors affecting those out of work are more acutely felt in rural wards. This includes lack of access to Job Centres, affordable childcare, fast, affordable broadband and deficiencies in public transport. National figures indicate that low local incomes are a significant issue in sparse rural areas.

The number of young adults aged 16-25 not in education, employment or training (NEET) is lower in rural wards than in towns, but some rural wards did have high numbers. The findings also reflect the tendency for young people to move from rural areas to towns to find work.

## **Cultural Activities, Sport and Leisure**

Our research showed that people in rural Wealden do not fully benefit from sport, leisure and cultural opportunities because of patchy provision, issues with transport, lack of information and cost. There is a particular issue for teenagers living in rural Wealden.

## **Education and Learning**

Attainment data showed that Wealden schoolchildren in both rural and town wards performed well at primary level, but were below the county average at GCSE. Although more pupils attained 5 A\*-C GCSEs (including maths and English) in rural wards, the average attainment rate was still under 50% across rural wards, and less than 33% in two wards.

## **Environment and Community Safety**

Emotive media reporting of isolated incidents of crime has made some residents unnecessarily fearful of crime in their area. We collected data on domestic violence incidents, which were neither exclusively related to deprivation nor to towns, but slightly more prevalent in towns.

## **Customer Insight**

Data from Mosaic in conjunction with data from the Council Tax Benefit recipients database showed that rural deprivation mainly affects older residents and that many residents who can be classed as 'living in deprivation' live in areas that are generally affluent. Most Council Tax Benefit claimants in Wealden are 'independent older people with relatively active lifestyles' and more people from this group live in rural areas. There are also high numbers of 'small business proprietors living in low density estates in smaller communities' and 'older people preferring to live in familiar surroundings in small market towns'. Both groups have a disproportionately high number of Council Tax Benefit claimants in rural Wealden wards.

## **Conclusions**

Many of the issues faced by deprived people in rural Wealden are the same as the wider community. However there is a perception amongst some that those who live in rural areas should accept lower standards because they are thought to have chosen to live in these areas. By no means everyone in rural Wealden has chosen their circumstances. Many people living in rural wards, particularly the elderly, feel isolated and worried about the future. There should be equality of access to services for all residents, not just those in our towns.

The need for more affordable housing in rural Wealden has been reinforced by our findings, along with a need to better identify isolated individuals in need of support. There is broad support for developing a 'befriending' scheme to assist with this. Transport remains a major barrier to access: a single transport charity for Sussex could help guide and consolidate the patchy community transport schemes that currently run separately in rural wards.

## **2. Deprivation in rural Wealden**

### **2.1. Research context and rationale**

Wealden Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) wants to improve understanding of rural deprivation not picked up by widely used sources such as the Indices of Multiple deprivation.

The objective is to encourage partners to make more informed decisions on service provision and the strategic planning of rural service delivery, resulting in better quality of life for residents of rural areas.

The research was carried out in two phases:

- data collection and collation, and
- interviews and focus groups.

With the assistance of many of the LSP partners, we have been able to access local data at a smaller scale than usually practicable. This gives an unusually 'local' aspect to the quantitative as well as the qualitative side of this project, but demonstrates an approach that is replicable in other areas.

The report is structured around the Wealden Sustainable Community Strategy themes:

Housing  
Health and Social Care  
Transport and Access  
Prosperity and Business  
Culture, Sport and Leisure  
Education and Learning  
Environment  
Community Safety

### **2.2. Understanding rural deprivation**

Deprivation is about inequality - having less than others - for example lower incomes, poorer employment opportunities, poorer health, fewer education opportunities or qualifications, poorer housing and living environments.

On average, rural populations suffer lower levels of deprivation than urban areas, although there are more people living in better off urban than rural areas (Commission for Rural Communities, 2008). Within rural communities, sparsely populated areas show higher levels of deprivation than less sparsely populated areas, largely because of poorer housing and, therefore, poorer internal living environments, and lower access to services.

The South East of England experiences lower levels of deprivation than other parts of the UK, but there are still many rural areas in the South East that suffer considerable deprivation which is not widely recognised. In rural Wealden, this is exacerbated by some areas of high deprivation around Hastings and the Sussex coast identified in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which tend to attract the attention of policy makers to the detriment of recognition of deprivation in (inland) rural Wealden.

These national perspectives use area-based measures. Various problems exist with such an approach. They do not provide information on who is deprived within the areas, why have they become deprived and with what consequences for themselves and the wider community. Areas with a mixture of deprivation and affluence will also tend to have middling ranks, masking the small pockets of deprivation.

### 3. Introduction to Wealden

#### 3.1. Locations

Map 1 shows the wards in Wealden as delineated in 2010. These wards are used as the basis for District Council elections. Most of the data used in this project was available at this geographic level.

#### 3.2. Population

Broadly speaking, half of Wealden's population live in the five main towns and half live in villages, hamlets and rural areas. The largest towns are Crowborough and Hailsham each with approximately 20,000 residents, followed by Uckfield, Polegate and Willingdon. Much larger towns about the District: Tunbridge Wells to the north and Eastbourne to the south. The following table gives the population figures suitable for broad comparison with the summary tables in this report that refer to total ward populations (as opposed to households or working-age populations), however, the dates may not be the same. Figure 1 gives the population and age profiles of each of the rural wards.

Issue	Resident population (ONS mid-year estimate)		
Units	Persons		
Date	2007		
Analysis	Area	Percentage (Wealden)	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex County Council area <sup>#</sup>		508,274
	Wealden District	100%	143,761
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	50.9%	73,174
Rates and totals	Town wards*	40.3%	57,946
	Hellingly ward	3.6%	5,199
	Willingdon & Jevington ward	5.2%	7,442

<sup>#</sup>: This excludes Brighton & Hove. Referred to simply as East Sussex throughout this report.

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

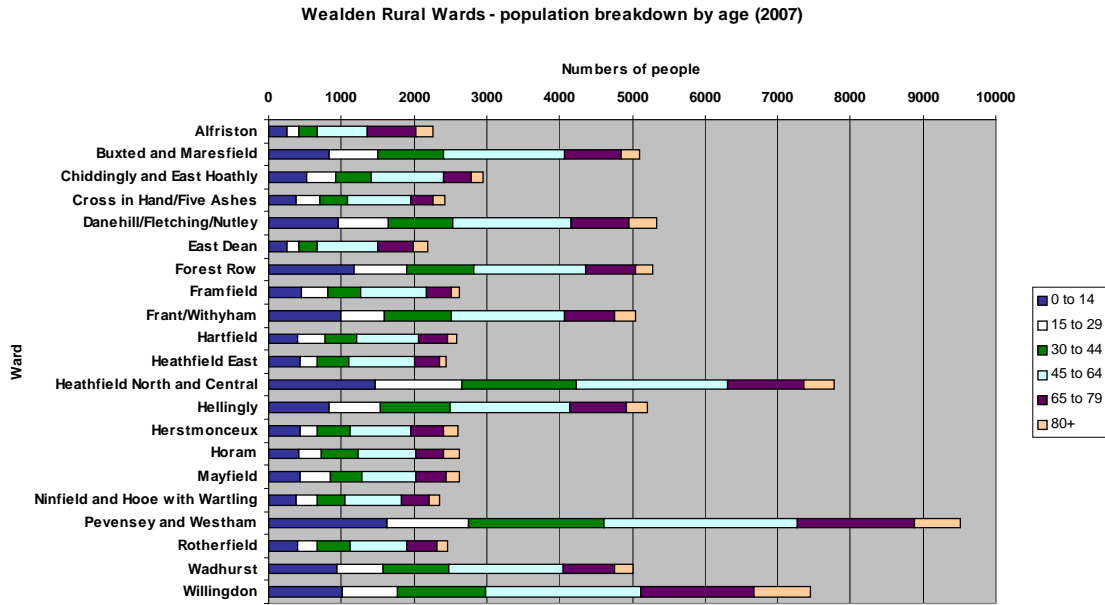
# Map 1 - Wealden Wards



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Figure 1 - Wealden Rural Wards - 2007 Population Estimate (ONS 2010)



## 4. Themed approach to deprivation in rural Wealden

### 4.1. Housing

The data analyses show that there are significant numbers of social-rented houses in rural areas, albeit fewer than in towns. Fuel poverty and 'non decent' private house condition are great problems in rural areas. These results were reflected by the focus groups and interviews, which identified issues for people on low incomes who either live in private rented accommodation or who own their own houses but who can no longer afford to maintain them.

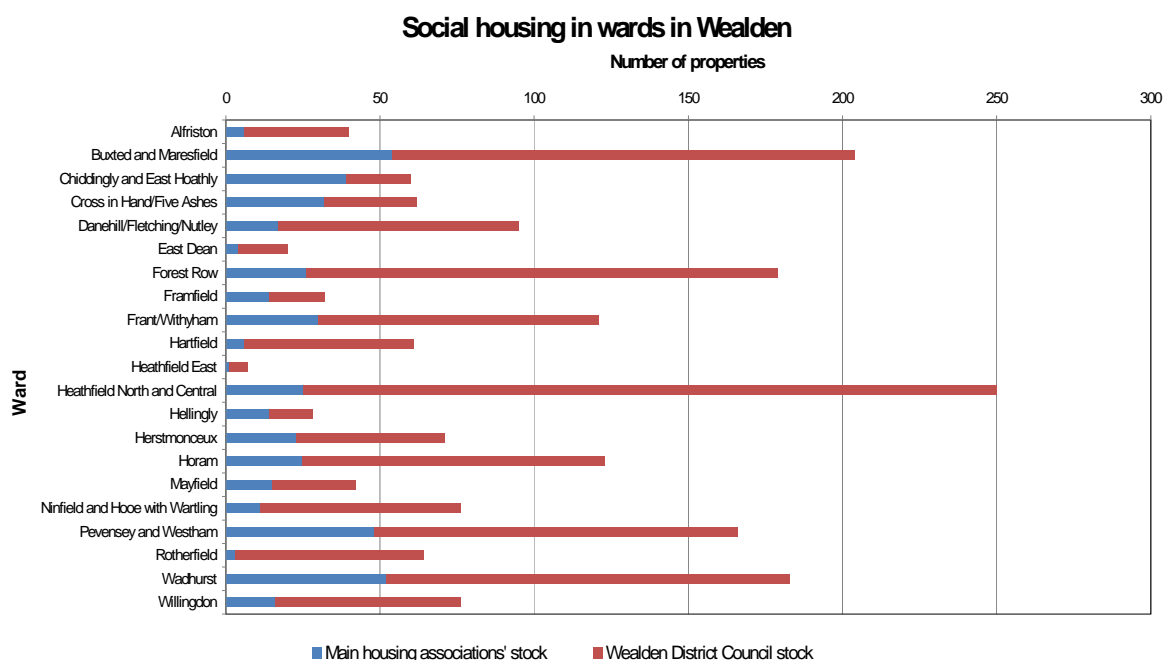
Housing affordability was discussed in the qualitative study as high prices make it very difficult for young people to leave their parental home to set up their own households. Affordability and lack of social housing tenancies are also major barriers to moving for vulnerable and low income households seeking to escape anti-social behaviour or to gain better access to services. Nationally published figures show that Wealden has one of the highest lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings ratios outside London<sup>2</sup>.

#### What the data tells us

##### Social housing

Social housing makes up 7.4% of the housing stock in Wealden. Of the 4,529 social houses, it has been possible to map 3,990 and 1,884 are located in rural wards, with 2030 found in town wards. As a comparison of Figure 1 with Figure 2 demonstrates, the numbers of social houses by ward do not closely match the population. Wards with high numbers of social houses clearly hold high numbers of relatively low income households. At the other end of the scale, it is difficult for low income households to live in a ward to which they have a strong local connection where there are small numbers of social houses, unless there is a large and relatively cheap private rented sector.

**Figure 2 - Number of Housing Association\* and Wealden District Council properties, March 2010**



\*: Includes the four housing associations with significant housing stocks in Wealden

The number of homelessness applications and preventions associated with a rural Wealden address (61) was significantly lower than in Wealden towns (134) during the year October 2008–September 2009. However, the figures rose considerably between the last two financial years.

### Fuel poverty

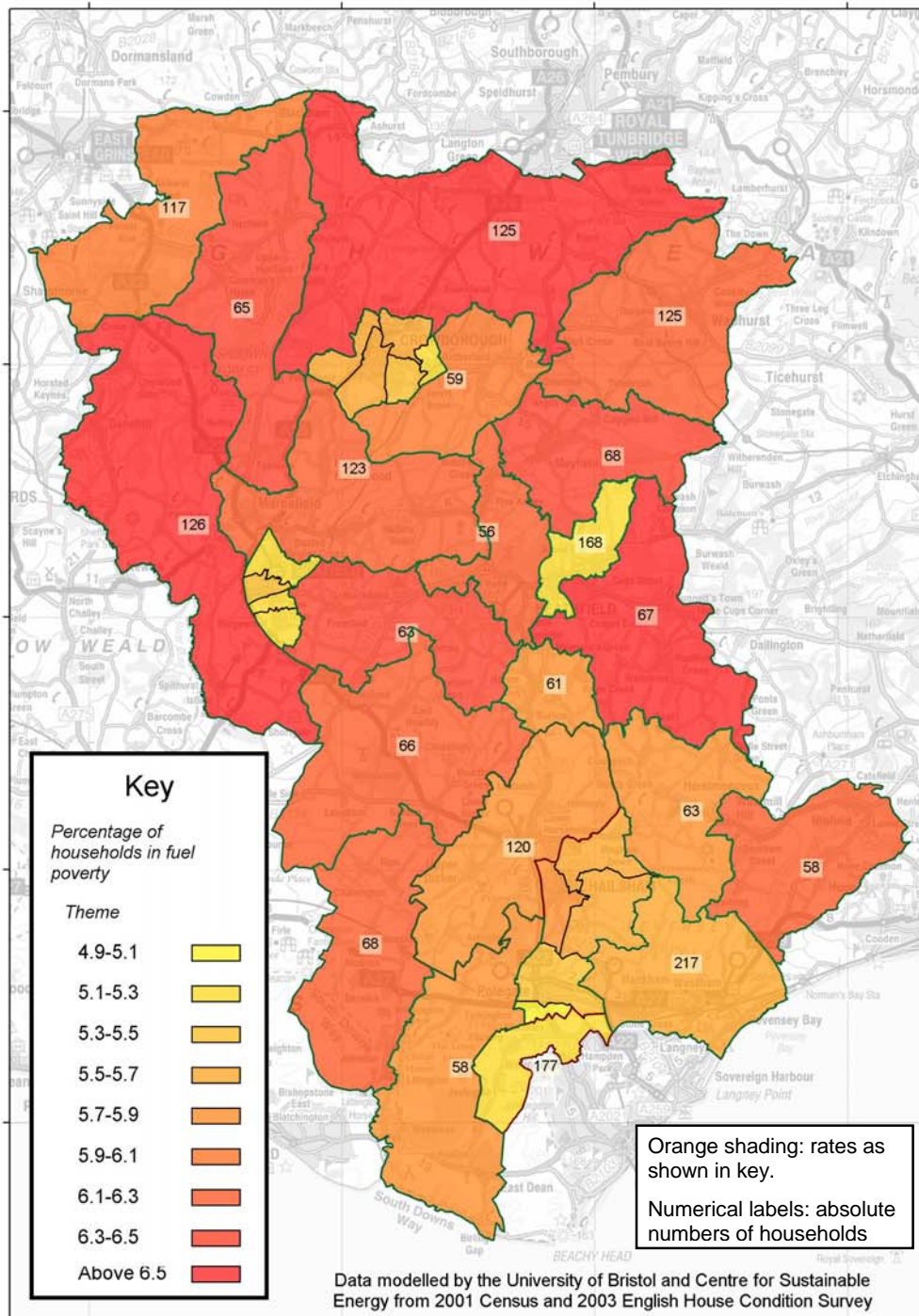
Fuel poverty is generally more widespread in rural areas because many rural buildings are harder and more expensive to insulate and the lack of mains gas means people are more reliant on expensive heating and fuel. Fuel poverty has a well-demonstrated negative impact on people's health. The disproportionate rises in fuel prices over the last decade mean that these figures will all have increased significantly.

Issue	Households living in fuel poverty		
Units	Households		
Date	2001 and 2003		
Analysis	Area	Percentage	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	5.9%	12,732
Rates and totals	Rural wards	6.2%	1,753
Rates and totals	Town wards	5.4%	1,297
Poorest rural ward figures	Heathfield East	7.3%	67
Poorest rural ward figures	Danehill/Fletching/Nutley	6.6%	126
Poorest rural ward figures	Frant/Withyham	6.5%	125

Map 2 shows the modelled rate of fuel poverty and absolute numbers of rural households across Wealden.

**Map 2: Numbers and percentages of households in fuel poverty (would need to spend >10% of their income to heat their home satisfactorily), modelled from 2001 & 2003 data**

Numbers and percentages of households in fuel poverty (would need to spend >10% of income to heat home satisfactorily), 2001-2003



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## **What people told us - perceptions, beliefs and experience**

Housing is a major issue for many people living in rural Wealden. For those working locally or not working, there are several scenarios where difficulties are likely to occur:

- People on low incomes who own their homes but can no longer afford to maintain them
- People on low incomes living in private rentals
- People living in affordable local authority and housing association properties
- Young people unable to leave the parental home to set up their own households

## **Issues**

### *Fuel poverty*

- Elderly residents in rural Wealden who live in poor quality or poorly maintained houses that are difficult to heat.
- The lack of mains gas away from the towns and increasing electricity costs mean that some residents can afford to heat and live in just one room in their house.
- Lack of awareness of grants and subsidies amongst those most in need.

### *Housing affordability*

Small rural shops and services are closing because they are no longer viable as businesses in their own right and are worth more as residential property. Such commercial premises are often sold for conversion to housing, which can increase the stock of affordable properties. Paradoxically, this is not universally welcome. It is believed to cause the lack of local shops and services for residents in the rural areas which can lead elderly people to move away.

Many local people in rural Wealden have little option but to rent private accommodation. They feel insecure as short term six monthly or annual leases are the norm.

Young people face particular housing difficulties in rural Wealden: many are ineligible for social housing, and unable to afford to rent privately, let alone buy their own home.

### *Planning-related issues*

- A perceived barrier to building more affordable housing is that 'more well off newcomers' are better organised to object to planning applications.
- Mistrust amongst parish councillors that the plans approved bear no resemblance to the development that materialises in reality.

### *Financial issues*

- For victims of anti-social behaviour it is often difficult to afford to move.
- Some deprived people are effectively trapped in a particular location or situation because of difficulties they face in obtaining bank accounts or 'crisis loans'
- Rent arrears and credit checks are also an issue for those with poor credit histories looking to move out of rural areas to seek work or better access to services.
- Home insurance optional - the cost tends to be prohibitive so people at financial disadvantage are uninsured and suffer the most when their property is stolen.

## 4.2. Health and Social Care

A significantly higher proportion of adults are supported to live independently in Wealden towns than in rural areas, although social services still have over 1,500 rural clients. Recent figures on the numbers of emergency hospital admissions per year were just over 11,000 each from rural and from town wards, making the town ward rate the higher one.

Again there is significant overlap between the data sets picked for inclusion and the issues raised by focus group or interview participants. Essentially the issues are around access to hospital and health services for people in rural areas and the means and resources for looking after vulnerable and elderly residents in rural Wealden.

### What the data tells us

#### Adults supported to live independently

The number of people aged 18 years and over who were supported to live independently through Social Services is indicative both in terms of physical and mental health and in terms of the level of service provision needed in rural areas. The figures include only those whose care is funded directly by East Sussex County Council, not those who receive Adult Social Services' care, but fund it themselves. ESCC funding is means-tested.

Issue	Persons aged 18 years and over supported to live independently through social services		
Units	Rate per 1000/Persons		
Date	June 2009		
Analysis	Area	Rate	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	40 per 1000	16,252
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	27 per 1000	1,561
Rates and totals	Town wards*	39 per 1000	1,806
Poorest rural ward figures	Herstmonceux	41 per 1000	73
Poorest rural ward figures	Pevensey & Westham	40 per 1000	297
Poorest rural ward figures	Chiddingly & East Hoathly	31 per 1000	72

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

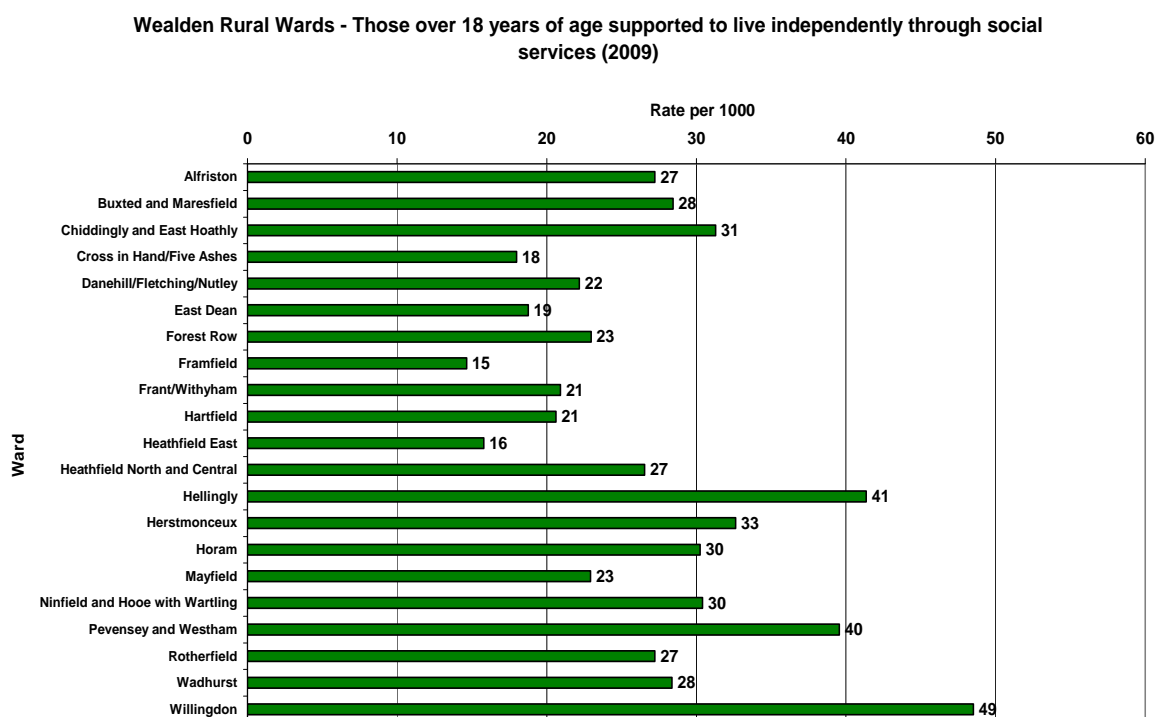
#### Emergency hospital admissions

The rate of emergency hospital admissions is commonly viewed as reflecting both poor general health as well as other factors such as a higher incidence of accidents.

Issue	All emergency hospital admissions		
Units	Age-standardised ratio (East Sussex = 100)		
Date	2007/08 to 2008/09		
Analysis	Area	Index/Ratio	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	100	102,673
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	80	11,184
Rates and totals	Town wards*	96	11,086
Poorest rural ward figures	Pevensey and Westham	106	1,970
Poorest rural ward figures	Ninfield and Hooe with Wartling	97	438
Poorest rural ward figures	Alfriston	93	515

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

**Figure 3 - Persons over 18 years old supported to live independently through social services (June 2009)**



## What people told us - perceptions, beliefs and experience

### Issues

- Increasing centralisation of health services, with the expectation that people will travel in from the country to the main hospitals.
- Sparse and inconsistent provision of day care for vulnerable elderly residents Wealden.
- Fears that the new scheme of personal care budgets may leave some deprived and elderly adults confused and vulnerable to exploitation.
- A general 'over reliance on volunteers' for service provision in rural areas
- Less opportunity for local services to check up on vulnerable people (post offices have closed, benefits increasingly paid directly into bank accounts)

### 4.3. Transport and access

Unsurprisingly, given the greater need for a car in rural areas, car ownership rates are higher among rural households than their counterparts in Wealden towns. However, there are still over 3,000 households in rural Wealden (10.5%) who do not own a car and whose service needs have to be taken into account. More counter-intuitive is the finding that the percentage of households within 30 minutes of GP surgery by public transport is higher in rural wards (79%) than in towns (73%). This still leaves 6,331 households a longer journey to their GP, and perhaps greater difficulty arranging the trip for those on a low income than someone in town, where the actual physical distance is likely to be smaller.

Focus group and interview discussions highlighted the patchiness of public transport services and the difficulty of using it at off-peak times, either for shift workers or young people going

out in the evening. Reflecting this patchiness, some specific local issues were raised, not just about routes/frequency, but also accessibility for the elderly or parents with pushchairs. The cost of public transport was also an issue. Road safety and speeds in villages were also raised. Road traffic accident data was not included in the study, but Wealden's roads have a very high incidence of casualties which is being addressed by members of the Safer Wealden Partnership and Sussex Safer Roads Partnership<sup>3</sup>.

## What the data tells us

### Car ownership

Car ownership data from the 2001 census introduces a complex transport issue. Rural residents with a car will travel greater distances on average. Transport is therefore a greater financial burden to poorer people in rural areas. Those who do not or cannot access a car are far more likely to experience significant problems in getting around and accessing services. Even those households with a car may experience problems if not all members of the household can access the vehicle as and when they require it.

Issue	Car ownership rates		
Units	Households with no car		
Date	2001 (Census)		
Analysis	Area	Percentage	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	23.4%	50,290
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	10.5%	3,030
Rates and totals	Town wards*	17.8%	4,233
Poorest rural ward figures	Pevensey & Westham	14.9%	568
Poorest rural ward figures	Horam	13.8%	144
Poorest rural ward figures	Alfriston	13.5%	149

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

### Access to a GP surgery by public transport

The percentage of households within 30 minutes of a GP by public transport is a useful indicator in itself and to a limited extent, can be seen as a proxy for 'access to services' when comparing rural wards. For example, all villages with a GP surgery also have one or more convenience shops. The figure is affected by bus routes and frequencies and the walking distance from a home to a route, which has some surprising consequences. The figures are also available for those households with no car, which is a logical and important concern, but needs to be considered alongside the points made in the paragraphs on car ownership.

Issue	Households, weighted for sensitivity to travel, within 30 minutes of a GP by public transport		
Units	Households		
Date	2005		
Analysis	Area	Percentage	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	77%	
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	79%	23,532 (6,331 >30 mins)
Rates and totals	Town wards*	73%	17,888 (6,642 >30 mins)
Poorest rural ward figures	Framfield	54%	568 (476 >30 mins)
Poorest rural ward figures	Heathfield North and Central	71%	2,412 (974 >30 mins)
Poorest rural ward figures	Rotherfield	71%	712 (286 >30 mins)

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

## What people told us - perceptions, beliefs and experience

### Issues

Patchy or non-existent public transport provision constrains access to services or jobs. Where transport is available it is unlikely to accommodate shift working or unsocial hours.

Where there is provision, the costs of travel can be prohibitively expensive. This discourages some young adults from attending college courses, attending pre-school activities with their child, accessing jobs or the job centre or visiting family in hospital.

Public Transport issues vary significantly according to location. Specific bus routes highlighted for concern included:

- routes from Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough to surrounding villages in the evening
- lack of transport at off peak times prevents some wishing to work at Gatwick Airport but required to work shifts

Other access problems to some of the public transport that is available e.g.

- Westham train station is difficult to use for the elderly and disabled due to the large gap between the train and the platform edge.
- Buses from Pevensey are reported to be an older design which is inappropriate for parents with pushchairs.

### *Community transport*

- The Age Concern community minibus is regarded as essential for older people without transport as some of them are unable to walk far enough to make it to the main bus routes from their homes.
- Fear that community bus services are under threat as a result of a lack of drivers, finances and/or lack of use.
- Lack of Sunday services limits possibilities for visiting family.

### *Road safety*

- Very high rates of road traffic accidents (RTAs) resulting in death or serious injury in the South East - concern about effect of rural development on road safety especially in the light of a lack of affordable public transport options.
- High traffic speeds through villages and still perceived as an issue which calls for further traffic calming measures.

### *Extreme weather*

- Disruption and transport problems caused by snowstorms in winter 2010
- Concern about a lack of salt bins in appropriate areas, and
- Road clearance on smaller roads to allow access for those with mobility issues

## **4.4. Prosperity and business: working age adults and employment**

Just over 3,000 residents of rural wards were claiming out-of-work benefits in 2009, compared with 2,535 from Wealden towns. However, there were more Job Seekers Allowance (short-term unemployed) claims in towns than rural wards, giving a markedly

higher claimant rate. The number of 16 to 25 year-olds not in education, employment or training was also higher in Wealden towns, but 121 young people were affected in rural wards. Council Tax Benefit is a means-tested benefit claimed by 3,666 or 11.7% of the households in Wealden's rural wards.

The qualitative study highlighted the personal experiences and some issues lying underneath these figures. These issues often apply across Wealden, but more acutely in rural areas. They included deficiencies in public transport and lack of access to: Job Centres [none in Wealden]; affordable childcare and decent/affordable broadband.

The 'brain drain' effect of young people leaving rural areas to find work, and, low local incomes were also raised. In a national analysis, low pay has been found to be more of a problem than unemployment in highly rural areas like Wealden<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately, data on low pay is not available below the scale of Districts/Boroughs, but this is backed up by both anecdotal evidence and a comparison of lower part of the national workplace-based income deciles for Wealden and other local authorities<sup>5</sup>.

## What the data tells us

### Out-of-work benefits claimants

Unemployment figures can be quite complex. The number of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants is an accurate and up-to-date figure, but this benefit can only be claimed for six months, so the figures exclude people who have been unemployed for longer periods. The number of people on any out-of-work benefit gives a broader view of unemployment although it is published less frequently. Even wider is the Census based 'economically inactive' figure, which includes those not claiming benefits, but is not covered here.

Issue	Job Seekers Allowance Claimants		
Units	Percentage of the working-age population/number of claimants. (Monthly averages).		
Date	2009		
Analysis	Area	Percentage	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	3.49%	9,845
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	1.60%	692
Rates and totals	Town wards*	2.39%	763
Poorest rural ward figures	Heathfield North & Central	2.22%	99
Poorest rural ward figures	Herstmonceux	2.22%	31
Poorest rural ward figures	Pevensey and Westham	2.14%	110

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

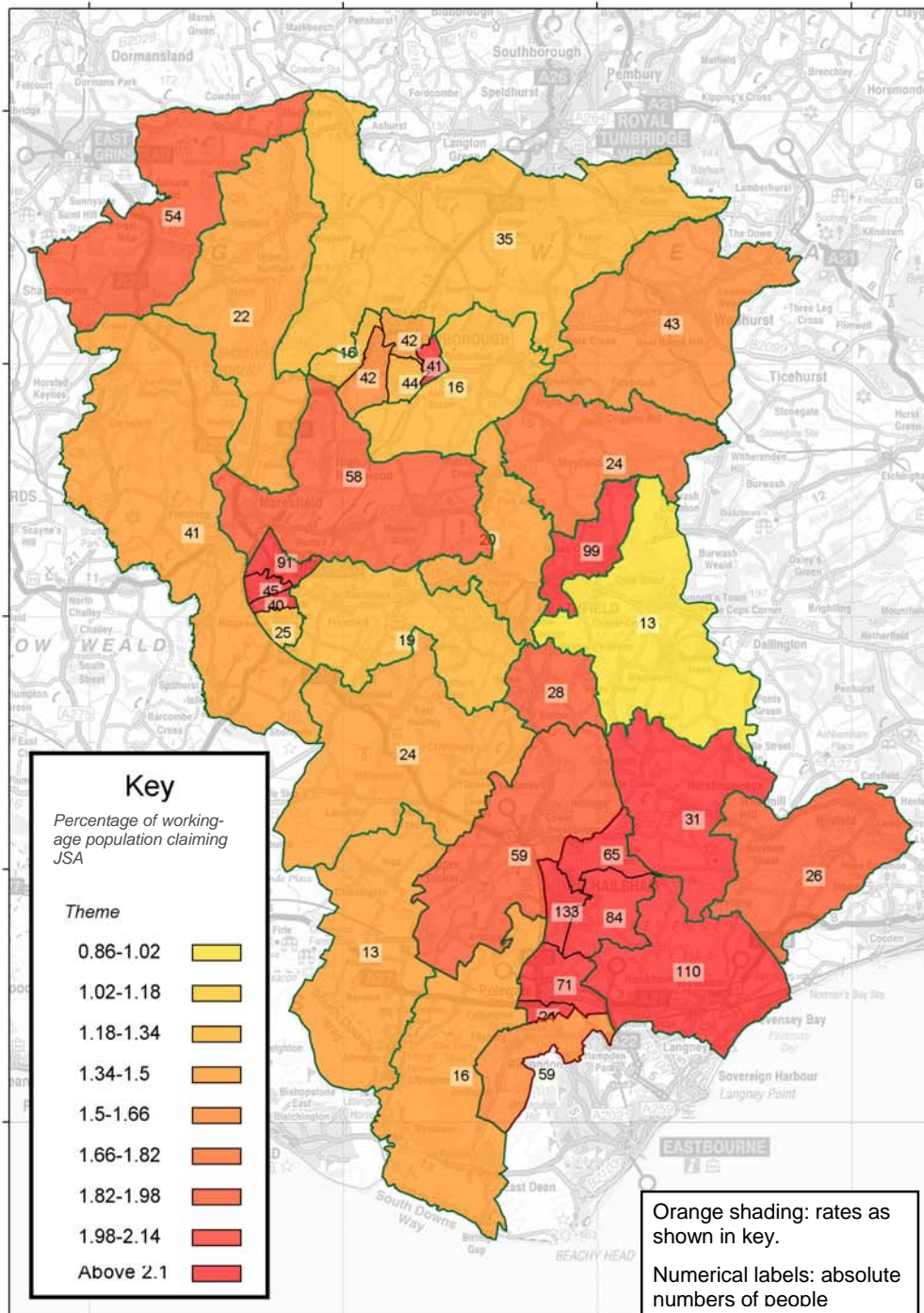
The rural ward with the greatest number of out-of-work benefit recipients is Pevensey & Westham with 580. Other wards with high numbers of benefit recipients are Heathfield North and Central (290) and Danehill/Fletching/Nutley (240). The total numbers out-of-work benefit recipients are considerably higher in rural areas at 3,005 compared with 2,535 in town wards.

### Young people not in education, employment or training

Absolute numbers of 16 to 25 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) were mainly low in individual rural wards. Taken together, however, 121 young people were NEET in rural wards, with the equivalent figure being 173 in towns. Among rural wards the numbers in Herstmonceux (6), Framfield (8) and Pevensey & Westham (23) were significantly higher than might be expected taking into account the estimated population aged 15 to 29.

**Map 3: Number and percentage of the working age population claiming Job Seekers Allowance, 2009 average**

Number and percentage of the working-age population claiming Job seekers Allowance, 2009 average



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## Council Tax Benefit recipients

Council Tax Benefit (CTB) is available to households who are liable for Council Tax (almost all), have a low income and either have savings of less than £16,000 or are over 60 and receive Guarantee Pension Credit.

Issue	Council Tax Benefit recipients		
Units	Households		
Date	March 2010		
Analysis	Area	Percentage	Total
Comparator (if available)			
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	11.7%	3,666
Rates and totals	Town wards*	17.8%	4,496
Poorest rural ward figures	Horam	17.1%	191
Poorest rural ward figures	Pevensey & Westham	16.5%	699
Poorest rural ward figures	Herstmonceux	15.9%	199

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

Map 4 plots the rate of benefits claims across Wealden by postcode. Each postcode is plotted as a single point coloured according to the claimant rate within the postcode. Postcode areas with fewer than four addresses were removed to reduce distortion. Areas with no points or colouring are either these removed data points or are postcode areas where there are no claimants.

A buffer has been added to each data point also representing the claimant rate. Where points are close together, the colouration follows the average claimant rate, but this does not happen with isolated postcode areas. Consequently there are a few prominent red patches which only represent one or two data points.

The key expresses the rate of benefits claimants in the postcode as a proportion of 1, i.e. 0.4–0.45 is 40–45%.

## Children in low income families

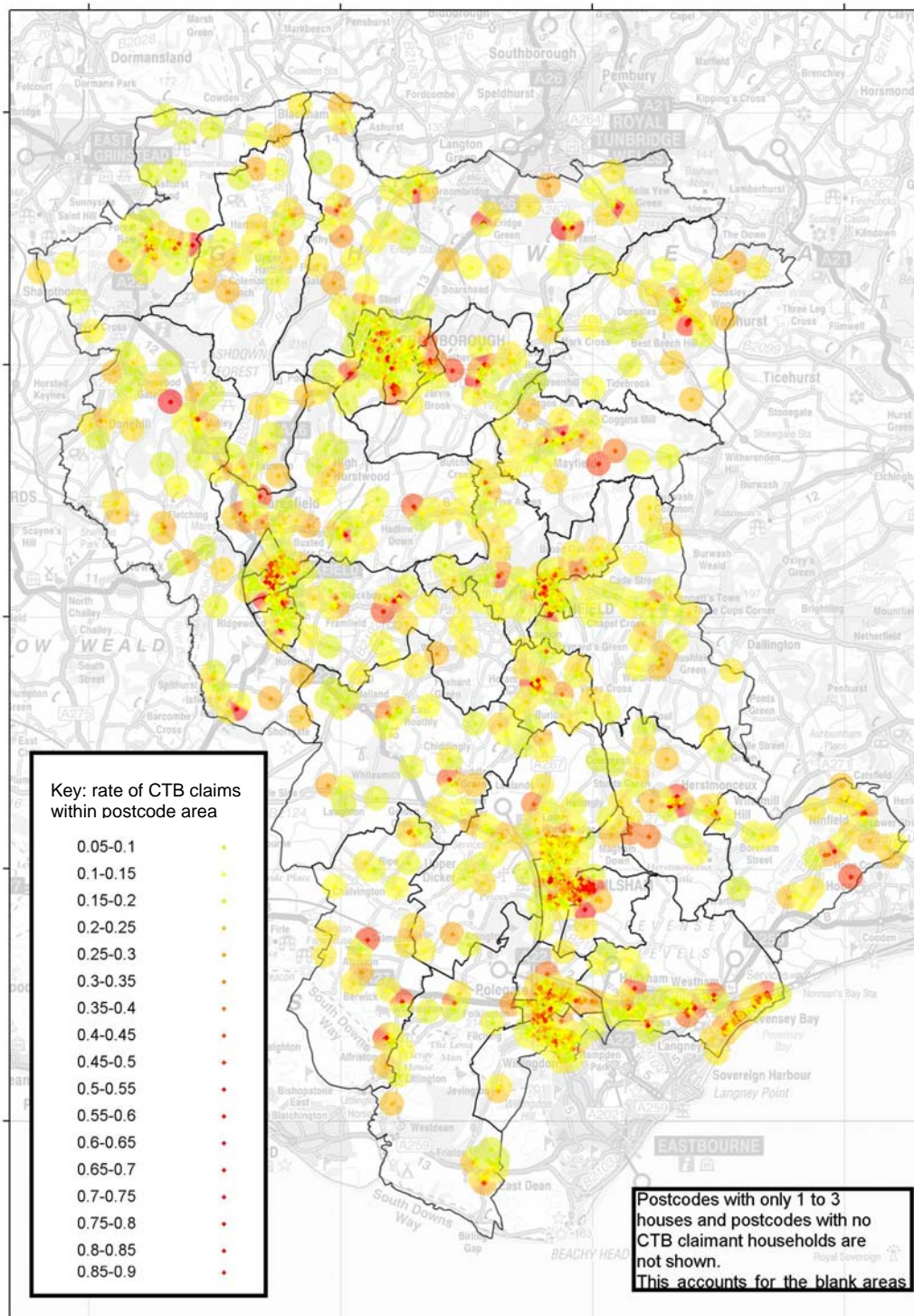
The number of children in families in receipt of Child Tax Credit (<60% median income) or claiming Income Support/Job Seekers Allowance on 31 August 2008 was considered. In rural wards, 1,175 children and in town wards, 1,700 children live in families receiving these benefits or tax credits. The rural wards with the greatest numbers of these children were Heathfield North and Central (175), Pevensey and Westham (170) and Forest Row (95).

## What people told us - perceptions, beliefs and experience

### Issues

- Access to
  - appropriately timed public transport
  - childcare at affordable prices
  - local job centres
  - the internet to seek work online.
- Young people tend to move from rural areas to towns in order to access work.
- Low local incomes (eg in the service sector, farming and equestrian jobs) mean that many adults currently employed in rural Wealden are at risk of deprivation.

**Map 4: Rate and numbers of Council Tax Benefit claimants by postcode**  
**Council Tax Benefit Claimant Rates by Postcode**



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- A 'hand to mouth existence' means people are not saving or 'future proofing' themselves.
- Seasonal work creates some fluctuation in JSA (Job Seeker's Allowance) figures for some parts of Wealden.
- Private broadband access is expensive and unavailable to those with a poor credit history.
- Opportunities to set up online businesses are limited in rural areas because of slow broadband speeds; potential employers tend to choose sites with assured internet access.

#### **4.5. Cultural activities, sport and leisure**

No data on this theme was analysed, but the qualitative work revealed issues around access/transport and the patchiness of provision and the barriers to both of these elements. Where services are available there are clearly benefits.

#### **What people told us - perceptions, beliefs and experience**

##### **Issues**

- People in rural Wealden do not benefit fully from sport, leisure and cultural opportunities because of
  - Patchy provision
  - Transport issues
  - Lack of information
  - Cost
- Little entertainment for rural teenage populations; worse in winter when it is not possible to cycle to local schemes and clubs, and local facilities are rarely floodlit.
- Funds for cultural and sporting activities have been in short supply as a result of the recession.
- Provision of adequate entertainment may mean young people are less likely to 'cause trouble'.
- There are examples of a vibrant social life in many of the villages in rural Wealden, particularly for older, mobile and socially adept women, but such groups tend to be dominated by the older ladies and can be intimidating for outsiders.

#### **4.6. Education and Learning**

The attainment data suggest that Wealden schoolchildren in both rural and town wards were performing well at primary level and below the county average at GCSE. Attainment levels were greater in rural wards, but there were still significant numbers of pupils who did not achieve the high benchmark of 5 A\*-C grade GCSEs including Maths and English and an average of 154 eleven year-olds per year from rural wards not achieving level 4 at Key Stage 2. Notably, there was not a very close match between a ward's children's attainment at Key Stage 2 with that at Key Stage 4.

The focus groups and interviews covered barriers to education that may hinder a child's development. These included public transport costs and timings; lack of awareness of opportunities or subsidies; cross-authority boundary Sure Start centre access arrangements and poor broadband access.

## What the data tells us

### School pupils' attainment at Key Stages 2 and 4

The percentage of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C grade GCSEs including Maths and English was analysed according to where pupils live (rather than where their school was). Three years of GCSE results from 2007, 2008 and 2009 were used.

Issue	Percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grade GCSEs including Maths and English		
Units	Pupils resident in ward		
Date	Three years of GCSE results from 2007, 2008 and 2009		
Analysis	Area	Percentage	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	2007: 43.2%, 2008: 46.1%, 2009: 50.8%	
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	41.2%	782 (1,158 did not)
Rates and totals	Town wards*	34.5%	666 (1,263 did not)
Poorest rural ward figures	Horam	27.1%	
Poorest rural ward figures	Frant/Withyham	32.1%	
Poorest rural ward figures	Pevensy & Westham	36.4%	

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

Level 4 is the government's benchmark for attainment at the end of primary school education (Key Stage 2, age 11). A 'typical' 11 year-old will normally be working at Level 4, and the analyses looked at pupils achieving level 4 or above, in line with widely used statistics. The information is presented according to where pupils live.

Issue	Key Stage 2 attainment to Level 4 or above in both English and Maths		
Units	Pupils resident in ward		
Date	2007 + 2008 + 2009		
Analysis	Area	Percentage	Total
Comparator (if available)	East Sussex	2008: 71%, 2009: 69%	
Rates and totals	Rural wards*	80.1%	1,868 (463 did not)
Rates and totals	Town wards*	73.9%	1,441 (509 did not)
Poorest rural ward figures	Forest Row	70.5%	
Poorest rural ward figures	Pevensy & Westham	77.1%	
Poorest rural ward figures	Herstmonceux	77.2%	

\*: The mixed rural/town wards of Willingdon & Jevington and Hellingly are not included in either of these figures

## What people told us - perceptions, beliefs and experience

### Issues

- The main barriers to education and learning are the:
  - prohibitive cost and timings of some public transport routes
  - limited awareness of opportunities and subsidies available.
- Some existing public transport routes provide better access to services provided by other local authorities.
- For parents in Pevensy, the closest Sure Start centre is in Hailsham which is more difficult to access by public transport than the one in Eastbourne.

- Poor broadband speeds hinder study. GCSE and A-Level students require broadband access to their coursework. Poor broadband speeds in some areas of rural Wealden make this a significant difficulty. Libraries can make a positive contribution in this respect.

#### 4.7. Environment and community safety

Data on domestic violence showed that there were significant problems in both rural and town wards, although more in the latter.

The qualitative work covered issues around the fear of crime and the influence of the media both in terms of perceptions of risk and the impact that being demonised had on young people. Wealden's high quality natural environment was highly valued, but there were concerns around litter and dog-fouling.

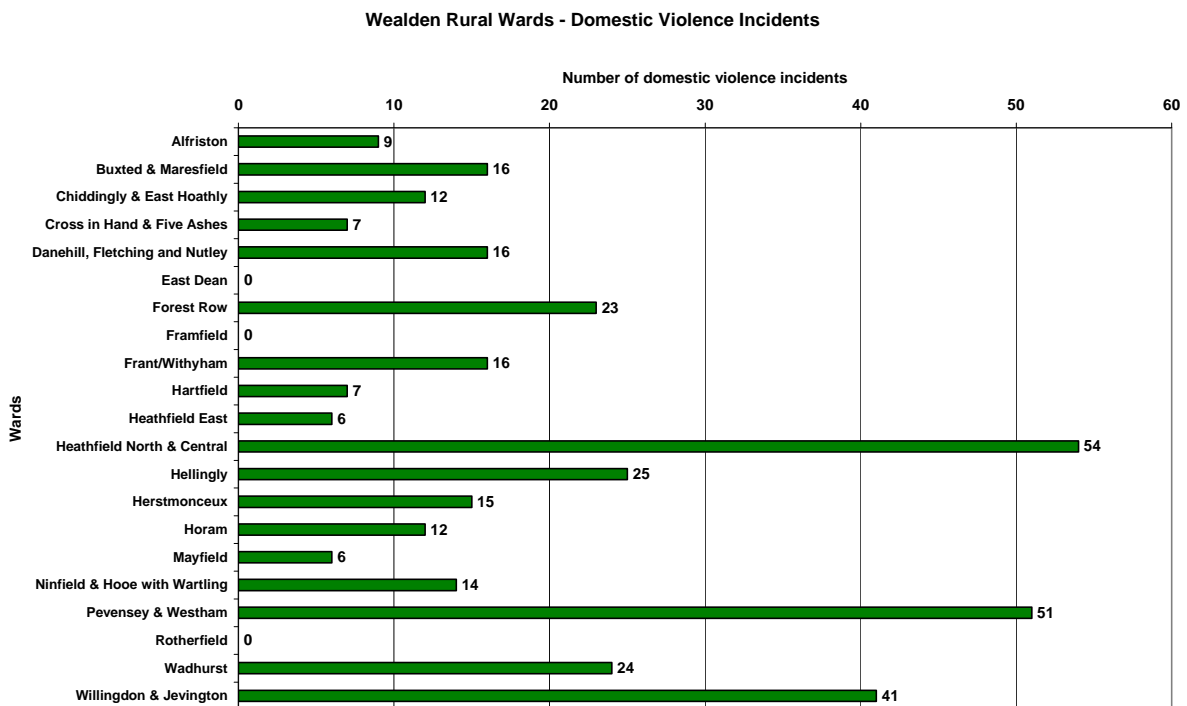
#### What the data tells us

##### Domestic violence

Domestic violence incidents, including both 'crime' and 'non-crime' incidents for this project, are neither exclusively related to deprivation, nor, as the results show, to towns. However, they generally more prevalent in deprived areas.

During the financial year 2008–09, there were 325 domestic violence incidents in rural wards and 376–381 in town wards. The rural wards with the highest occurrences of domestic violence were Heathfield North and Central, Pevensey and Westham and Wadhurst.

Figure 4 - Wealden Rural Wards - Occurrences of Domestic Violence



Where the number of incidents is below six, the figure is suppressed.

## What people told us - perceptions, beliefs and experience

### Issues

#### *Environment*

- The biodiversity and good quality of Wealden's well-protected countryside is highly valued. However, some environmental quality and community safety issues detract from some people's perception of their quality of life. Examples raised include:
  - Unsightly littering on A-roads
  - Picnic litter left by visitors
  - Dog fouling

#### *Crime*

- Crime and the fear of crime are real concerns for some residents of rural Wealden.
- Overblown media coverage of a few isolated incidents elsewhere can make some people unnecessarily fearful of crime in their area. Emotive media reporting is perceived as contributing to the demonisation of young people.
- Attitudes towards police presence and support and relationships with local police in the rural villages vary.
- Enforcement of speed limits and parking restrictions in villages are sources of dissatisfaction with the level of visible policing for some people.

## 5. Customer Insight

Customer Insight is knowing and understanding our customers today and tomorrow alongside an ability to use this 'customer intelligence' to inform, shape, innovate and plan service delivery for today and the future. One customer insight tool is segmentation. This improves the effectiveness of delivery by recognising the varied needs and preferences of customer groups and responds to them with differentiated treatment strategies.

### 5.1. Segmentation methods

Two systems were used in this project. The Office of National Statistics/University of Leeds 'OAC - Output Area Classification' and Experian Information Solutions' commercial segmentation package, Mosaic. Mosaic differs from OAC in that it can be analysed at individual household or post code levels and it is derived from multiple sources, including Census data.

We first mapped the distribution of different segments across Wealden. We also overlaid Mosaic's postcode-level segments and the OAC segments at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level on outputs from our Council Tax Benefits recipients database. This gave us a list for each postcode and each LSOA of the number and percentage of households receiving CTB and which Mosaic segment typified that postcode and which OAC segment typified that LSOA.

Mosaic also suggests appropriate channels and styles for communicating with each group.

### 5.2. What we learnt through customer insight

#### *Poor health, wealth and fear of burglary*

We looked at the Mosaic groups ranked as among the poorest 10% for 'good health', 'wealth' and 'fear of burglary'. Only 16 households in rural wards of Wealden were classified among the segments that fare poorly on the latter two counts. These households were in Buxted,

Heathfield, Horam and Maresfield. However, in terms of 'good health' over 2,000 households in rural wards are classified among the Mosaic segments with the poorest health:

- I49: Low income older couples renting low rise social housing in industrial regions
- J51: Very elderly people, many financially secure, living in privately owned retirement flats
- J54: Older couples, independent but on limited incomes, living in bungalows by the sea

Households considered by Mosaic to fall within these categories were frequent in the Parishes of Chalvington with Ripe and Selmeston (Alfriston Ward) and in Pevensey Bay, where between 40% and 50% of households are classified either as J51 or J54. High numbers of these households also appear in Wadhurst, Westham, Pevensey, and the levels of Pevensey Parish. Alfriston and Pevensey & Westham wards also have high rates of emergency admissions to hospital, although the figure is relatively low in Wadhurst.

#### *Mosaic and OAC overlays with Council Tax Benefits data*

In this section, a different definition of 'rural' was used – areas considered either 'Town and Fringe' or 'Village, Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings' in Defra's rural-urban classification system. An \* is used to highlight this.

Group J (independent older people with relatively active lifestyles) is much the most prevalent group among CTB claimants – 30.7% of all claimants. This is more pronounced in the rural\* parts of the district – 32.3% of rural\* claimants. And group J is also greatly over-represented among CTB claimants, as Group J households make up only 22.1% of the Wealden population as a whole.

Figure 5 is based on the numbers of CTB claimants in each postcode area in Wealden and which Mosaic type is most frequent in that postcode area. Mosaic types with high percentages of the CTB claimants living across rural\* Wealden are shaded blue or lilac. These are the Mosaic types to consider when looking for high numbers of claimants.

The Mosaic types that are less frequent in Wealden are obviously less likely to have high numbers of CTB claimants. However, those that are associated with low income and low savings are be 'over-represented' in terms of the percentage of Wealden CTB claimants living in postcode areas characterised by that Mosaic type. This is expressed in the tables as a ratio, with the Mosaic types where this applied shaded pink, or lilac where they also have high numbers of claimants. The ratios are given for all Wealden postcodes and rural\* Wealden postcodes only. Comparison of the two ratios indicates whether these household type are particularly likely to need to claim CTB in rural\* areas.

One of the issues with these analyses is that because they use the Mosaic type that is most frequent in each postcode, it could be that the households who are claiming benefits within a given postcode are categorised in a different group or type from that which typifies the postcode. So, it is not possible to judge whether the appearance of, for example, 'K58: Well off commuters and retired people living in attractive country villages', in this list might be an effect of the recession, an artefact of 'generalising' at the postcode level, or some other factor such as the greater awareness of or access to the benefits available. It probably reflects a combination of these factors.

The OAC analyses also suggest the importance of the age profile as a factor influencing whether an output area has a high number or rate of benefit claimant households.

**Figure 5 - Numbers of CTB claimants from different Mosaic type postcode areas**

MOSAIC Type	Percentage of all Wealden households in postcode areas classified as this Mosaic type	Percentage of rural* Wealden CTB claimant households in postcode areas classified as this Mosaic type	Ratio showing how many times more CTB claimant households there are in postcode areas classified as this Mosaic type than would be expected if each Mosaic type had the same CTB claimant rate	Ratio showing how many times more rural* Wealden CTB claimant households there are in postcode areas classified as this Mosaic type than would be expected if each Mosaic type had the same CTB claimant rate
I50: Older people receiving care in homes or sheltered accommodation	1.0%	3.9%	4.3	4.0
F37: Young families living in upper floors of social housing	0.1%	0.3%	5.6	3.9
I49: Low income older couples renting low rise social housing in industrial regions	0.7%	1.7%	3.1	2.5
C17: Small business proprietors living in low density estates in smaller communities	6.1%	13.1%	1.4	2.2
J55: Older people preferring to live in familiar surroundings in small market towns	6.3%	12.5%	1.7	2.0
K60: Smallholders and self employed farmers, living beyond the reach of urban commuters	1.8%	3.0%	0.7	1.7
K58: Well off commuters and retired people living in attractive country villages	19.5%	16.3%	0.4	0.8
J54: Older couples, independent but on limited incomes, living in bungalows by the sea	7.6%	10.5%	1.4	1.4
A07: Well paid executives living in individually designed homes in rural environments	6.1%	5.6%	0.5	0.9
J53: Financially secure and physically active older people, many retired to semi rural locations	4.1%	4.3%	0.9	1.0

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

Many of the issues faced by deprived people in rural Wealden, particularly relating to education, health and other services, are shared with the wider community. The difficulty is that those on low incomes have less ability to absorb the additional costs of negotiating their way around the constraints that they face. Allied to this is a perception, amongst some people, that those who live in rural areas should accept lower standards of service provision because they are thought to have chosen to live in these areas. However, this ignores ideas of equality of access to services for all, and glosses over the fact that not everyone in rural Wealden has chosen their circumstances and the location in which they currently live. This has led, in many cases, to feelings of isolation and worry about the future. As the quote below illustrates, this is not related to specific activities or services, but to a combination of issues that leave vulnerable people feeling more vulnerable and concerned for the future:

“Once my grandson is old enough they’re not going to pay for him to stay here and I won’t be able to afford the rent. So they will cut my rent down and I won’t be able to afford to stay here because it’s two-bedroom. So I will have to look for a one-bedroom place. But that worries me because my grandson will be going to college and he won’t be able to afford to live anywhere, because he’s only got me and he’s gonna have to live with me even if I got a one bedroom place he’ll have to stay with me, because he won’t be able to support himself in accommodation while he’s studying at college, you know he won’t be able to do that. So that does worry me because I also need him around when I can’t do things. You know I can’t lift, I cannot lift anything, like even

the bin I can't lift so I do need him here for that because it puts a hell of a lot of a strain on my back, and just lifting even a saucepan could put my back out of, out of place. So, and I can't do hoovering or anything like that coz he does that for me so he is a big help to me really. Without him I'd be lost."

Many of the issues that are listed here under WLSP thematic areas are interlinked (for example, there is a clear connection between provision of public transport and access to education, employment and health services). Furthermore, it is apparent that the provision of services for vulnerable and deprived people in rural Wealden is patchy and that few of them have the means to address this, particularly in terms of transport to local service centres. This has led, in the eyes of some people, to an over reliance on charitable initiatives.

The following actions have been identified as having potential to help address the constraints facing deprived people in Wealden:

**Housing Actions:** There is a need for more affordable housing and a need to identify vulnerable isolated individuals in need of support. This could be achieved through joined up thinking between the fire and rescue services and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector to identify where vulnerable people living in poor housing are located. Fire and rescue already offer preventative schemes to ensure these people have access to alarms and sprinkler systems and are therefore aware of the locations of some vulnerable people. 'County Connect' could be a possible link for this to enable notes on vulnerable people to be shared and key safes could be adopted as required. At the time that the research was conducted, many interview and focus group attendees felt that the responsibility for promoting more affordable housing lay with the local authority, through the Local Development Framework however it is increasingly clear that alternatives will need to be found to supplement the work of the local authority.

**Health and Social Care:** There is support for developing the potential for 'good neighbour' and befriending schemes to combat problems of social isolation. Helping adults in need of care to stay in their own homes in rural Wealden and giving them a range of local housing suitable for their conditions may help to encourage local prosperity in the area.

**Transport Actions:** It is thought that an overarching single transport charity in Sussex, with a clear mandate and strategic vision, could better tackle some of the current issues of provision that are faced in rural Wealden. There are also various requirements for improvements to footpaths and shared use routes, to enable people to move more safely on foot and by bicycle. One example is between Framfield and Uckfield, as there is no footpath for the last few hundred metres despite the fact that many pedestrians use this route.

**Education, employment and finance:** Loan sharks in rural Wealden can be a genuine problem for deprived individuals with poor credit ratings. Credit Unions have the potential to improve this situation – for example a credit union in Crowborough. There is also thought to be scope for providing more employment through farm diversifications schemes, although it is recognised that local and regional grant support is likely to decline. Cross-boundary reciprocal arrangements between authorities, for example around Sure Start centres, could significantly improve access to adult education.

**Cultural activities, sport and leisure:** One barrier to adults putting on activities for teenagers is CRB checks and other risk assessment paper work:

"Every single different project that I work on I have to be CRB checked for separately."

There is a need to find those willing to commit to CRB checks in order supervise teenage groups and GH suggest there is a need for a separate person to deal with the paperwork of setting up CRB checks and other administrative elements of running groups for teenagers. JP identifies the work of the 'football foundation' as exemplary here. There is also a need to use school facilities available after school better and then put on transport after school (especially in winter).

## APPENDIX

### Methodology

**Quantitative data from partners working in Wealden:** Members of the Wealden Local Strategic Partnership initiated this project and all members contributed to the initial list of indicators/issues to be included in the study. Once a long list had been drafted, priority indicators were identified by each of the organisations involved in the project steering group, to produce a short-list of 20–25 data sets. In a few cases, this involved identifying the best proxy for the issue of concern.

Each partner holding data for one of the short-list of indicators was then approached and with regard to the need for data protection, Wealden District Council was provided the raw data. No personal data were provided, and where individual numbers of any data set were below six, the result for the wards in question was suppressed.

The data were then reanalysed from the rural perspective and presented in the full data report containing tables, charts and maps.

The Mosaic work was carried out by East Sussex County Council as part of a customer insight pilot funded through the Sussex Improvement Partnership. Wealden District Council carried out parallel analyses using the publicly available segmentation tool, Output Area Classification.

**Interviews:** In depth interviews were carried out with 10 local people in rural Wealden. A rapport building 'life history' approach to the interviews was adopted. This method examines memories and experiences across the lifespan to create a life story that can be used to understand behaviours in the individual and the societal and historical influences on these. Specifically, interviews explored family, relationships and experiences through the lifecourse as well as present day activities. Interviews then covered key priorities from the Sustainable Community Strategy and tried to ground these in the interviewees' experiences of place. Interviews were brought to a positive end via questions on best practice.

**Focus Groups:** Two focus groups were undertaken: one with LSP members and the other with community representatives. The groups covered the same key priorities and explored these priorities through participants' specific expertise and local knowledge. Where possible, interview data was also used to inform focus group discussion.

#### Interview Participants

Interviewee	Age	Location	Source
1 F	75-85	Hartfield	Suggested by Chair of the Wealden Seniors Forum
2 F	65-75	Broad Oak, Heathfield	Suggested by Chair of the Wealden Seniors Forum
3 M	55-65	Mayfield	Involved with Tenant Association for a WDC housing estate.
4 M and F	65-75	Westham	Suggested by Westham Village Hall Committee. Partially-Sighted Male and his wife
5 F	50-65	Horam	Suggested by Neighbourhood Officer

6 M1 and M2	17 and 15	Pevensey Bay	Participants in Pevensey Bay Local Action Team
7 F	55 -65	East Dean	Suggested by Southdown Housing Association and Homeworks support officers
8F	18-25	Pevensey Bay	Suggested by Southdown Housing Association and Homeworks support officers. Single mum.

### Focus Group 1 LSP Participants

David Liley, East Sussex County Council  
 Sheila O'Sullivan, East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT  
 Neal Robinson, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service  
 Liz Allsobrook, Action in rural Sussex  
 Julia Pope, Sussex Police  
 Malcolm Harris, Wealden District Council

### Focus Group 2 Voluntary Sector Participants

Mary Colato, East Sussex Association for the Blind  
 Graham Coffey, Job Centre Plus  
 Graham Hill, Victim Support  
 Mark Betson, Rural Officer for the Diocese of Chichester  
 John Padfield, 'backbench' Wealden District Councillor/farmer  
 Caroline Mack, Chief Executive of Uckfield Citizens Advice Bureau

### Data providers

East Sussex County Council  
 East Sussex Downs and Weald Primary Care Trust  
 Sussex Police  
 Wealden District Council

### Project steering group

Barry Winchester, Affinity Sutton  
 Gill Cameron-Waller, Wealden District Council  
 Graham Evans, East Sussex Downs and Weald Primary Care Trust  
 Helen Joslin-Allen, East Sussex County Council  
 Simon Kiley, Action in rural Sussex  
 Teresa Gittins, Action in rural Sussex  
 Tom Stuart, Wealden District Council

### Qualitative project researchers

Becky Taylor, Plumpton Agricultural College  
 Hannah Macpherson, University of Brighton  
 Neil Raven, University of Brighton

### End notes

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI), 2007. The Rural Share of Deprivation in the South-East: East Sussex Version 2. <http://www.rural-evidence.org.uk/reports.php>

<sup>2</sup> Communities and Local Government Table 576: Ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings by district  
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<sup>3</sup> See Wealden District Council (2010) Sharing Responsibility - Changing Behaviour.  
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<sup>4</sup> Guy Palmer (2009) Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural England.  
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<sup>5</sup> ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings [www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=13101](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=13101)