

TACKLING RURAL POVERTY AND SOCIAL ISOLATION FRAMEWORK

Background

- The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework is a DARD initiative which aims to help tackle poverty and social isolation in rural areas through the delivery of a range of measures in partnership with other statutory bodies targeted at reducing poverty and social isolation. These measures aim to complement other poverty and isolation initiatives and actions undertaken by government.
- The TRPSI Framework covers the period 2011-15 and builds on a previous package of measures provided under DARD's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Framework which operated during the period 2008-11. In the current budget period, 2011-15, the DARD Minister has secured £16 million to tackle poverty and social isolation in rural areas under the TRPSI Framework. Approval has recently been sought to extend the period of the TRPSI Framework to March 2016 however to date no budget has been agreed.

Strategic Context

- A key goal in DARD's Strategic Plan 2012/2020 is to improve the lives of farmers and other rural dwellers targeting resources where they are most needed.
- The Programme for Government 2012-15 contains a commitment to bring forward a package of measure to tackle rural poverty and isolation.
- The Rural White Paper Action Plan contains a commitment by DARD to implement a package of measures to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation.

Objectives

- To provide the necessary tools to help identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas.
- To develop programmes/interventions to help alleviate poverty/social isolation amongst vulnerable people/groups in rural areas.
- To complement and add value to existing government strategies aimed at tackling poverty and social isolation.
- To help empower rural communities to help themselves.

Priority Areas for Intervention

The TRPSI Framework outlines the priority areas for government to target and mitigate against issues of rural poverty and social isolation. These are:-

- **Access Poverty** – with a focus on access to statutory services, advice on welfare benefits, health and social care, education and training and public transport;
- **Financial Poverty** – with a focus on ensuring vulnerable rural dwellers can maximise their income, maximise benefit uptakes in rural areas, tackle fuel poverty and address the additional costs people face by living in rural areas; and
- **Social Isolation** – with a focus on addressing different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups, i.e. through community development approaches, supporting those organisations that work in rural areas, help those suffering from stress or mental health issues and on researching the needs and challenges of “hard to reach” vulnerable groups in rural areas.

Target Groups

The measures under the TRPSI Framework are designed to target the following groups. These groups were identified from evidence gathered from the EQIA on the APSI Framework 2008-11 and the evaluation of programmes funded under the 2008-11 Framework.

- Elderly;
- Lone parents;
- Disabled;
- Ethnic Minorities;
- Unemployed;
- Sexual Orientation (LGBT);
- Carers;
- Children;
- Older Children and Young People.

Actions

The TRPSI Framework contains an Action Plan setting out a range of initiatives aimed at tackling rural poverty and social isolation. These actions are set out in Annex A. A list of partnership organisations is also included in Annex B.

Review of TRPSI

It is proposed that a Review of the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework 2011-15 will be commenced in the near future and will be used to inform any further TRPSI initiatives.

The future of TRPSI

Any future TRPSI intervention will be subject to budgetary considerations and the outcome of the evaluation of the current TRPSI Programme. That evaluation will be

based on the evaluation of individual projects funded by TRPSI. The project level evaluations are currently being undertaken.

TRPSI PROGRESS HIGHLIGHT REPORT AT 29 SEPTEMBER 2014

PfG 2011 – 15 PRIORITY 2: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES, TACKLING DISADVANTAGE AND IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

PROGRAMME AIM

	AIM	PROGRESS
	To bring forward a £13 million package to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation in the next three years (2012/13 – 2014/15).	Overall target is on track to be met. £8.69m spend to end of March 14 with £1.86m spend incurred in 14/15 to date.

The agreement of the 2011-15 budget confirmed an enhancement to DARD's commitment to tackling poverty and social isolation in rural areas with a corresponding PfG target to spend £13m across the remaining 3 years 2012/13-2014/15. Work continued on the ground to build on the successes of intervention in the previous period, develop interventions and review the 2008-2011 Anti Poverty and Social Isolation framework. The revised Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation framework and indicative action plan was launched by Minister O'Neill on 22 February 2012.

REVISED FRAMEWORK

The TRPSI Framework identified three key priority areas for intervention in rural areas. These include:-

- Access Poverty (focus on access to statutory services);
- Financial Poverty (focus on measures that ensure vulnerable rural dwellers can maximise their income); and
- Social Isolation (focus on measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups).

FINANCE

(i) TO PROGRAMME END

Total Costs of the overall intervention	DARD Paid to date	DARD % Paid of Total Committed	RAG Status
£13m	£9.807*	75.5%	Green

* excludes Borewells expenditure of £750,242

(ii) 2012/13 YEAR END POSITION

DARD Spend Target (£)	In Year Spend to date (£)	% Achieved of In Year Target	RAG Status
£4m	£4.044m*	100%	Achieved

* excludes Borewells expenditure of £224,645

(iii) 2013/14 YEAR END POSITION

DARD Spend Target (£)	In Year Spend to date (£)	% Achieved of In Year Target	RAG Status
£4m	£4m*	97.5%	Achieved

* excludes Borewells expenditure of £518,797

(iv) 2014/15 POSITION (end of August 14)

DARD Spend Target (£)	In Year Spend to date (£)	% Achieved of In Year Target	RAG Status
£5.053m	£1.861m*	37%	Green

* excludes Borewells expenditure of £6,800

FUNDED INITIATIVES

Working in partnership with other key Departments and DARD delivering initiatives the programme supports the following interventions:-

- **Maximising Access in Rural Areas (MARA) – 12,000 rural households visited by 31 March 2015;**
- **Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) – 500,000 rural passenger trips to be provided by 31 March 2015;**
- **Community Development – to support rural people to identify and tackle local issues to bring about improvements to their quality of life;**
- **Farm Family Health Checks – 7,000 rural dwellers to receive health screening checks by 31 March 2015;**
- **Rural Support – To provide a listening ear and signposting service to farmers and the wider rural community until 31 March 2015;**
- **Rural Challenge (Small Grants) Programme – 5,000 rural dwellers to benefit by 31 March 2015;**
- **Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated – 81,000 additional rural flexi-care service contacts by 31 March 2015;**
- **Youth Employability Programme (Boost) –1,460 rural young unemployed people to increase their employability skills by 31 March 2015;**
- **Rural Youth Entrepreneurship (RYE) Programme – 825 vulnerable rural young people provided with Business Pre Development support with**

150 completing Business Action Plans and referred onwards for further business creation support (to INI etc) by 31 March 2015;

- **Rural Borewells Scheme – 230 rural households to obtain a wholesome water supply by the construction of a private borewell by 31 March 2015;**
- **Fuel Poverty initiative(s): Strategic interventions with DSD and Power NI to address rural fuel poverty issues;**
- **Enhancement of Rural Broadband provision in conjunction with DETI;**
- **Health in Mind initiatives in conjunction with DCAL.**

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

75.5% of the spend target has been achieved as at the end of August 2014. DARD is continuing to deliver directly and work in partnership with other Departments and Agencies on a number of initiatives.

Some very significant Project Outcomes have been achieved to date and these include:-

- 12,243 households have been visited under the Maximising Access in Rural Areas project;
- 5,765 health checks in 266 locations completed (farmer marts and community venues);
- 67,888 contacts made under the Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated project;
- 1,131 unemployed young people supported by the BOOST youth employability programme;
- 509 young people engaged in a Rural Youth Entrepreneurship programme;
- 467,380 passenger trips have been funded through the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme;
- 1,490 homes have received energy efficiency enhancements;
- 5,606 beneficiaries from projects funded via the Rural Challenge Programme;
- 63 Rural Borewells have been drilled;
- There is ongoing investment in the Rural Support charity, and in Rural Community Networks to undertake rural Community Development work.

ACTIONS

- **Maximising Access Rural Areas (MARA)**

The MARA project is a cross-departmental regional service which aims to maximise access to local services, grants and benefits, to support rural dwellers living in or at risk of poverty and social isolation. Household visits will continue to March 2016.

- **Transport**

The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) was developed in conjunction with DRD. It allows Smart Pass holders (in particular the elderly and disabled) access to concessionary travel on Rural Community Transport Partnership vehicles.

- **Health and Wellbeing**

A Farm Families Health Checks Programme is delivered regionally across all rural livestock markets and various community based facilities. The Programme provides health screening, advice and signposting to services for farmers, their families and rural dwellers.

- **Fuel Poverty**

DARD continues to explore avenues of potential support to help alleviate fuel poverty for vulnerable rural dwellers. Previous interventions have included the provision of additional rural specific assistance towards the DSD Warm Homes Scheme and the Power NI "Free Insulation Scheme".

- **Young People**

Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Programmes are being supported to help reduce economic inactivity among vulnerable rural young people by addressing barriers to employment and by creating the foundations for the development of future rural businesses.

- **Support for vulnerable Elderly**

DARD are supporting a Western Health and Social Care Trust pilot project to expand the existing Flexi Care Scheme which provides support to vulnerable rural older people to avail of services which reduce social isolation and enhance independent living.

- **Water (Borewells)**

Properties that currently do not have mains water tend to be in isolated rural areas which increase the cost of providing a water main. This scheme provides eligible households with a bore well and is currently open for applications.

- **Rural Communities**

DARD supports rural Community Development with a focus on tackling rural poverty and isolation through improving the economic capability of rural areas by increasing access to various funding programmes, promoting the social economy, and building capacity.

- **Rural Challenge Programme**

Delivery of a small grants programme to provide the community and voluntary sector with the opportunity to address localised poverty and isolation issues.

- **Rural Support**

DARD funds Rural Support to operate a helpline which provides a listening ear and signposting service for farmers and rural dwellers. Rural Support deals with a wide range of issues - from financial and legal matters, inheritance concerns and worries about stress and mental health.

PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

Public Health Agency (MARA, Farm Family Health Checks, CERI)

Department of Regional Development (Assisted Rural Travel Scheme, Rural Borewells Scheme)

Department of Employment and Learning (Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Programmes)

Department of Social Development (Fuel Poverty)

Rural Community Transport Partnerships (Assisted Rural Travel Scheme)

Rural Support Networks (Rural Community Development)

Rural Development Council (Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Programmes)