

# Evaluation of the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development's Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Framework 2011-15

Final Report

November 2015

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## Executive Summary

The NI Executive Programme for Government 2011-2015 contained a commitment to tackle rural poverty and social isolation in Northern Ireland with a £13m programme of measures. The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework was the mechanism through which DARD sought to deliver this commitment. The Strategic Investment Board (SIB), a body under OFMDFM, provide specialist advice and support to the public sector, primarily Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments. SIB was commissioned by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to undertake this evaluation with the objective of determining what contribution the TRPSI Framework had made to tackling rural poverty & social isolation. It reflects on the Framework's achievements in terms of meeting its goals and objectives and the way in which through its actions it addresses the 3 priority areas and the target groups outlined in the Framework.

The individual elements of the Framework are not evaluated in detail as at this point in the overall Framework evaluation only a small number of TRPSI projects/programme evaluations have been completed. However, the ARD Committee undertook its own review of TRPSI during 2014/15 which found that there was *'a high level of praise and support for all who help deliver the various TRPSI Framework programmes at a local level'*. The Committee agreed that it was content with the current TRPSI programme in terms of the approach taken to date, the projects and measures it has focused on, the positive impacts that it has made and the allocation of finance to each project. A number of recommendations were made by the ARD Committee and these have been considered as part of this evaluation.

The main conclusions of the evaluation are set out under the main headings of the terms of reference as follows:

### Analysis of TRPSI Framework

- The TRPSI Framework has successfully put in place a range of measures delivered in partnership with Departments, government bodies and a number of voluntary/community groups to deliver on the PfG commitment to tackle rural poverty and social isolation through a co-ordinated programme;
- The Framework has complemented both aspects of DARD's wider service delivery to rural communities along with those of other Departments.
- Seventeen individual measures have been delivered across the three priority areas of access poverty, financial poverty and social isolation, some of which were continuation of previous programmes and others which were new;
- The ways in which the Framework have addressed rural poverty and social isolation are extensive across each of the 3 priority areas as follows:

#### Access Poverty

- Providing access to advice on what benefits rural dwellers are entitled through MARA (12,265 households have received a 1<sup>st</sup> visit)

- Improving urban-rural linkages through investment in Broadband and funding of the ARTS Scheme (almost 780,000 passenger trips for rural dwellers)
- Improving access to healthcare services through the Farm Family Health Checks project (7,325 clients presented for a health check) and the Health in Mind project
- Providing access to wholesome water supplies for rural dwellers through the Rural Borewells Scheme (73 Borewells drilled)
- Improving access to library services through the 'Libraries in a Box' project
- Improving access to community and leisure facilities through support provided to voluntary and community groups under the Rural Challenge Programme (28,749 participants and 10,074 beneficiaries)

#### Financial Poverty

- Increasing household incomes through Increasing benefit uptake as a result of the MARA Project. MARA is estimated to have contributed an extra £1.9m of benefits into rural households over a 3-year period.
- Reducing household expenditure through savings in fuel costs through support provided under the Warm Homes Scheme (504 applicants) and the Power NI Free Insulation Scheme (1,541 homes)
- Increasing employment in rural areas through the creation of new businesses under the RYE project (207 young people, 9 businesses created to date)
- Improving employability of young people through skills gained through participation in the RYE and BOOST projects (1,355 young people)
- Reduced transport costs for older people benefiting from use of the Smart Pass
- Providing financial advice to rural dwellers through the Rural Support advice service (1,461 calls received with 106 receiving one-to-one financial mentoring)
- The Rural Challenge Programme also provides advice on debt

#### Social Isolation

- Reducing social isolation for vulnerable elderly people living in rural areas within the Western Health through the CERI project (80,725 contact hours made)
  - Improving access to opportunities to alleviate social isolation through better access to transport funded by the ARTS Scheme
  - Reducing the potential effects of social isolation through the promotion of positive mental health under the Health in Mind project
  - Addressing the effects of social isolation through the advice service provided by Rural Support
  - Increasing opportunities for social engagement through support provided to voluntary and community groups under the Rural Challenge Programme
  - Improving knowledge and understanding of issue around social isolation facing the LGBT Community in rural areas through support for research
- The PfG target of spending £13m has been met and actual expenditure over the period of the Programme by DARD has amounted to just over £15m;

- The four largest measures in terms of spend were Community Development (33%), MARA (20%), ARTS (14%) and Fuel Poverty (14%);
- The TRPSI framework has levered an additional spend of £11.7m from a wide range of other match funders giving a total funding of £27m, with the major match funding coming from DRD for the ARTS rural transport scheme which accounted for over £8m of total funding;
- As delivery of the Framework evolved DARD initiated a TRPSI Board to bring together staff working of the various schemes to share best practice and ensure that corporate governance requirements were met. In our view the Board Meeting structure is a very positive and crucial aspect of the TRPSI governance structures. However, if the Board is to be continued or indeed rebranded as a working group there would be added value in setting out the Board's membership and role and remit. This remit should include monitoring the overall performance of the Framework in relation to the achievement of objectives and outputs. It is also the case that the Board meetings appear to be heavily focused on the DARD contribution to the TRPSI Framework;

#### Effectiveness of TRPSI Framework

- All the measures within the Framework contribute to one or more of the three priority areas of access poverty, financial poverty or social isolation;
- The strongest fit with priority areas appears to be MARA, which contributes strongly to all 3 priority areas, while some smaller schemes such as Rural Support also contribute to all three priority areas;
- The Framework has been less successful in reaching the specified target groups, with only the elderly, disabled and older children/young people receiving explicit support, while ethnic minorities and the LGBT community appear to receive less targeting;
- It is also surprising that women, who suffer from rural poverty and social isolation, are not included as an explicit target group in the Framework although certain categories of women are represented e.g. carers, older women, women who are lone parents;
- There is evidence that the Framework has been successful in implementing the horizontal principles of partnership, complementarity, flexibility and good community relations. However there is less evidence that the horizontal principle of sustainability has been achieved, as some of the measures are still funded by DARD and not yet mainstreamed or adopted by other agencies. Also, there is no formal process for monitoring the impact of TRPSI on Section 75 groups;
- The aim of the Framework is to tackle poverty and social isolation among vulnerable people. It is clear that further work needs to be done on the measurement and targeting of need among vulnerable people in rural areas.

### Achievement of aims and outcomes

- The aims of the Framework have been largely delivered, particularly in terms of identifying and developing programmes and interventions to address issues of poverty and social isolation in rural areas and working with other agencies to do so;
- Where the Framework has been less successful has been in clearly demonstrating through quantitative evidence that it is meeting the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas with the tools provided;
- The difficulty with measuring the outcomes of the Framework arises from the fact that no quantified or directly measurable indicators were established at the outset of the Framework;
- Nevertheless there is some evidence from some contextual indicators that there has been some improvement in the proportion of individuals living in poverty in the rural west which declined from 27% in 2008/09 to 24% in 2012/13.

### Recommendations

Recommendations around any future TRPSI Framework have been structured around the following key themes:

- Framework Aims & Objectives;
- Setting & Monitoring Targets/Impacts;
- Governance Structures; and
- Programme Delivery

#### Framework Aims & Objectives

##### Recommendation 1

The aims, objectives and outcomes of any future TRPSI Framework should be revisited and more clearly defined. There should be a direct link between the Framework aims/objectives and the expected outcomes which should be both measurable and achievable. An appropriate measurement system should be put in place to ensure that this link can be made.

##### Recommendation 2

The focus of the TRPSI Framework needs to be more clear in terms of who or where it wants to target. A much clearer definition of what constitutes 'vulnerable or isolated people/groups' is required e.g. is it vulnerable people experiencing poverty or vulnerable people experiencing social isolation or both. This fits with the concept of using the TRPSI Framework more flexibly to target 'gaps' in support to people in rural areas.

A clear policy decision is required on whether the Framework should target rural dwellers experiencing 'social isolation' who may or may not fall within the definition of vulnerable people/groups.

### Recommendation 3

The TRPSI target groups should be reviewed and refined to better reflect the concept of people/groups experiencing 'isolation or poverty'. As discussed above, this should also include consideration of how vulnerable people are defined in terms of poverty and social exclusion. The determination of an appropriate target group(s) should be directly linked to the ability to monitor the Framework's impact on them going forward.

### Recommendation 4

Project/programmes should be reviewed in the context of their contribution to the TRPSI Framework aims and objectives focusing specifically on tackling poverty and rural isolation amongst groups.

### Recommendation 5

It is important that the next Framework recognizes the capacity building role and is more specific about its outcomes and links to other programmes both within the Framework and outside it.

### Recommendation 6

There needs to be awareness and in some instances complementarity between the next TRPSI Framework and the new RDP (e.g. young people participating on RYE may have the potential to access RDP funding going forward).

### Recommendation 7

We recommend that the aims of any future TRPSI Framework should take the following into consideration:

- Promoting the development of new and innovative approaches to tackling rural poverty and social isolation
- Promoting the development of rural specific solutions/interventions to address poverty and social isolation issues
- Supporting the roll out of pilot projects which if successful can/should be mainstreamed by other government Departments
- Supporting the development of effective partnerships between government Departments and other organisations which can help deliver better solutions for vulnerable rural dwellers through the sharing of learning, information, expertise and experience.
- Support the leveraging of additional funding and/or other resources to be used to target poverty and social isolation in rural areas
- Improving the understanding of rural aspects of poverty and social isolation across government through the sharing of knowledge, information, experience and expertise between organizations.

## Setting and Monitoring Targets/Impacts

### Recommendation 8

Some common measurement framework should be established for any future TRPSI Framework. Appropriate and measurable targets should be identified which reflect the aims, objectives and outcomes of the TRPSI Framework. This could incorporate a 'matrix' of measures reflecting some of the domain elements of the NIMDM. Where



possible, impacts should be geographically ‘mapped’ to provide a clearer understanding of TRPSI’s impact at a local and regional level.

#### Recommendation 9

Consideration should be given for the need to consider measures that have a more explicit economic focus in any future Framework e.g. improving employability and strategic impact. This will however be dependant on the nature of programmes included in any subsequent TRPSI Framework.

### Governance Structures

#### Recommendation 10

Any new Framework would benefit from a project board/steering group structure. It should set out a terms of reference and reporting arrangements. A suggestion for consideration would be to have one or more ‘independent’ Board members which may involve other government Departments to support the development and on-going delivery of the next TRPSI Framework.

#### Recommendation 11

A forum should be established which brings together the various partners representing Department, Agencies, the Voluntary/Community sector as well as rural researchers/statisticians. This would allow sharing of information, knowledge, expertise and experience in tackling rural poverty and social isolation. It is recommended that the Forum meets on a bi-annual basis and has a clearly articulated agenda and outcomes.

#### Recommendation 12

In designing the new Framework any programmes should define very clear roles in terms of ownership and delivery across the Departments/Organisations involved.

#### Recommendation 13

The Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy (IDCRP) provides a good forum to ensure that ‘rural’ issues including those relating to the TRPSI Framework in addressing poverty and social isolation have a wider platform for discussion. The Terms of Reference for the IDCRP should therefore be amended to incorporate the TRPSI Framework. The proposed introduction of the Rural Proofing Bill should support this action.

#### Recommendation 14

Consideration should be given as to where the ‘ownership’ of any new TRPSI Framework should lie, particularly in light of the changing context of the new government departments and the fact that the proposed Rural Proofing Bill would require policy-makers to assess whether proposed policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas compared with elsewhere.

## Programme Delivery

### Recommendation 15

There needs to be a clear 'exit strategy' for TRPSI projects/programmes. TRPSI should introduce new models with the aim that, if proven to be successful, should be taken on by project partners.

### Recommendation 16

It is important that the business case for any new project/programme developed under the Framework should clearly establish the need and rationale for intervention in the context of existing programme provision.

### Recommendation 17

Any future Framework should be more explicit that one of TRPSI's aims is to pilot projects and innovative programmes which address the core aim(s) of the TRPSI Framework in tackling rural poverty and social isolation.

### Recommendation 18

Programmes funded under any future TRPSI Framework should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to determine the continuing need for the intervention.

## 1. Background and Terms of Reference

### Background

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework, 2011-2015 was launched in 2011 in response to the Programme for Government commitment to bring forward a package of measures to tackle rural poverty and social isolation. It followed on from and built on the previous 2008-2011 programme which addressed rural anti-poverty and social exclusion. There was a particular emphasis in the new Framework on an integrated and co-ordinated approach to the problems of rural poverty & social isolation.

The TRPSI Framework aims to address some of the challenges facing those living in rural areas and to alleviate the stresses on those most vulnerable in our society by providing projects and programmes that address access poverty (such as access to benefits, education and training programmes and public transport), financial poverty (addressing low incomes and additional costs associated with rural areas) and social isolation (ensuring vulnerable groups can overcome barriers to goods and services and supporting community groups and support organisations).

### Description of TRPSI Framework

The TRPSI Framework document sets out the aims, priority action areas, target groups and expected outcomes.

The aims of the Framework were as follows:

- To build on the work of the Rural Anti-Poverty / Social Inclusion Framework 2008 – 2011;
- To provide the necessary tools to 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 empower rural communities to help themselves.

Three priority areas for the Framework were identified:

#### a) Access Poverty

Measures supported under this priority focus on access to statutory services such as advice on welfare benefits, health and social care, public transport, advice and support and education and training.

#### b) Financial Poverty

This priority focuses on measures that ensure vulnerable rural dwellers can maximise their income. Measures supported may focus on addressing fuel poverty, maximising benefit uptakes in rural areas, or focus on addressing the additional costs people face by living in rural areas.

c) Social Isolation

This priority focuses on measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups. This may be through community development approaches using community development to address local needs, or supporting organisations that work in rural areas supporting those suffering from different types of stress or mental health issues. This priority will also focus on researching the needs and challenges of “hard to reach” vulnerable groups in rural areas.

The Framework highlights that no single definition of ‘rural’ exists but references NISRA’s recommendation to use programme specific definitions where feasible and where not to define ‘rural’ as settlements with a population of 4,500 or less. It references the 3 key related measurements of ‘poverty’ in Northern Ireland as 1) relative income poverty – where median income is 60% of the UK average 2) absolute low income – where median income is less than 60% of the median in 1998/99 and 3) low income and material deprivation combined – where households have an income of 70% of the UK median and with a material deprivation score of 25 or more. The Framework also makes the distinction between two types of poverty – Financial and Access poverty. The Framework defines ‘social isolation’ as a lack of contact with other people in normal daily living – in the workplace, with friends and in social activities.

The Framework also identified a number of target groups that any measures would seek to support:

- Elderly
- Disabled
- Lone parents
- Ethnic Minorities
- Unemployed
- Sexual Orientation (LGBT)
- Carers
- Children
- Older children and young people

Finally the expected outcomes of the Framework were set out as follows:

- Contribute to the reduction of poverty among targeted vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Contribute to the reduction of social isolation among targeted vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Provide an evidence base for identifying rural poverty/social isolation that can influence other mainstream government interventions;
- Complement the work of other Departments in tackling poverty and social isolation;
- Enhance multidisciplinary approaches to tackling poverty and social isolation in rural areas.

A number of programmes and measures were identified for inclusion in the Framework, some of which were a continuation of programmes carried forward from the 2008-11

Programme and others which were new. Up to seventeen individual programmes have been identified as part of the Framework.

### Terms of Reference

As the Framework has reached the end of its funding period the Department has identified the need for an independent evaluation that will consider how effective it has been and what lessons have been learned for any future framework of this nature.

The terms of reference for the evaluation were agreed as follows:

- *To determine the contribution that DARD's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework has made to tackling rural poverty and social isolation*
- *To determine how effective the Framework has been in contributing to reducing (a) access poverty, (b) financial poverty and (c) social isolation in rural areas;*
- *To determine how effective the Framework has been in targeting each of the vulnerable groups specified in Section 5 of the Framework;*
- *To determine the extent to which the aims specified in Section 4 of the Framework have been achieved;*
- *To identify the key benefits arising from the implementation of the Framework for:*
  - *Rural dwellers*
  - *DARD*
  - *Other Departments*
  - *Other Partnership Organisations*
  - *The Voluntary and Community Sector*
- *To identify any lessons learned which should be applied in respect of the development and implementation of any future Framework in relation to:*
  - *The aims and objectives of the Framework*
  - *The horizontal principles specified in the Framework*
  - *Engagement with partnership organisations*
  - *Increasing the long term benefits of the Framework*
  - *Delivering better outcomes for rural dwellers*
  - *Achieving better value for money for DARD*
  - *Improving the quality of information available on equality monitoring*

It is clear from these terms of reference that the evaluation relates to the evaluation of the overall Framework rather than of the individual programmes and projects that it covers. Nevertheless, the outcomes of these programmes and projects feed into the overall outcomes of the Framework.

### Work carried out

Evaluators from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), reporting to a small steering group from the Sustainable Rural Communities Branch of DARD, carried out the evaluation. The work was carried out over the period April to July 2015.

At the outset it was understood that evaluations had been completed for all the constituent programmes and projects delivered under the Framework and that the results of these evaluations would be used to inform the evaluation of the overall Framework. While some final evaluations are under way, none of these were available to the evaluators.

In the absence of final evaluation reports on the individual programmes and projects, evidence was drawn from a number of secondary sources:

- Highlight reports to the TRPSI Project Board
- Summary project sheets which were completed by Programme leaders for each Programme in the Framework for the purpose of this evaluation
- Financial information from Rural Development Division on expenditure on TRPSI programmes
- Interviews with Director of DARD Rural Policy, Director of DARD Rural Development Division and Head of Corporate Services in Rural Development Division
- Interviews with Programme leaders in DARD Rural Development Divisions South and West
- Interviews with partners in other Government Departments:
  - DRD Rural Transport
  - DHSSPS
  - DSD Housing Directorate
  - DCAL Libraries
  - DEL\*
- Interviews with other stakeholders including:
  - Public Health Agency
  - Rural Development Council
  - Rural Support Networks
  - Rural Support
  - Rural Community Transport Network\*
  - Rural Community Network
  - NI Rural Women's Network
  - NISRA

\*Not available during evaluation period

A draft report was submitted to the steering group and following feedback a final report was prepared.

## 2. Strategic Context

The Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD) has responsibility for rural development and rural policy in Northern Ireland. These responsibilities include the management and implementation of the Rural Development Programme, the development of the Rural White Paper Action Plan, rural proofing and the promotion of integrated rural policy making across government.

The 2011-2015 TRPSI Framework was developed at a time when the rural policy of the Department and the Executive was evolving:

- The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 had been approved and was already up and running. The Programme, which was funded jointly by the European Commission and the NI government, included Axis 3 which aimed to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to encourage diversification. This Programme had a strong economic emphasis, because of the European legislation, and also focussed on capital investment rather than resource led programmes. There was considered therefore to be a need to supplement this Programme with measures specifically aimed at addressing poverty & social isolation in rural areas.
- The Rural White Paper Action Plan, the Executive's overarching strategy for rural areas, was at a draft stage. However, one of the priorities within the White Paper was *"to seek to minimise, where it exists, disadvantage, poverty & social exclusion and inequality amongst those living in rural areas and in particular amongst vulnerable groups."* One of the specific actions in the Plan was to identify & tackle the causes of poverty & disadvantage in rural areas and to promote social exclusion. The TRPSI Framework offered the opportunity to test some cross-departmental collaborative approaches to these problems.
- DARD's Strategic Plan 2012-2020 had an explicit goal to *'improve the lives of farmers and other rural dwellers targeting resources where they are most needed'*. This included a commitment to tackle rural poverty and social isolation by working with the Executive, other Departments and Agencies, and rural stakeholders.

The Programme for Government 2011-2015, under Priority 2: Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Wellbeing, set out a commitment to *"Bring forward a £13 million package to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation in the next three years"*, as the responsibility of DARD. This commitment became the TRPSI Framework.

In discussing the Framework with key stakeholders it became clear that the Framework covered a range of programmes that could not be accommodated under other Departmental programmes such as the Rural Development Programme. This is a strength of the Framework in that it allows for innovation and piloting of initiatives that cannot be undertaken elsewhere but it is also a weakness in that it does not have a strong strategic focus and rather becomes a group of, in some instances, unconnected programmes.

TRPSI aims to complement and add value to existing government strategies that are aimed at tackling poverty and social isolation. It provides opportunities for a

collaborative interdepartmental approach. A key element of the framework is about working in partnership with other Departments and organisations to develop an integrated approach to dealing with rural challenges.

Moving forward the new Rural Development Programme for the period 2014-20 has now been developed and identifies the continuing need to address problems of rural poverty and social isolation in Northern Ireland. It is aimed at improving competitiveness in the agriculture and forestry sector, safeguarding and enhancing the rural environment and fostering competitive and sustainable rural businesses and thriving rural communities through the delivery of a range of schemes. It also emphasises the need to encourage diversification and entrepreneurship and to increase employment opportunities in rural areas. The LEADER approach of forming Local Action Groups to plan for local rural areas has been adopted.

The LEADER approach complements the new statutory power of community planning acquired by the new 11 Council structures in Northern Ireland. Both the LEADER structures and the Local Development Strategies prepared by them can inform the preparation and implementation of Community Planning. While most Councils are still in the process of preparing their Community Plans, this places an important context on any new Framework to address rural poverty and social isolation.

The **Rural White Paper Action Plan** is an Executive initiative led by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development which aims to provide a framework for the Executive to work together to address key issues and challenges facing rural communities. The Rural White Paper Action Plan contains over 90 commitments across all Departments covering a wide range of rural issues including rural broadband, healthcare, rural tourism, poverty and social inclusion, housing, rural transport and planning.

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework is one of a number of complementary rural initiatives led by DARD which are aimed at helping to ensure that the specific needs of rural communities are addressed. The **TRPSI Framework** provides a flexible mechanism for DARD to work in partnership with other public sector organisations to develop programmes which target poverty and social isolation among vulnerable rural dwellers. **Rural proofing** is a DARD-led initiative which aims to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of rural dwellers by requiring rural needs and circumstances to be considered as an integral part of the government policy making process. It also requires Departments to evaluate the impact of government policy and public service delivery on rural communities and, where appropriate, to take action to mitigate any detrimental impacts. **Rural Champion** is a DARD-led initiative aimed at addressing the specific needs of rural communities primarily through the championing of rural issues inside and outside government.

**Delivering Social Change** is an Executive initiative which aims to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all age groups and also seeks to secure an improvement in children and young people's health, well being and life opportunities with a view to breaking the long term cycle of multi-generational problems. The TRPSI Framework aims to complement the Delivering Social Change initiative by tackling poverty in rural areas through suite of measures targeted to address the needs of the vulnerable groups including the elderly, children and young people.



It is also important to recognise that the current TRPSI Framework has been delivered during a period when the local economy was still recovering from the economic recession which began in 2007/08. This has limited the economic opportunities available to rural dwellers caught in poverty and impacted on the delivery of the outcomes.

Looking forward to any new Framework, the continuing programme of austerity in UK public spending and the proposals for welfare reform are likely to have an impact on all parts of Northern Ireland including rural areas.

### 3. Analysis of the TRPSI Framework

#### Introduction

In this section the origins of the TRPSI Framework are set out followed by details of the various projects and programmes that are included within it. This is followed by an analysis of the expenditure on the Framework projects and programmes, including matched funding from other sources. Finally, there is a brief review of the delivery of the Framework as a whole.

#### Context of TRPSI's Origins

The TRPSI Framework sets out the goals, objectives, priority action areas and outcomes for the Programme for Government commitment to help tackle poverty and social isolation in rural areas. It involves a range of measures delivered in partnership with Departments, government bodies and a range of voluntary/community groups over the period 2011/12 to 2014/15. It builds on DARD's previous rural Anti-Poverty And Social Inclusion Framework (2008/9 to 2010/11) through which the Department delivered a £10 million package of measures. Six<sup>1</sup> of the 17 projects assisted under the current Framework were already in place during the previous Framework period.

The current Framework has focused on three priority areas for intervention; access poverty (focusing on access to statutory services), financial poverty (focusing on measures that ensure vulnerable rural dwellers can maximise income) and social isolation (focusing on measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups).

The Framework aims to:

- Build on the work of the Rural Anti-Poverty/Social Inclusion Framework 2008-2011;
- Provide the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Develop programmes/interventions to help alleviate poverty/social isolation amongst vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Complement and add value to existing government strategies aimed at tackling poverty and social isolation;
- Empower rural communities to help themselves.

The outcomes will be measured at individual programme level given that they will address different aspects of poverty and exclusion. However, collectively it is expected that the outcomes will:

- Contribute to the reduction of poverty among targeted vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Contribute to the reduction of social isolation among targeted vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;

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<sup>1</sup> ARTS, MARA, Rural Challenge, Rural Support, Fuel Poverty (Warm Homes) and Community Development

- Provide an evidence base for identifying rural poverty/social isolation that can influence other mainstream government interventions;
- Complement the work of other Departments in tackling poverty and social isolation;
- Enhance multidisciplinary approaches to tackling poverty and social isolation in rural areas.

The Framework explicitly specifies a number of target groups including the elderly, lone parents, disabled, ethnic minorities, unemployed, sexual orientation, carers, children and older children and young people. These target 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.

The Framework also refers to a number of horizontal principles including:

- Partnership – at both Departmental and community level
- Complementarity – with Axis 3 measures developed through the Local Action Groups
- Flexibility – through ongoing horizon scanning, openness to new ideas and approaches
- Sustainability – to create sustainable development in rural communities
- Equality – promoting equality and good community relations through Section 75 and the Human Rights Act 1998

The measures funded under the TRPSI Framework support its aims to encourage rural communities to help themselves through the practical delivery of on-the-ground interventions that complement existing government strategies.

### Profile of TRPSI Projects/Programmes

The TRPSI Framework centres on a series of projects/programmes aimed at tackling rural poverty and social isolation. Seventeen projects/programmes have been supported under the TRPSI Framework 2011/12 – 2014/15, as follows:

1. ARTS (Assisted Rural Travel Scheme)	2. Rural Youth Entrepreneurship (RYE)
3. Community Development – Rural Support Networks	4. FFHC (Family Farm Health Checks)
5. MARA (Maximising Access to Rural Areas)	6. Rural Support
7. Fuel Poverty – DSD (Warm Homes)	8. Rural Challenge Programme 2012
9. CERI (Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated)	10. Community Development - Rural Faith Based Engagement
11. Fuel Poverty - Power NI	12. Health in Mind
13. Rural Borewells	14. Libraries in a Box
15. Rural Broadband	16. LGBT Research
17. BOOST	

Each project/programme within the framework has its own objectives and targets. They involve a number of delivery and funding partners framed around a broad set of actions. A brief description of each is outlined in the Table below along with a short summary of key achievements to date<sup>2</sup>. Further detail is provided in Appendix A of this report.

**Table 3.1: Summary of TRPSI Projects/Programmes**

Project Name	Brief Description	Key achievements to date
<b>ARTS (Assisted Rural Travel Scheme)</b>	Passengers with a valid SmartPass can travel free or half fare on a dial-a-lift service provided by Rural Community Transport Partnerships	772,516 passenger trips for rural dwellers have been delivered (April 2011 – Feb 2015) benefitting approx. 5,000 individuals
<b>Community Development Rural Support Networks</b>	Provision of a local community development support and advice service for all rural wards	Supporting access to the RDP, other elements of TRPSI, engagement with LAGs, developing capacity and leadership
<b>MARA (Maximising Access to Rural Areas)</b>	‘Enablers’ visits rural households to make an assessment of the grants, benefits and services they are entitled to	12,265 households have received a 1 <sup>st</sup> visit resulting in 13,915 individual assessments generating 32,647 referrals for grants, benefits and services.
<b>Fuel Poverty DSD (Warm Homes)</b>	Aims to help alleviate poverty by supplementing Warm Homes Plus for ‘hard to treat’ rural homes	504 applicants received energy efficiency measures from 2011/12 – 2013/14
<b>CERI (Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated)</b>	Addresses social isolation for vulnerable elderly people living in rural areas within the Western Health and Social Care Trust’s (WHSCT) catchment area, with a focus on health promotion, healthy lifestyles and supporting independent living	80,725 contact hours made from Jan 2012 – March 2015
<b>Fuel Poverty Power NI</b>	Government and energy stakeholders working together to supplement the Power NI Free Loft Insulation Scheme to reduce heating costs and create warmer homes for vulnerable rural households	2011/12 – 578 homes 2012/13 – 323 homes 2014/15 – 640 homes
<b>Rural Borewells</b>	To provide financial	73 borewells drilled to date

<sup>2</sup> As outlined in the Summaries in appendix A completed by DARD officials

	assistance towards the construction of a private borewell to enable applicants to obtain a wholesome water supply in rural areas where access is not technically or financially possible	with a further 15 in the pipeline
<b>Rural Broadband</b>	Roll out of rural broadband in more isolated areas	
<b>BOOST</b>	Aims to reduce economic inactivity among unemployed rural young people	1,355 young people have completed the programme which ended in March 2015
<b>RYE</b>	Developing business creation potential among vulnerable young people in rural Northern Ireland	207 young people actively engaged in programme 55 onward referrals 9 new businesses created
<b>FFHC (Family Farm Health Checks)</b>	Screening vans attend agricultural marts, other agri/food industries and various community events in rural areas to increase access to health screening services, providing health related advice, information and sign-posting	7,325 clients have presented for a Health Check at 355 venues 3,783 have been advised to visit their GP as a result 1,751 clients have consented to be referred to MARA
<b>Rural Support</b>	Provides a telephone helpline services for rural residents - includes time of 33 volunteers	1,461 calls received Since Sept 14, 32 information sessions on rural stress and positive mental health/well-being delivered One-to-one financial mentoring to 106 individuals
<b>Rural Challenge Programme 2012</b>	Small grants programme providing rural community and voluntary groups grant aid of up to £10k to deliver projects aimed at addressing poverty and isolation	28,749 programme participants 10,074 programme beneficiaries
<b>Community Development Rural Faith Based Engagement</b>	Community development work in conjunction with Faith Based organisations	An Enabler in place in each county supporting groups and individuals. 'Facilitatory Development' grants were available to enable groups to use activities or bring in the expertise they need to make a difference in their area.
<b>Health in Mind</b>	Promote +ve mental health	Delivered in 18 rural

	through reading, learning & information activities in a library setting	libraries with over 870 people participating in over 100 activities by March 2015
<b>Libraries in a Box</b>	Trial the idea of a small, self service library facility in community buildings in 3 rural areas which depend on a mobile service	Pilot underway in 3 rural locations (Trillick, Eskra and Clonmore) with the aim of testing the concept and finding which type of community facility encourages maximum usage
<b>LGBT (Research)</b>	A study on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in rural areas	Production of a Report presenting information on the experiences of LGB&/T people in rural areas across a range of thematic areas

Individual elements of the TRPSI Framework have extensive reach in terms of rural dwellers. Impacts directly reach individuals and households. For example, almost 780,000 passenger trips have taken place because of the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) benefitting approximately 5,000 individuals. Almost 80,000 contact hours have been made with around 2,000 rural elderly individuals in the Western Trust area. The Family Farm Health Checks (FFHC) has accommodated over 7,000 clients for health checks. Perhaps the most recognised programme within TRPSI has been Maximising Access to Rural Areas (MARA) where over 12,000 households have been visited and almost 33,000 referrals made to other support services to which rural dwellers are entitled. Other elements of the Framework support individuals indirectly through programmes including Community Development (Rural Support Networks and Rural Faith Based Engagement) and Rural Challenge. There are also some small but unique programmes including Libraries in a Box, RYE and BOOST.

The TRPSI Highlight Reports would suggest that, for the most part, programmes are on target to meet their individual objectives and where this is not the case clear explanation has been given as to why. For example, an under spend under the Rural Borewells programme is clearly noted and the reason provided due to a lower level of interest in the scheme than that indicated during DRD's consultation exercise.

### Funding Profile

The TRPSI Framework dedicated support to a package of measures worth up to £16m of DARD funding over the period 2011/12 to 2014/15. The Action Plan contained within the Framework outlined indicative budget costings for 14 projects in total amounting to £16.45m<sup>3</sup> over the 4-year period. The majority of projects involved resource based funding only (11), two projects anticipated both resource and capital funding (MARA and FFHCs) while one involved capital funding only (Fuel Poverty). The resource/capital split was anticipated as 88%/12%.

The majority of the projects listed in the original Framework Action Plan have gone on to be funded under TRPSI. Exceptions to this are 2 projects - a potential Post Office

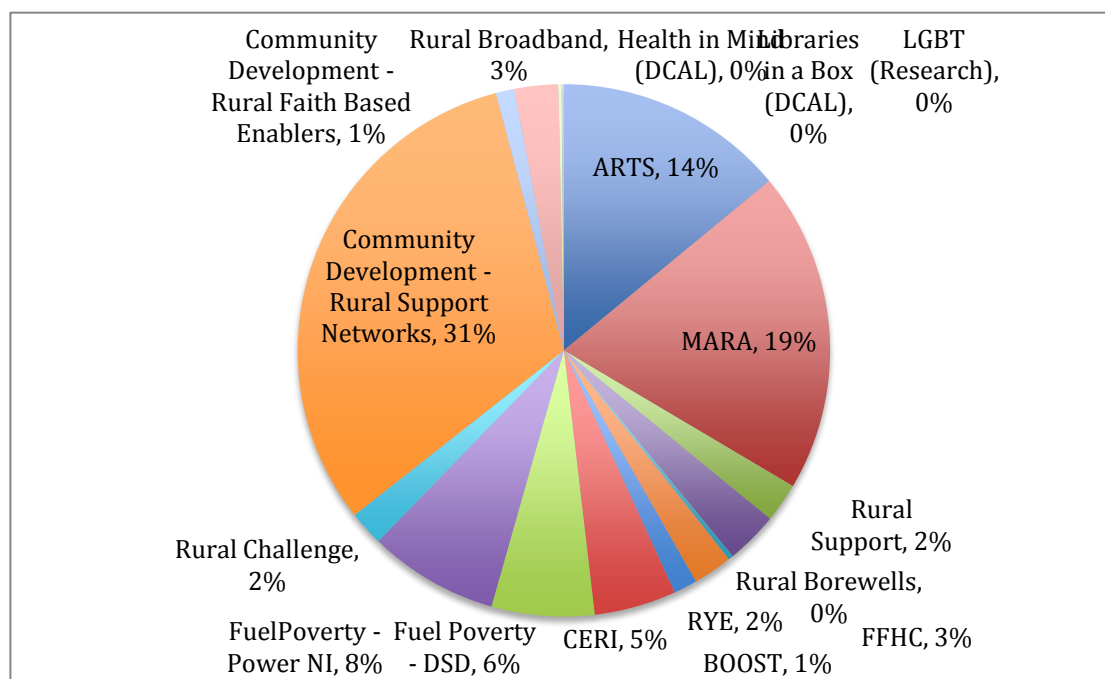
<sup>3</sup> 2 projects – Potential Post Office Diversification Scheme and Vulnerable Groups in Rural Society Research Programme – had no costs assigned to them at that point

Diversification Scheme and a Vulnerable Groups in Rural Society Research Programme. There was also £2.2m put aside in the original TRPSI Framework to deal with ‘emerging issues’. Projects that have been funded under the TRPSI Framework but were not part of the original Action Plan include and more recent projects - Rural Broadband, Health in Mind, Libraries in a Box and the LGBT research.

As a result, seventeen projects have gone on to be funded under the Framework over the period 2011/12 to 2014/15. As at June 2015 DARD funding for these projects amounted to just over £15m<sup>4</sup>. Community Development (Rural Support Networks and Rural Faith Based Engagement), MARA and ARTS together make up two-thirds of DARD spend over the Framework period followed by Fuel Poverty (PowerNI and DSD) which together account for 14% of the total. All other projects account for 5% or less of DARD funding.

The resource/capital spend split relating to DARD TRPSI funding over the period is split 77%/23%. Capital spend relates to both Fuel Poverty programmes (PowerNI and Warm Homes), MARA, FFHC and Rural Broadband.

**Figure 3.1: Profile of DARD TRPSI Funding £15m (2011/12 - 2014/15)**

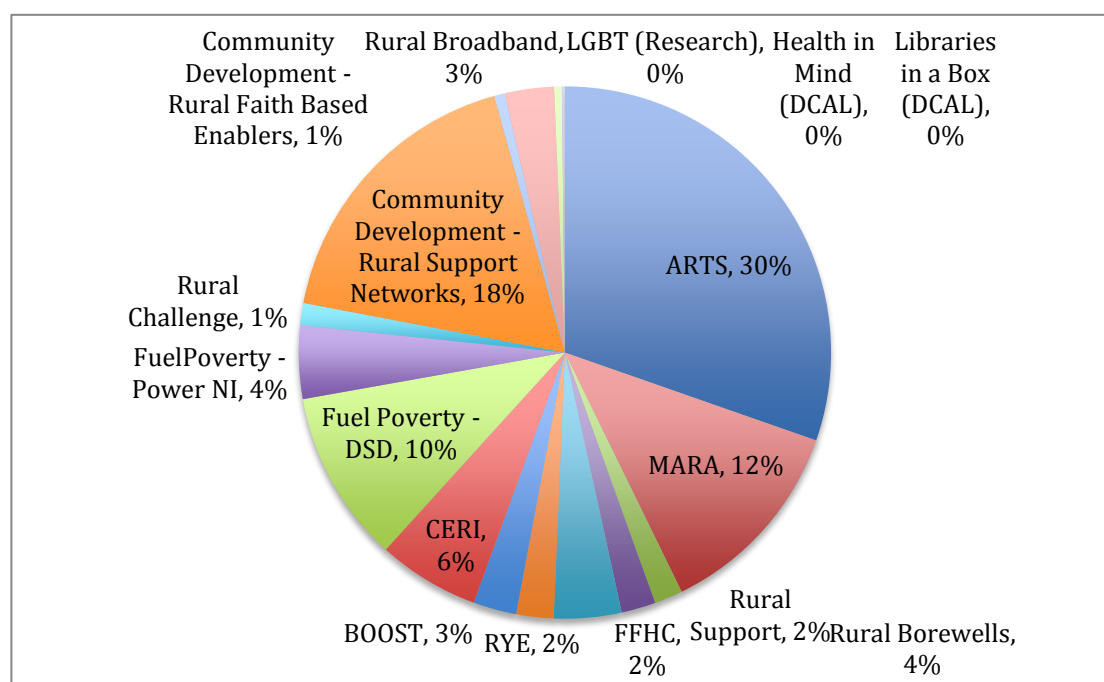


Source: DARDNI

Most TRPSI Framework projects also involved some elements of matched funding. This amounted to £11.7m over the Framework period so that total funding for projects under the Framework amount to £27m. The largest project funded under the overall Framework is ARTS, accounting for 30% of the total.

<sup>4</sup> Note: this excludes Rural Borewells funding of £1,049m and £400k match for Rural Broadband – both of which are included as Matched Funding

**Figure 3.2: Profile of Overall TRPSI Funding £27m (2011/12 – 2014/15)**



Source: DARDNI

There are 11 funding ‘partners’ providing matched funding towards the TRPSI suite of projects. These are listed in the table below.

**Table 3.2: Matched Funding Partners involved in TRPSI**

Matched Funder	Project(s)
DRD	ARTS Rural Borewells <sup>5</sup>
DEL	BOOST
DCAL	Health in Mind Libraries in a Box
DSD	Fuel Poverty
PHA	MARA FFHC
WHSC	CERI
Rural Support	Rural Support
Advantage	BOOST
Community Groups	Rural Challenge
Northern Periphery Programme	RYE

<sup>5</sup> Note: The Rural Borewells project would not have proceeded without DARD funding as DRD have no grant aiding power

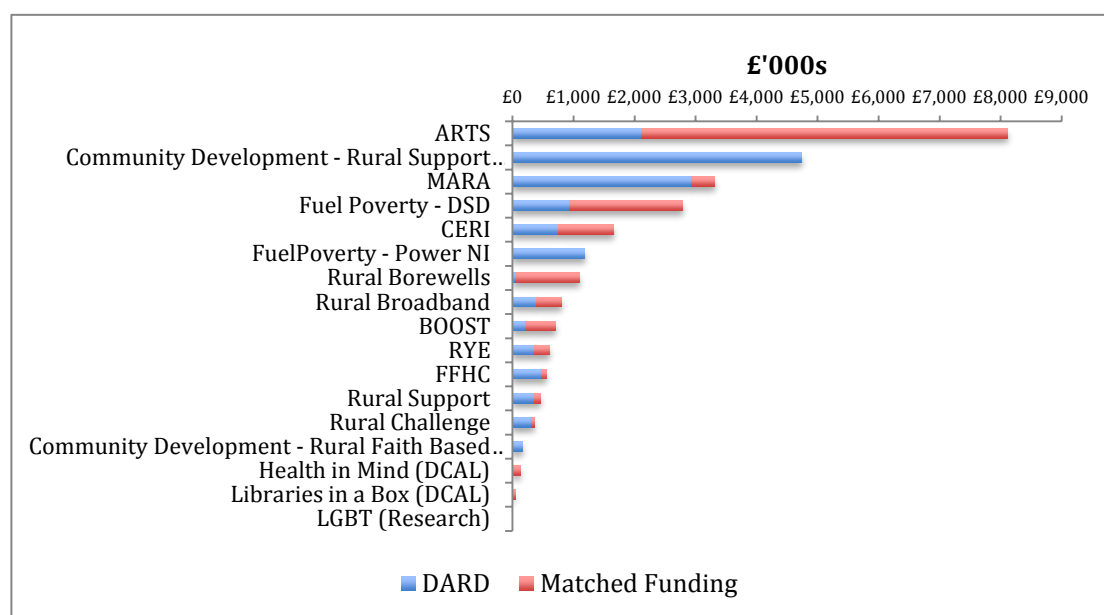


DARD is sole funder of both Community Development programmes (Rural Support Networks & Rural Faith Based Engagement) along with Fuel Poverty (PowerNI) and the LGBT research project.

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<sup>6</sup> EU funding of the Rural Broadband scheme could not be draw down without matched DARD funding

**Figure 3.3: Funding Profile of TRPSI Programmes/Projects ((2011/12 – 2014/15)**



Source: DARDNI

The largest matched funding contribution is made by DRD towards ARTS. DRD has contributed £6m to this scheme over the Framework period, 74% of its total cost.

**Table 3.3: TRPSI Project/Programme Funding**

Project/Programme Name	Matched Funder	Total Funding (£'000)	% DARD	% Matched Funder
ARTS	DRD	£8,110	26%	74%
Community Development Rural Support Networks		£4,739	100%	0%
MARA	PHA	£3,318	88%	12%
Fuel Poverty DSD	DSD	£2,793	34%	66%
CERI	WHSCT	£1,651	45%	55%
Fuel Poverty Power NI		£1,187	100%	0%
Rural Borewells	DRD	£1,095	4%	96%
Rural Broadband	EU	£800	50%	50%
BOOST	DEL/ADVANTAGE NI	£702	31%	69%
RYE	Northern Periphery Programme (NPP)	£605	59%	41%
FFHC	PHA	£557	86%	14%
Rural Support	Rural Support	£458	78%	22%
Rural Challenge	Community Groups	£360	88%	12%
Community Development Rural Faith Based Engagement		£169	100%	0%
Health in Mind	DCAL	£125	24%	76%

<b>Libraries in a Box</b>	DCAL	£44	36%	64%
<b>LGBT (Research)</b>		£4	100%	0%
<b>Overall TRPSI Spend</b>		<b>£26,718</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>

Source: DARDNI

### Delivery of Framework

The TRPSI Framework is managed through a Programme Board made up of DARD staff. This includes the TRPSI Programme Manager, managers from DARD’s Rural Development Division’s (RDD South & Corporate) along with the Head of DARD’s Sustainable Rural Communities Branch. RDD Project Officers are included in meetings as required.

The Board meets on a quarterly basis and has responsibility for the following aspects of the Framework:

- Overall Management of the TRPSI Framework
- Consideration of initiatives proposed for funding
- Quarterly consideration of the TRPSI Budget
- Consideration of Highlight Reports for each Project / Programme
- TRPSI Publicity / Communications

An integral part of the Board meetings is consideration of the Highlight Reports for all TRPSI funded initiatives. These are issued to Board Members for consideration prior to Board Meetings (see below for further discussion). Updates on progress towards objectives, financial position, positive outcomes, PR, audit and also any issues or risks are noted.

The Board Meetings also provide the opportunity to discuss progress towards Programme for Government targets, budget profiling and reach agreement and give direction on future or emerging issues.

In our view the Board Meeting structure is a very positive and crucial aspect of the TRPSI governance structures, particularly given the distinctiveness of each of the programmes within the Framework and their reach in terms of target areas and groups. The Board meetings allow consideration of each of the individual programmes within the Framework in the context of both each other and the overall TRPSI Framework.

However, there appears to be no terms of reference for the Board setting out the Board’s membership and role and remit. We would also have some concern over the extent to which the overall performance of the Framework is considered in light of the Board responsibilities outlined above.

It is also the case that the Board meetings appear to be heavily focused on the DARD contribution to the TRPSI Framework. There appears to be limited consideration given to the wider contributions by other Departments/Organisations to the Framework. The most obvious indicator of this is the lack of any other representation aside from DARD at the Board Meetings. There are 9+ other Departments/Organisations involved in funding and delivering the TRPSI Framework. They also have an important role to play

in feeding back on the delivery and performance of their own programme as well as understanding its role in the wider delivery of the Framework aims and objectives.

The TRPSI Highlight Reports provide a synopsis of project management and budgetary controls in place for the various funded initiatives<sup>7</sup>. The core elements of the Highlight Reports include:

- Programme Aim - a summary of the individual programme aim
- Programme Objectives – outlining objectives and detailing progress towards those objectives
- Finance – detailing the cost of the intervention including contributions from specific Departments/Agencies along with DARD payments to date – a RAG<sup>8</sup> indicator is also used to highlight the position of DARD's payments
- Issues & Risk – a consideration of key issues and risks
- Positive Outcomes – identifying the beneficial outcomes of the programme

As well as individual Highlight Reports an overall TRPSI Highlight Report is also provided using the same format outlined above.

A review of the Highlight Reports for January 2015 was undertaken as part of the evaluation and the evaluation team has noted the following comments:

- The Highlight Reports are very useful in providing an understanding, in a standardised format, the position of each of the programmes contained within the TRPSI Framework. This is particularly important for a Framework such as TRPSI where the individual programmes are quite disparate from each other
- The Reports clearly demonstrate progress towards specific programme objectives and the financial position of programmes from a DARD perspective are very clear
- The issues and risks section is important in highlighting any challenges to the individual programmes going forward and in providing further context to its delivery e.g. Rural Borewells challenge in meeting its budget
- It is useful and important that the positives of each programme are clearly identifiable

However, it would be useful if the Highlight Reports also included a 'Discussion & Actions' section in each Highlight Report. This would provide a brief outline of any noteworthy discussions during the previous Board meeting and action points arising.

Possibly the main issue arises with the overall TRPSI Highlight Report. A review of the January 2015 report showed limited discussion of how the Framework was contributing to its aims and objectives. In fact objectives mentioned are simply noted as 'on target'. These objectives are:

- To complement the PfG
- To make a positive contribution to tackling poverty & social isolation
- To be consistent with DARD's TRPSI Framework
- To target expenditure towards projects which will provide the best value for money
- To administer the Programme within existing resources

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix x

<sup>8</sup> Red, Amber, Green = RAG

It would be helpful if the programme objectives were more specific and measurable.

The spend information is exclusively focused on DARD expenditure (although this is in line with the PfG target). There is limited discussion around issues and risks. There is no sense in aggregate as to how the TRPSI Framework is performing which is perhaps linked to the challenges outlined around the lack of a core set of metrics upon which to measure its impact. This is discussed in more detail in Section 6 below.

### Conclusions on analysis of TRPSI Framework

The conclusions of this analysis can be summarised as follows:

- The TRPSI Framework has successfully put in place a range of measures delivered in partnership with Departments, government bodies and a number of voluntary/community groups to deliver on the PfG commitment to tackle rural poverty and social isolation through a co-ordinated programme;
- Seventeen individual measures have been delivered across the three priority areas of access poverty, financial poverty and social isolation, some of which were continuation of previous programmes and others which were new;
- Some significant outputs have been achieved to date:
  - 12,265 rural households have been visited under MARA;
  - 7,325 farm family health checks have been carried out at 355 venues;
  - 80,725 contact hours have been made with vulnerable elderly people in rural areas;
  - 1,355 unemployed young people have completed the BOOST employability programme and 207 young people have engaged with the rural youth entrepreneurship programme;
  - 772,516 passenger trips have been funded through the ARTS scheme benefitting approximately 5,000 individuals;
  - 504 rural homes have received energy efficiency measures and 1,541 have benefitted from loft insulation measures;
  - 6,763 beneficiaries have been funded under the Rural Challenge Programme;
  - 73 rural borewells have been drilled;
  - 1,461 calls have been received on the Rural Support helpline;
- The TRPSI Highlight Reports would suggest that, for the most part, programmes are on target to meet their individual objectives and where this is not the case clear explanation has been given as to why;
- The PfG target of spending £13m has been met and actual expenditure over the period of the Programme by DARD has amounted to just over £15m;
- The TRPSI framework levered an additional spend of £11.7m from a wide range of other match funders giving a total funding of £27m, with the major match funding coming from DRD for the ARTS rural transport scheme which accounted for over £8m of total funding;

- The Resource/Capital spend is split 77%/23%. This is higher than originally anticipated (88%/12%) which reflects the actual dynamics between capital and revenue within each of the individual projects:
- The four largest measures in terms of spend were Community Development (Rural Support Networks and Rural Faith Based Engagement) (33%), MARA (20%), ARTS (14%) and Fuel Poverty (14%);
- The Framework has been delivered through a Project Board which is made up of representatives from DARD. The Board meet quarterly to discuss the Framework with a specific focus on Highlight Reports presented for each of the TRPSI programmes. They outline progress towards objectives, funding, issues and positive outcomes;
- In our view the Board Meeting structure is a very positive and crucial aspect of the TRPSI governance structures, particularly given the distinctiveness of each of the programmes within the Framework and their reach in terms of target areas and groups. However, there appears to be no terms of reference for the Board setting out the Board's membership and role and remit. We would also have some concern over the extent to which the overall performance of the Framework is considered in light of the Board responsibilities.
- It is also the case that the Board meetings appear to be heavily focused on the DARD contribution to the TRPSI Framework. There appears to be limited consideration given to the wider contributions by other Departments/Organisations to the Framework;
- The Highlight Reports are very useful in providing an understanding, in a standardised format, of the position of each of the programmes contained within the TRPSI Framework. However, it would be useful if the Highlight Reports also included a 'Discussion & Actions' section providing a brief outline of any noteworthy discussions during the previous Board meeting and action points arising;
- Possibly the main issue arises with the overall TRPSI Highlight Report which provides an overview of the progress of the Framework as a whole.

## 4. Effectiveness of the Framework

### Introduction

This section examines the effectiveness of the TRPSI Framework in contributing to its:

- Priority areas
- Target groups
- Horizontal Principles
- Identifying Poverty and Social Isolation

### Priority Areas

There are 3 priority areas outlined under the TRPSI Framework;

1) Access Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focusing on access to statutory services</li></ul>
2) Financial Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focusing on helping vulnerable rural dwellers maximise their income</li></ul>
3) Social Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focusing on measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups</li></ul>

The table below provides an assessment of way in which the individual projects/programmes within the TRPSI Framework address these 3 priority areas. This is based on the evaluators' subjective assessment building on the views of key stakeholders and evidence presented through this evaluation and the ARD Committee Review.

The indicators are as follows:

√√√ = strong

√√ = medium

√ = weak

**Table 4.1: TRPSI Framework Fit with Priority Areas**

	Access Poverty	Financial Poverty	Social Isolation
ARTS	√√	√	√√
Community Development Rural Support Networks	√	√	√√
Community Development Rural Faith Based Engagement	√	√	√√
Fuel Poverty Warm Homes	√	√√	
Fuel Poverty Power NI	√	√√	
MARA	√√√	√√√	√√
CERI			√√√
Rural Borewells	√√		
Rural Broadband	√√		√
BOOST	√	√√	√
RYE		√√	√
FFHC	√√		√
Rural Support	√	√√√	√√
Rural Challenge	√√		√
Health in Mind	√√		√
Libraries in a Box	√√		√√

The table highlights that all of the projects/programmes fit with the Framework's priority areas although to different degrees. Five of the programmes fit with all 3 priority areas. MARA particularly stands out in this regard. Other strong programmes include ARTS and Rural Support. Three programmes fit with only 1 priority area but in the case of CERI, for example, the fit is strong. Possibly the weakest programmes, but again based on the subjective assessment of the evaluators, are Fuel Poverty, Rural Borewells and Rural Challenge.

Undertaking this exercise has highlighted the extent of overlap and interrelatedness between the various programmes funded under TRPSI. For example, with MARA providing access to advice on what benefits rural dwellers are entitled helps alleviate financial poverty. This is also the case with Rural Support in providing access to financial mentoring. ARTS provides an example of the interrelatedness of access poverty and social isolation in providing transport to rural dwellers to participate in the community.

However, this makes it difficult to differentiate at times between the differences between the 3 priority areas and whether it is necessary to have them distinguished in



this way. It may be sufficient to aggregate the 3 priority areas into one which simply focuses on the main aim of TRPSI which is to ‘tackle rural poverty and social isolation’ in whatever form that should occur and use the priority areas as a guide.

The review of the Priority areas also highlights that the extent of funding does not necessarily reflect the scale of impact in terms of the 3 priority areas. For example, Fuel Poverty has a relatively weak ‘fit’ with the Priority Areas but in value terms and in terms of ‘reach’ is one of the largest programmes funded under TRPSI.

### Target Groups

The Framework highlighted that the measures developed under it would support a number of specific groups including the elderly, disabled, lone parents, ethnic minorities, unemployed, sexual orientation (LGBT), Carers, Children and Older Children and young people.

Table 4.2 below outlines the way in which the individual elements of the Framework have explicitly focused on targeting these groups. Again, MARA stands out in terms of its ‘reach’ across the target groups as does the Community Development – Rural Support programme and Rural Challenge.

However, what the table demonstrates is that it is not clear that the Framework has been effective in reaching all the target groups to the same degree. The elderly, disabled along with older children and young people appear to receive the most explicit support through the individual projects/programmes. Groups which are more underrepresented include ethnic minorities and the LGBT community. The farming community and those on low income on the other hand are directly targeted in some Programmes although are not one of the formal Framework target groups. It has also been highlighted during the evaluation consultation process that women, typically identified as suffering from poverty and social isolation in rural communities, are not included as a specific target group.

**Table 4.2: Project/Programme Fit with Target Groups**

Project/ Programme	Target Groups									Non Target Groups		
	Elderly	Disabled	Lone Parents	Ethnic Minorities	Un employed	LGBT	Carers	Children	Older Children & Young People	No Specific Group	Low income	Farmers <sup>9</sup>
ARTS	√	√										
Community Development Rural Support Networks	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			
Community Development Rural Faith Based Engagement	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			
Fuel Poverty Warm Homes											√	
Fuel Poverty Power NI											√	
MARA	√	√	√	<sup>10</sup>	√	√	√	√	√			
CERI	√											
Rural Borewells										√		
Rural Broadband												
BOOST									√			
RYE									√			
FFHC												√
Rural Support												√ <sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Not a specific target group in the TRPSI Framework

<sup>10</sup> Limited uptake of ethnic minorities

<sup>11</sup> Largely farmers but some 'rural dwellers'

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<b>Rural Challenge</b>	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	
<b>Health in Mind</b>											√	
<b>Libraries in a Box</b>											√	

Based on interviews with programme leaders and the information provided through the project summaries, it is clear that the target groups are not necessarily one of the key focuses of individual projects/programmes. This is further emphasised by the fact that there is no formal mechanism across the TRPSI Framework programmes to monitor the impact on the various target groups which is linked to the equality impact assessment process (or lack of) in place.

This does raise a question mark around the list of target groups and whether these should more explicitly fit with the aim of the Framework around rural poverty and social isolation. In this case the target groups should encompass those on low incomes or in deprived areas along with the rural isolated. As it stands, the current target groups may not necessarily reflect poverty and social isolation but simply that they are located in a rural area. Again the challenge here is how those groups are identified and how information is captured to assess the impact of the Framework on them.

### Adherence to Horizontal Principles

The Framework also sets out a number of horizontal principles to guide its delivery. They are:

Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To embed existing joint working practices and identify collaborative working with others</li> </ul>
Complementarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To complement other DARD actions in support of rural development</li> </ul>
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be responsive to specific rural needs as they arise recognising the potential of pilot projects and innovative programmes</li> </ul>
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that projects are sustainable or that a sustainable exit strategy is in place</li> </ul>
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To promote equality and good community relations</li> </ul>

The Framework is strong on partnership, both from a funding and delivery perspective. There are cross-departmental partnerships and further partnerships involving government bodies along with the voluntary and community sectors. Some of the main partners involved across the projects/programmes are listed below.

**Table 4.3: TRPSI Framework Partners**

Departments	Public Bodies/Agencies	Voluntary/Community	Private Sector
DRD	PHA	RDC	Power NI
DSD	Health Trusts	Rural Support Networks	
DHSSPS	NIHE	Rural Community Transport Partnership	
DEL	SSA	Community Groups	
DCAL	Libraries NI	Rural Community Development Support Service	
	Local Councils		

The extent of partnership brought about by the TRPSI Framework was highlighted as a particular strength during the consultation process. The Framework provides a very positive example of the benefits particularly of cross departmental co-operation in tackling an issue which is as broad and far reaching as poverty and social exclusion.

The Framework has also addressed the issue of complementarity as it has allowed DARD to support actions that would otherwise be ineligible under the Rural Development Programme. This has been perceived as a particular strength of TRPSI during the evaluation consultation process.

In terms of flexibility there was room within the Framework to try new ideas and approaches. Examples include Fuel Poverty and CERI and more recently the work undertaken with Libraries NI with Health in Mind and Libraries in a Box. However, it is important to note that an estimated 70% of funding under the Framework was already earmarked through existing programmes meaning the ability to be 'flexible' is relatively limited.

It is perhaps more difficult to determine how the Framework has addressed the issue of sustainability. It is our understanding that none of the existing projects/programmes are being mainstreamed which would have been the original intention for some. This will be further constrained by the austerity programme currently in place.

It is also difficult to assess the Framework's contribution in promoting equality. Although not verified through this evaluation, Section 75 screening is required of any new policy or programme. However, some concerns have been noted over the 'match' of the target groups under the Framework with those outlined under Section 75. Section 75 outlines that the following nine key groups must be given consideration:

- People of different
  - Religious belief
  - Political opinion
  - Racial groups
  - Ages
  - Marital status
  - Sexual orientation
- Men and women generally
- People with a disability and people without
- People with dependants and people without

While the TRPSI Framework target groups will be covered within some of these nine key groups there is very limited direct fit between the Section 75 screening and the TRPSI target groups. Many aspects of the Framework directly support good community relations with examples including the ARTs programme and Community Development.

### Identifying Poverty & Social Isolation

The evidence provided by the Framework highlighted the difficulty in defining the concept of 'rural poverty and social isolation'. It was not possible to provide one single measure of the concept and also proved challenging to provide even a small number of measures.

What the Framework did attempt to do was to provide a picture of the poverty and exclusion challenges facing rural areas. It did this through a number of themes which included rural poverty, occupation/employment, housing and fuel poverty, access to transport, social isolation, vulnerable groups, falling enrolments, healthcare and community development. Where available statistics were provided on the status of those themes at that point in time but this covered only some of those themes and some statistics were particularly out of date. One figure quoted related to 2004.

This identification of rural poverty and the provision of a baseline to measure any impact of government interventions has been raised on numerous occasions<sup>12</sup>. Issues of concern include the fact that the MDM focuses on income and not expenditure (the argument being that it costs more to live in rural areas) and that deprivation in rural areas is less well defined geographically than urban areas i.e. it is harder to identify.

There is significant impetus behind the need for improved statistics to measure rural poverty. The ARD Committee has called on DARD to work with DFP through NISRA to undertake a review of how rural deprivation is measured. DARD is represented on the statistics co-ordinating group, which is a cross-departmental group considering a review of the multiple deprivation measures. DARD has recommended that there needs to be a full, in-depth review of the measures that should take account of rural-specific issues. NISRA's advice to the ARD Committee has been to use relevant information relating to the domains with the MDM e.g. proximity to services (which is referenced in the TRPSI Framework).

### Conclusions on effectiveness of TRPSI Framework

The conclusions on the effectiveness of the Framework can be summarised as follows:

- All programmes within the Framework contribute to one or more of the three priority areas of access poverty, financial poverty or social isolation although to different degrees;
- The strongest fit with priority areas appears to be MARA, which contributes strongly to all 3 priority areas, while some smaller schemes such as Rural Support also contribute to all three priority areas;
- The Framework has been less successful in reaching the specified target groups, with only the elderly, disabled and older children/young people receiving explicit support, while ethnic minorities and the LGBT community appear to receive less targeting. Some groups such as those on low income and farmers are targeted in programmes although not part of the specified target groups;
- It is also surprising that women, who suffer from rural poverty and social isolation, are not included as a target group in the Framework;
- There is evidence that the Framework has been successful in implementing the horizontal principles of partnership, complementarity and flexibility. The Framework's success in partnership working has been particularly strongly endorsed. However there is less evidence that the horizontal principle of sustainability has been achieved, as none of the measures have been

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<sup>12</sup> The issue received significant attention during the ARD Committee Review of TRPSI

mainstreamed or adopted by other agencies. There is also lack of evidence around equality impacts;

- It is clear that further work needs to be done on the measurement and targeting of rural deprivation. The Framework highlights that no one single measure of the concept of 'rural poverty and social isolation' exists and it has proved challenging to provide even a small number of measures. This has meant that the Framework is lacking in any clear monitoring and measurement system upon which to base its overall impact.

## 5. Achievement of Aims & Delivery of Outcomes

### Introduction

This section considers the extent to which the declared aims of the TRPSI Framework have been met and whether the anticipated outcomes have been delivered.

### Achievement of Aims

The current TRPSI Framework aims are to:

- Build on the work of the Rural Anti-Poverty / Social Inclusion Framework 2008 – 2011;
- Provide the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Develop programmes/interventions to help alleviate poverty/social isolation amongst vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Complement and add value to existing government strategies aimed at tackling poverty and social isolation;
- Empower rural communities to help themselves.

It is evident that the current TRPSI Framework has continued to build on the work of the 2008-11 Framework including taking forward a number of projects/programmes already in existence.

It is less evident that the Framework has provided the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas. MARA, for example, has allowed a better 'on the ground' understanding of people's needs but this has not been matched with a clear statistical basis for identifying vulnerable people/groups in rural areas. This is also made more difficult by the absence of evaluations for the individual projects/programmes.

This point is also particularly important when determining how the projects/programmes have helped alleviate poverty/social isolation among vulnerable people/groups in rural areas. There are significant numbers of people assisted by TRPSI interventions and this has been viewed as a success of the Framework. However, these numbers are outputs and do not give any indication of the impact of the Framework at this point in time. There is no quantifiable baseline of the level of poverty and social isolation among vulnerable people or groups in rural areas against which to measure an improvement. In a broader sense the basis for many of the interventions in the TRPSI Framework are to tackle poverty and social isolation.

The Framework was not explicit about the existing government strategies that it aimed to complement and add value to. There is evidence that it does, for example, support the Fuel Poverty Strategy through its own Fuel Poverty interventions. It could also be viewed as complementing other Strategies including the Older People Strategy and the Benefits Uptake Strategy through interventions such as MARA and ARTS. The FFHCs



support the Investing for Health Strategy while BOOST and RYE reflect the priorities of the Economic Strategy.

The TRPSI Framework has been particularly successful in empowering rural communities to help themselves. The measures are very much ‘on the ground’ interventions in that they directly impact on individuals and groups of people within rural areas. The community development bottom up approach underlies most of the TRPSI interventions. This reflects the high degree of involvement of the Rural Support Networks in the various interventions and indeed representative bodies including the Rural Community Network and Rural Development Council. The Rural Support Networks receive the largest share of DARD’s TRPSI budget to support individuals and communities in rural areas.

### Delivery of expected outcomes

The outcomes of this framework were to be measured at individual programme level. However collectively it was expected that outcomes were to:

- Contribute to the reduction of poverty among targeted vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Contribute to the reduction of social isolation among targeted vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- Provide an evidence base for identifying rural poverty/social isolation that can influence other mainstream government interventions;
- Complement the work of other Departments in tackling poverty and social isolation;
- Enhance multidisciplinary approaches to tackling poverty and social isolation in rural areas.

The Framework provides no basis for how poverty and social isolation among vulnerable groups could be measured and impact assessed. No baseline or targets are provided. Undoubtedly the different programmes/projects have benefited a large number of individuals/households over the Framework period but there is no evidence that the measures actually reduced poverty or social isolation among targeted vulnerable groups.

The evidence is still in development in identifying rural poverty/social isolation both in terms of the evaluations of the individual measures and the review of the NIMDM in the context of rural issues.

The Framework has complemented the work of other Departments in tackling poverty and social isolation. This is highlighted through TRPSI’s engagement through many of the measures with cross-departmental partners including DRD, DSD, DCAL, DEL and DHSSPS, Health Trusts and the PHA<sup>13</sup>.

This cross-departmental co-operation is also reflected in TRPSI’s success in enhancing multi-disciplinary approaches to tackling poverty and social isolation in rural areas. The

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A

Framework addresses issues around health and well-being, transport, finance, enterprise, employability, education, community development and poverty.

The TRPSI Framework document did provide some contextual indicators to reflect the level of poverty in rural areas. While these indicators are not up-to-date they do highlight that over the period of the TRPSI and its predecessor these key indicators have improved with the exception the rate of unfitness of rural NIHE housing which has actually increased significantly. For example, the share of individuals living in poverty and those with no savings have both fallen over the 3-year period to 2012/13 although this is only one year in to the current TRPSI Framework.

**Table 5.1: Change in contextual indicators**

	TRPSI	Current	Source
Individuals living in poverty	Rural west 27%	Rural west 24%	Family Resource Survey 2012/13 (prev 08/09)
People with no savings	Rural west 53%	Rural west 47%	As above
Rate of unfitness in NIHE housing	Rural 4.1%, Isolated rural 5.2%, Urban 1.6%	Rural 9%, Isolated rural 14%, Urban 3%	NIHE Housing Condition Report 2011 (prev 2009)
Households not able to keep their accommodation warm enough	11%	7%	Family Resource Survey 2012/13 (prev 08/09)
Households with one or more adults over pension age	32% (urban 27%)	32% (urban 27%)	Family Resource Survey 2012/13 (prev 08/09)

The indicators used the TRPSI Framework document provide further evidence of the dearth of statistics which identify rural poverty and social isolation.

### Conclusions on achievement of aims and outcomes

The conclusions on the achievement of aims and outcomes of the TRPSI Framework can be summarised as follows:

- The aims of the Framework have been largely delivered, particularly in terms of identifying and developing programmes and interventions to address issues of poverty and social isolation in rural areas and working with other Departments/organisations to do so;

- Where the Framework has been less successful has been in its aim of providing the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;
- The difficulty with measuring the outcomes of the Framework arises from the fact that no quantified or directly measurable indicators were established at the outset of the Framework;
- Nevertheless there is some evidence from some contextual indicators that there has been some improvement in the proportion of individuals living in poverty in the rural west which declined from 27% in 2008/09 to 24% in 2012/13. This is the most recent data available.

## 6. Evaluation of the Framework

The Terms of Reference developed by DARD for this evaluation of the TRPSI Framework were as follows:

1. *To determine the contribution that DARD's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework has made to tackling rural poverty and social isolation*
2. *To determine how effective the Framework has been in contributing to reducing (a) access poverty, (b) financial poverty and (c) social isolation in rural areas;*
3. *To determine how effective the Framework has been in targeting each of the vulnerable groups specified in Section 5 of the Framework;*
4. *To determine the extent to which the aims specified in Section 4 of the Framework have been achieved;*
5. *To identify the key benefits arising from the implementation of the Framework for:*
  - a. *Rural dwellers*
  - b. *DARD*
  - c. *Other Departments*
  - d. *Other Partnership Organisations*
  - e. *The Voluntary and Community Sector*
6. *To identify any lessons learned which should be applied in respect of the development and implementation of any future Framework in relation to:*
  - a. *The aims and objectives of the Framework*
  - b. *The horizontal principles specified in the Framework*
  - c. *Engagement with partnership organisations*
  - d. *Increasing the long term benefits of the Framework*
  - e. *Delivering better outcomes for rural dwellers*
  - f. *Achieving better value for money for DARD*
  - g. *Improving the quality of information available on equality monitoring*

We have pulled together the evidence from previous sections of this report to provide evidence on how the terms of reference for the evaluation have been addressed.

The context to this section of the report is the lack of evaluation material from the individual elements of the Framework which would allow us to measure TRPSI's impact in aggregate. As a result this evaluation relies on soft and rather anecdotal evidence. This is particularly the case for the first item of the Terms of Reference (Determining the Contribution) where the evidence that is held is limited and not conclusive.

### Contribution to tackling rural poverty and social isolation

In overall terms, the TRPSI Framework has addressed issues of rural poverty and social isolation through the individual programmes supported by it. These programmes have directly supported rural people and households to improve their financial standing, access services and integrate into their local community. Although individual programme evaluations are not available, a large number of rural individuals/households are estimated by DARD to have benefited directly from the Framework.

The ways in which the Framework have addressed rural poverty and social isolation are evident through the following:

### Access Poverty

- Providing access to advice on what benefits rural dwellers are entitled through MARA (12,265 households have received a 1<sup>st</sup> visit)
- Improving urban-rural linkages through investment in Broadband and funding of the ARTS Scheme (almost 780,000 passenger trips for rural dwellers)
- Improving access to healthcare services through the Farm Family Health Checks project (7,325 clients presented for a health check) and the Health in Mind project
- Providing access to wholesome water supplies for rural dwellers through the Rural Borewells Scheme (73 Borewells drilled)
- Improving access to library services through the 'Libraries in a Box' project
- Improving access to community and leisure facilities through support provided to voluntary and community groups under the Rural Challenge Programme (28,749 participants and 10,074 beneficiaries)

### Financial Poverty

- Increasing household incomes through Increasing benefit uptake as a result of the MARA Project. MARA is estimated to have contributed an extra £1.9mf benefits into rural households over a 3-year period.
- Reducing household expenditure through savings in fuel costs through support provided under the Warm Homes Scheme (504 applicants) and the Power NI Free Insulation Scheme (1,541 homes)
- Increasing employment in rural areas through the creation of new businesses under the RYE project (207 young people, 9 businesses created to date)
- Improving employability of young people through skills gained through participation in the RYE and BOOST projects (1,355 young people)
- Reduced transport costs for older people benefiting from use of the Smart Pass
- Providing financial advice to rural dwellers through the Rural Support advice service (1,461 calls received with 106 receiving one-to-one financial mentoring)
- The Rural Challenge Programme also provides advice on debt

### Social Isolation

- Reducing social isolation for vulnerable elderly people living in rural areas within the Western Health through the CERI project (80,725 contact hours made)
- Improving access to opportunities to alleviate social isolation through better access to transport funded by the ARTS Scheme
- Reducing the potential effects of social isolation through the promotion of positive mental health under the Health in Mind project
- Addressing the effects of social isolation through the advice service provided by Rural Support
- Increasing opportunities for social engagement through support provided to voluntary and community groups under the Rural Challenge Programme
- Improving knowledge and understanding of issue around social isolation facing the LGBT Community in rural areas through support for research

### Effectiveness in contributing to priority areas

There are three priority areas outlined under the TRPSI Framework;

1) Access Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focusing on access to statutory services</li> </ul>
2) Financial Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focusing on helping vulnerable rural dwellers maximise their income</li> </ul>
3) Social Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focusing on measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups</li> </ul>

Table 4.1 above highlights that all of the projects/programmes fit with the Framework's priority areas although to different degrees. Five of the programmes fit with all three priority areas. MARA particularly stands out in this regard. Other strong programmes include ARTS and Rural Support. Three programmes fit with only one priority area but in the case of CERI, for example, the fit is strong. Possibly the weakest programmes, but again based on the subjective assessment of the evaluators, are Fuel Poverty, Rural Borewells and Rural Challenge.

Undertaking this exercise has highlighted the extent of overlap and interrelatedness between the various programmes funded under TRPSI. For example, with MARA providing access to advice on what benefits rural dwellers are entitled helps alleviate financial poverty. This is also the case with Rural Support in providing access to financial mentoring. ARTS provides an example of the interrelatedness of access poverty and social isolation in providing transport to rural dwellers to participate in the community.

However, this makes it difficult to differentiate at times between the differences between the three priority areas and whether it is necessary to have them distinguished in this way. It may be sufficient to aggregate the 3 priority areas into one which simply focuses on the main aim of TRPSI which is to 'tackle rural poverty and social isolation' in whatever form that should occur and use the priority areas as a guide.

The review of the Priority areas also highlights that the extent of funding does not necessarily reflect the scale of impact in terms of the 3 priority areas. For example, Fuel Poverty has a relatively weak 'fit' with the Priority Areas but in value terms and in terms of 'reach' is one of the largest programmes funded under TRPSI.

### Effectiveness in targeting vulnerable groups

The Framework highlighted that the measures developed under it would support a number of specific groups including the elderly, disabled, lone parents, ethnic minorities, unemployed, sexual orientation (LGBT), Carers, Children and Older Children and young people.

Table 4.2 above outlines the way in which the individual elements of the Framework have explicitly focused on targeting these groups. Again, MARA stands out in terms of its 'reach' across the target groups as does the Community Development – Rural Support programme and Rural Challenge.

However, what the table demonstrates is that it is not clear that the Framework has been effective in reaching all the target groups to the same degree. The elderly, disabled along with older children and young people appear to receive the most explicit support through the individual projects/programmes. More underrepresented groups include ethnic minorities and the LGBT community. The farming community and those on low income on the other hand are directly targeted in some programmes although are not one of the formal Framework target groups. It has also been highlighted during the evaluation consultation process that women, typically identified as suffering from poverty and social isolation in rural communities, are not included as a specific target group.

Based on interviews with programme leaders and the information provided through the project summaries, it is clear that the target groups are not necessarily one of the key focuses of individual projects/programmes. This is further emphasized by the fact that there is no formal mechanism across the TRPSI Framework programmes to monitor the impact on the various target groups which is linked to the equality impact assessment process (or lack of) in place.

This does raise a question mark around the list of target groups and whether these should more explicitly fit with the aim of the Framework around rural poverty and social isolation. In this case the target groups should encompass those on low incomes along with the socially isolated. As it stands, the current target groups may not necessarily reflect poverty and social isolation but simply that they are located in a rural area. Again the challenge here is how those groups are identified and how information is captured to assess the impact of the Framework on them.

### Achievement of aims of Framework

The aims of the TRPSI Framework are to:

- *Build on the work of the Rural Anti-Poverty / Social Inclusion Framework 2008 – 2011;*

It is evident that the current TRPSI Framework has continued to build on the work of the 2008-11 Framework including taking forward a number of projects/programmes already in existence. In fact 70% of the funding under the existing TRPSI Framework relates to programmes already in place under the previous Framework.

- *Provide the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;*

It is less evident that the Framework has provided the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas. MARA, for example, has allowed a better 'on the ground' understanding of people's needs but this has not been matched with a clear statistical basis for identifying vulnerable people/groups in rural areas. This is also made more difficult by the absence of evaluations for the individual projects/programmes.

- *Develop programmes/interventions to help alleviate poverty/social isolation amongst vulnerable people/groups in rural areas;*

This point is also particularly important when determining how the projects/programmes have helped alleviate poverty/social isolation among vulnerable

people/groups in rural areas. There are significant numbers of people assisted by TRPSI interventions and this has been viewed as a success of the Framework. However, these numbers are outputs and do not give any indication of the impact of the Framework at this point in time. There is no quantifiable baseline of the level of poverty and social isolation among vulnerable people or groups in rural areas against which to measure an improvement.

In a broader sense the basis for many of the interventions in the TRPSI Framework are to tackle poverty and social isolation.

- *Complement and add value to existing government strategies aimed at tackling poverty and social isolation;*

The Framework was not explicit about the existing government strategies that it aimed to complement and add value to. There is evidence that it does, for example, support the Fuel Poverty Strategy through its own Fuel Poverty interventions. It could also be viewed as complementing other Strategies including the Older People Strategy and the Benefits Uptake Strategy through interventions such as MARA and ARTS. The FFHCs support the Investing for Health Strategy while BOOST and RYE reflect the priorities of the Economic Strategy.

- *Empower rural communities to help themselves.*

The TRPSI Framework has been particularly successful in empowering rural communities to help themselves. The measures are very much ‘on the ground’ interventions in that they directly impact on individuals and groups of people within rural areas. The community development bottom up approach underlies most of the TRPSI interventions. This reflects the high degree of involvement of the Rural Support Networks in the various interventions and indeed representative bodies including the Rural Community Network and Rural Development Council. The Rural Support Networks receive the largest share of DARD’s TRPSI budget to support individuals and communities in rural areas.

## Benefits arising from the implementation of the Framework

### (a) Rural dwellers

- The TRPSI Framework has actively focused on the needs of rural dwellers when designing and delivering projects. It is not clear as to the extent to which it has met the needs of ‘vulnerable’ rural dwellers.
- The TRPSI Framework has led to improvements in the quality of life for rural dwellers including;
  - Improved access to services including:
    - ❖ Better access to health and wellbeing services;
    - ❖ Better access to transport services, particularly for those not having access to a car;
    - ❖ Improved broadband quality for rural households
    - ❖ Better access to wholesome water supply
    - ❖ Better access to library services
  - Financial benefits resulting from



- ❖ Increased awareness of benefit entitlement and benefit uptake;
- ❖ Reduced transport costs for older people benefiting from the Smart Pass;
- ❖ Lower fuel bills through energy efficiency measures etc
  
- Increased opportunities for social engagement and participation in sport/leisure activities
  
- Access to advice and support services tailored to meet the needs of rural dwellers
  
- Provision of training for young people in relation to employment skills and entrepreneurship

*(b) DARD*

- The TRPSI Framework contributes to the achievement of DARD's strategic goal to improve the quality of life for rural dwellers
- It provides the mechanism for DARD to deliver on the Executive's PFG target to deliver a £13m package of measures to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation
- It provides a useful role for the DARD Regional Offices in terms of reach with local communities
- It allows DARD to test out new and innovative approaches to tackling rural poverty and social isolation
- It provides an effective mechanism for DARD to build better working relationships with other Departments and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and learning on rural issues
- The TRPSI Framework complements DARD's rural proofing initiative by helping to ensure that other Departments focus on the needs of rural areas in deliver
- It supports and complements DARD's Rural Development Programme. For example, programmes like CERI, Rural Challenge and Childcare complement actions under the RDP Basic Services. Borewells and MARA could also be considered in this way. BOOST and RYE complement the Rural Business Investment measure. FFHC and Rural Support have complemented agri-focused schemes and support delivered through CAFRE. Community Development Support has also enhanced DARD programmes, Axis 3 in particular.
- It has informed the development of the Rural Development Programme 2014- 2020
- DARD has received positive feedback and good publicity as a result of the success of individual initiatives funded under the TRPSI Framework

*(c) Other Departments*

- Joint funding provided by DARD through the TRPSI Framework has allowed other Departments to fulfill their responsibilities in relation to rural areas more effectively
- It has also widened and informed the debate around definitions of poverty and social isolation particularly in a rural context
- Working in partnership with DARD and other organizations under the TRPSI Framework has allowed Departments to benefit from shared knowledge and experience of rural issues although it is noted that there is no formal forum for sharing this experience

- Joint working with DARD and other organisations has enabled other Departments to deliver projects which may not otherwise have been viable

*(d) Other Partnership Organisations*

- The flexible nature of the Framework together with the support of DARD has provided opportunities for organisations to pilot new and innovative projects that may not have been taken forward otherwise
- Joint funding by DARD under the TRPSI Framework has allowed organizations to deliver more within their budget and has also helped the sustainability of partnership organisations

*(e) The Voluntary and Community Sector*

- The VCS has benefited directly from financial support under the Rural Challenge Programme
- The VCS has benefited from capacity building through participation in community development programmes
- Some TRPSI Framework programmes help support the work of the VCS e.g. Community Development

## Lessons learned

*(a) Aims and objectives of the Framework*

It was difficult to measure the extent to which some of the aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the Framework had been achieved due to the nature of the aims and objectives and due to the absence of evaluations of individual projects. The aims, objectives and intended outcomes of any future TRPSI Framework should therefore be designed carefully to ensure they are achievable, realistic and measurable.

*(b) The horizontal principles specified in the Framework*

It was difficult to determine how the Framework has addressed the issue of horizontal principle of sustainability. There was no evidence to indicate that any of the existing projects/programmes are being mainstreamed by other government organisations or that suitable exit strategies were in place. Many of the projects had short-term impacts and did not meet the criteria of leaving a lasting legacy and impact on alleviating poverty and addressing social isolation in accordance with the horizontal principles specified. Further consideration should be given in any future Framework to how sustainability can be achieved more effectively for those projects which have proven to be meeting a need and achieving an impact in relation to the Framework aims. It is important to note that not all programmes funded under the Framework will be sustainable given the innovative nature of some programmes within it.

*(c) Engagement with partnership organizations*

The TRPSI Framework has provided good opportunities for the sharing of learning and experience between organizations working in partnership. However there is no formal mechanism for organisations to come together to share knowledge and expertise. Consideration should therefore be given to establishing a rural poverty and social

isolation forum incorporating DARD, other Departments, partnership organisations and the voluntary/community sector to provide a formal mechanism for discussing rural poverty and social isolation issues. The terms of reference of the existing Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy should be amended to incorporate the TRPSI Framework to help ensure a more strategic approach is adopted to tackling rural poverty and social isolation across government.

*(d) Increasing the long term benefits of the Framework*

It is not possible at this point to present evidence of the long-term benefits of the Framework. Observations from this evaluation would suggest that quality of life has been improved for individuals that have helped to alleviate poverty and/or social isolation. It is expected that the individual evaluations may assess this impact. There is also little evidence that any of the measures have been mainstreamed or adopted by other agencies and therefore there is a question as to the medium/long term impacts of some of the programmes funded under the Framework which have the potential to be sustainable. Any future Framework should have a greater focus on how to maximize the medium and long-term impacts of interventions on tackling poverty and social isolation with consideration given to how to ensure that successful projects are mainstreamed by other government organisations. The landscape for both funding and delivery of the TRPSI Framework may change with the role of Councils in community planning and rural regeneration and this may provide the opportunity to consolidate the benefits of some elements of the Framework.

*(e) Delivering better outcomes for rural dwellers*

Evidence shows that while some groups have been successfully targeted under the Framework other groups have been less successfully targeted. Any new Framework should have a greater focus on targeting the needs of vulnerable rural dwellers through the development of outcome-based programmes.

*(f) Achieving better value for money for DARD*

Evaluations of individual programmes are not yet completed and therefore the issue of value for money cannot be properly addressed. Demonstrating value for money is very closely linked to being able to assess the outcomes in relation to the overall funding input. This is crucial to the future development of any new TRPSI Framework.

From a purely DARD perspective, the Framework has secured significant levels of matched funding through partnership working on the various programmes. As budgets come under increasing pressures the TRPSI Framework provides an opportunity to secure additional funding for rural areas and maximise the value for money of that funding.

*(g) Improving the quality of information available on equality monitoring*

There was a lack of equality monitoring information available in respect of individual programmes funded under the Framework. Equality monitoring should be undertaken in respect of each individual measure funded under the Framework at the earliest opportunity. Responsibility for undertaking the equality monitoring should lie with the

project manager. The project manager should liaise with the DARD Equality Unit as appropriate. The TRPSI Board should have responsibility for ensuring that this has been carried out and for formally signing off the equality monitoring. A database should be maintained on TRIM recording the progress of the equality monitoring process for all programmes/projects funded under the Framework.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

In overall terms, TRPSI has been a successful Framework in terms of the composite achievements of its project/programmes. It has supported tens of thousands and individuals and households to address issues of financial poverty, access poverty and social isolation. It has taken some very innovative approaches to supporting rural communities to address rural poverty and social isolation. The success of the Framework is noted through the particularly positive endorsement from the ARD Committee Review which recognised the ‘high level of praise and support for all who help deliver the various TRPSI Framework programmes at a local level’<sup>14</sup>. TRPSI has been viewed as a strong ‘brand’ during the consultation exercise.

TRPSI successes include:

- Effective delivery ‘on the ground’ and in reaching particular targets groups e.g. elderly, farmers
- A strong partnership approach across departments, agencies and community/voluntary organisations
- Interconnectedness between many of various projects/programmes within the TRPSI Framework
- Innovative approaches to tackling rural poverty and social isolation
- Acting as a catalyst to allow participating organisations to widen their community offering
- Allowing the expansion of mainstream programmes
- Transfer of positive learning experience (e.g. DSD Warm Homes Scheme)
- Strong cross-party political support

Some very positive working relationships have been built between Departments and others through TRPSI. For example, DARD, DCAL and Libraries NI forged a close working relationship to ensure that access to library services in rural areas was not lost. DHSSPS are very positive about their collaboration with DARD and the TRPSI Framework in that it aligns with their policy objectives and allows them a greater reach. The investment by DARD has allowed ‘certainty’ to do more work in some areas. Rural Support highlighted how important DARD funding was to their existence and the positive working relationship forged with the Department to deliver their service.

The point has been made that TRPSI is national money which means there is more flexibility in how it can be spent. This means that it can be used to promote new and innovative approaches to tackling rural poverty and social isolation e.g. pilot projects/programmes. It can also be used as a vehicle to maximize finance and draw down additional funding. The Framework has allowed programmes to be put in place which would have been very difficult to implement if, for example, funded through EU monies.

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<sup>14</sup> ARD Committee Position Paper on DARD’s Anti-Poverty & Social Inclusion Programme, 2015

Many of the core elements of the current TPRSI Framework should be taken forward into any future Framework. However, there are areas that require consideration based both on the views of key consultations along with our observations made during the evaluation. It is clear that any new Framework should establish:

- What are the priorities for tackling rural poverty and social isolation among vulnerable groups going forward?
- What are they expected to achieve?
- How should they be delivered?

There is also a consensus that the next Framework should be:

- Targeted – targeting ‘gaps’ – this negates the issue of an area based vs. target group approach
- Flexible
- Innovative – used to ‘pilot’ new approaches
- Provide direction – drive interventions rather than the interventions driving the Framework

### A Changing Context

There are a number of issues for consideration going forward which will change the context for the development of any future TRPSI Framework.

A key issue is that TRPSI’s environment, both operationally and strategically, will be subject to significant change. Community Planning within the 11 new Councils is a particularly important change in that Councils will be working more proactively with their local communities, and statutory bodies and agencies, to promote the well-being of their area and improve the quality of life of its citizens. Allied to this is the role of the new LAGs under the NI Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) which will be complementary to the community planning work of the new Councils. This will be a transitional phase for Councils as they get to grips with their new role.

There are also potential implications from the introduction of the new Departments, particularly given that DARD will become the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The new Departments are expected to be in place during 2016.

A number of projects are also being taken forward under the ‘Delivering Social Change’, a cross-departmental strategy set up by the Northern Ireland Executive to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

With all of these change comes the fundamental question of where TRPSI fits in. One suggestion is that it should be OFMDFM’s responsibility because of the crosscutting nature of the interventions. Another is that it should remain DARD’s responsibility but only to the extent that it ‘pilots’ new and innovative interventions with the view to mainstream across other Departments if successful.

A further issue is the potential introduction of a Rural Proofing Bill. The Minister launched a public consultation on policy proposals for a Rural Proofing Bill in February 2015. The Bill is expected pass through the Assembly stages by early 2016. This would mean that policy-makers would have a statutory obligation to assess whether a proposed policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas compared with elsewhere to ensure that the needs of rural dwellers is firmly embedded across government. This would also become a statutory obligation for the local Councils.

The changing funding climate will also present challenges. There will be a greater onus to provide a well-evidenced case on why a project/programme should be funded under TRPSI. Issues have already been raised about the potential to mainstream some initiatives or to scale back others. There is also a view that working in partnership becomes more challenging when budget pressures emerge.

### Recommendations for any future Framework

There are a number of issues and recommendations arising from the evaluation of the TRPSI Framework which should be considered when drawing up any future Framework. We have grouped them into a number of key areas as follows:

- Framework Aims & Objectives
- Setting and monitoring targets/impacts
- Governance Structures
- Programme Delivery

### Framework Aims & Objectives

#### Issue

The aims and outcomes of TRPSI (also referred to as goals and objectives in the Framework document) are very broad in trying to accommodate areas of poverty and social isolation, vulnerable people/groups and with that specified targets groups. It can therefore be difficult to establish where or by whom the impact of the TRPSI Framework should or has been felt. It is particularly difficult to establish the Framework's impact on some of the expected outcomes which are either unclear or difficult to measure. This is exacerbated by the lack of any clear measures/targets upon which to assess impact.

#### Recommendation 1

The aims, objectives and outcomes of any future TRPSI Framework should be revisited and more clearly (and perhaps more narrowly) defined. There should be a direct link between the Framework aims/objectives and the expected outcomes which should be both measurable and achievable. An appropriate measurement system should be put in place to ensure that this link can be made.

#### Issue

It is not clear whom the TRPSI Framework is trying to support in tackling rural poverty and social isolation. The TRPSI Framework currently accommodates both area based and target group approaches through its various interventions. However, it is not clear that the Framework fully reaches either particularly when considered against its objective of reaching deprived areas and/or vulnerable groups. In fact neither deprived areas nor vulnerable groups features strongly in the narrative around the TRPSI Framework programmes. This is further complicated when the concept of social isolation is included.

The 3 criteria for support can be considered in the matrix format outlined in the table below. This demonstrates that the focus of the Framework should be on vulnerable people/groups whether they live in disadvantaged areas or not and whether they are socially isolated or not. For example, a deprived area can include non-vulnerable people and vulnerable people do not necessarily live in a deprived area. This means that the

Framework is not intended to provide blanket support for people who live in disadvantaged areas. The issue of social isolation is perhaps more complicated in that does being socially isolated on its own qualify individuals/groups for support under the Framework.

	Vulnerable people/groups	Disadvantaged Areas	Socially Isolated
Vulnerable people/groups	√	√	√
Disadvantaged Areas	√	?	√
Socially Isolated	√	?	√ / ?

### Recommendation 2

The focus of the TRPSI Framework needs to be more clear in terms of who or where it wants to target. The matrix above would suggest that it should focus on vulnerable people but a much clearer definition of what constitutes ‘vulnerable people/groups’ is required e.g. is it vulnerable people experiencing poverty or vulnerable people experiencing social isolation or both. This fits with the concept of using the TRPSI Framework more flexibly to target ‘gaps’ in support to vulnerable people in rural areas.

A clear policy decision is required on whether the Framework should target rural dwellers experiencing ‘social isolation’ who may or may not fall within the definition of vulnerable people/groups.

### Issue

There is a wider issue as to who the target groups within TRPSI should be. As it currently stands the target groups listed in the Framework are not necessarily reflective of ‘vulnerable people/groups’. It is unclear as to how some supports reflect to concept of ‘vulnerable groups’. There is relatively limited emphasis on the target groups in the narrative around each programmes and again no formal monitoring of impact.

### Recommendation 3

The TRPSI target groups should be reviewed and refined to better reflect the concept of people/groups experiencing ‘isolation or poverty’. As discussed above, this should also include consideration of how vulnerable people are defined in terms of poverty and social exclusion. The determination of an appropriate target group(s) should be directly linked to the ability to monitor the Framework’s impact on them going forward.

### Issue

Some programmes are more closely aligned to the three priority areas of the TRPSI Framework Not all programmes within the Framework are sufficiently targeted at dealing with the overall aim of the TRPSI Framework in alleviating poverty/social isolation amongst vulnerable groups/people in rural areas. MARA addresses all 3 Priority areas while Rural Borewells is only focused on Access Poverty.



#### Recommendation 4

Project/programmes should be reviewed in the context of their contribution to the TRPSI Framework aims and objectives focusing specifically on tackling poverty and rural isolation amongst 'vulnerable' groups.

#### Issue

The Importance of TRPSI as a catalyst for the development of other programmes has been noted. An example is the funding of Rural Support Networks (RSNs) helps build capacity which directly links into the RSN's wider role on, for example, the recently formed Local Action Groups (LAGs).

#### Recommendation 5

It is important that the next Framework recognizes the capacity building role and is more specific about its outcomes and links to other programmes both within the Framework and outside it.

#### Issue

The new Rural Development Programme (RDP) is also focused on addressing poverty and isolation although our understanding is that this is more capital funding as opposed to the 'capacity building' approach through TRPSI.

#### Recommendation 6

There needs to be awareness and in some instances complementarity between the next TRPSI Framework and the new RDP (e.g. young people participating on RYE may have the potential to access RDP funding going forward).

#### Issue

A number of the recommendations above relate to the aims of any new Framework developed for the next period of funding. This has provided the basis to establish a number of principles underlying the aims/objectives of TRPSI going forward.

#### Recommendation 7

We recommend that the aims of any future TRPSI Framework should take the following into consideration:

- Promoting the development of new and innovative approaches to tackling rural poverty and social isolation
- Promoting the development of rural specific solutions/interventions to address poverty and social isolation issues
- Supporting the roll out of pilot projects which if successful can/should be mainstreamed by other government Departments
- Supporting the development of effective partnerships between government Departments and other organisations which can help deliver better solutions for vulnerable rural dwellers through the sharing of learning, information, expertise and experience.
- Support the leveraging of additional funding and/or other resources to be used to target poverty and social isolation in rural areas

- Improving the understanding of rural aspects of poverty and social isolation across government through the sharing of knowledge, information, experience and expertise between organizations

## Setting and Monitoring Targets/Impacts

### Issue

One of the main weaknesses in the TRPSI Framework is that there is no consistent way of identifying and measuring poverty and social isolation among vulnerable people/groups. There are no baseline, targets and performance measurement tools in place to assess impact which to a large degree reflect the challenges in actually establishing an appropriate set of indicators for the Framework in the first place. Also the Framework defines rural, poverty and social isolation and uses metrics to do so but this are not reflected in any of TRPSI's programme impacts or the wider TRPSI Framework itself. There are particular issues with the use of the NI Multiple Deprivation Measures to identify issues of rural poverty because of the area-based approach taken by these indicators. This places a question mark over the extent to which the Framework has been able to 'provide the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas', one of its key aims.

The importance of an appropriate performance measurement system is crucial not only in identifying the overall impact of the TRPSI but also the contribution that individual projects have made to the delivery of the Framework objectives.

### Recommendation 8

Some common measurement framework should be established for any future TRPSI Framework. Appropriate and measurable targets should be identified which reflect the aims, objectives and outcomes of the TRPSI Framework. This could incorporate a 'matrix' of measures reflecting some of the domain elements of the NIMDM. Where possible, impacts should be geographically 'mapped' to provide a clearer understanding of TRPSI's impact at a local and regional level.

### Issue

Tackling rural poverty can be undertaken using both social and economic measures. Any future Framework should consider including more economic measures which may have a more long-term benefit in addressing rural poverty. A small number of programmes in the existing Framework are directly linked to employability and enterprise although ultimately lead to reduced poverty and social isolation.

### Recommendation 9

Consideration should be given for the need to consider measures that have a more explicit economic focus in any future Framework e.g. improving employability and strategic impact. This will however be dependant on the nature of programmes included in any subsequent TRPSI Framework.

## Governance Structures

### Issue

The role/remit and composition of the TRPSI Board is an issue. There appears to be no terms of reference for the Board setting out its role and remit. Further, the Board is currently made up of DARD representatives only which means that at present there is no external challenge function to issues debated around the Framework. We would also have some concern over the extent to which the overall performance of the Framework is considered in light of the Board responsibilities. It is also the case that the Board meetings appear to be heavily focused on the DARD contribution to the TRPSI Framework with limited consideration given to the wider contributions by other Departments/Organisations to the Framework;

### Recommendation 10

Any new Framework would benefit from a project board/steering group structure. It should set out a terms of reference and reporting arrangements. A suggestion for consideration would be to have one or more 'independent' Board members which may involve other government Departments to support the development and on-going delivery of the next TRPSI Framework.

### Issue

There is a very wide range of projects/programmes within the TRPSI Framework, some of which are connected to one another while others operate in isolation from each other<sup>15</sup>. This means that there is no opportunity for the various partners involved in the Framework to understand all elements of the Framework, the objectives and impacts and to discuss issues/challenges in common in tackling rural poverty and social isolation.

### Recommendation 11

A forum should be established which brings together the various partners representing Department, Agencies, the Voluntary/Community sector as well as rural researchers/statisticians. This would allow sharing of information, knowledge, expertise and experience in tackling rural poverty and social isolation. It is recommended that the Forum meets on a bi-annual basis and has a clearly articulated agenda and outcomes.

### Issue

It is not always clear where responsibility for individual programmes lies when a number of Departments/Organisations are involved and this has meant that, on occasion, DARD are undertaking the work of other Departments. Duplication of roles and responsibilities across Departments is also an issue with cross-Departmental programmes.

### Recommendation 12

In designing the new Framework any programmes should define very clear roles in terms of ownership and delivery across the Departments/Organisations involved.

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<sup>15</sup> A number of consultees were not aware of the whole TRPSI 'offering' even though they were involved in projects where that information would be useful (e.g. Rural Support)

#### Issue

Linked to this is the challenge which DARD has faced in engaging with other Departments because rural development is typically viewed as 'DARD's responsibility'. The TRPSI Framework provides evidence as to why this is not the case and how other Departments/Organisations can contribute to addressing rural issues.

#### Recommendation 13

The Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy (IDCRP) provides a good forum to ensure that 'rural' issues including those relating to the TRPSI Framework in addressing poverty and social isolation have a wider platform for discussion. The Terms of Reference for the IDCRP should therefore be amended to incorporate the TRPSI Framework. The proposed introduction of the Rural Proofing Bill should support this action.

#### Issue

There is a challenge as to where ownership and overall responsibility for the TRPSI Framework should lie going forward. For example, whether it should be the responsibility of OFMDFM because of its cross-Departmental approach or that of the new Department for Communities which has a strong focus on community development.

#### Recommendation 14

Consideration should be given as to where the 'ownership' of any new TRPSI Framework should lie, particularly in light of the changing context of the new government departments and the fact that the proposed Rural Proofing Bill would require policy-makers to assess whether proposed policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas compared with elsewhere.

### Programme Delivery

#### Issue

Some of the TRPSI programmes started as 'pilots' but remain part of the Framework even though they have the potential to be 'mainstreamed'. A number of examples were given. This includes the potential for RYE to be delivered through the new Councils. Others include MARA and ARTS which if mainstreamed which would free up a significant part of the TRPSI budget to accommodate new projects/programmes.

#### Recommendation 15

There needs to be a clear 'exit strategy' for TRPSI projects/programmes. TRPSI should introduce new models with the aim that, if proven to be successful, should be taken on by project partners.

#### Issue

The issue of overlap/duplication with some TRPSI programmes has been raised on a number of occasions throughout the consultation process. This is in the context of both overlap within TRPSI Framework projects/programmes and outside the TRPSI

Framework. For example, MARA and Rural Support Networks both offer advice on grants and benefits for rural dwellers. There are enterprise and employability supports which are also offered at a mainstream level.

#### Recommendation 16

It is important that the business case for any new project/programme developed under the Framework should clearly establish the need and rationale for intervention in the context of existing programme provision.

#### Issue

The strategic focus of some aspects of the TRPSI Framework has been questioned. Some are viewed as a 'toe in the water' in terms of rural proofing but are not particularly strategic (e.g. Health in Mind). Further, it would appear that some programmes have ended up in TRPSI 'by accident rather than by design' pointing again to the lack of strategic focus. Some consultees described the Framework as 'reactive' rather than 'proactive'. The counter argument to this is that TRPSI should be about 'toe in the water' projects/programmes to see if they work in the context of addressing rural poverty and social isolation. This is already recognised through the TRPSI Framework Horizontal Principle around 'Flexibility' and the ability to be responsive to rural development needs as they arise.

#### Recommendation 17

Any future Framework should be more explicit that one of TRPSI's aims is to pilot projects and innovative programmes which address the core aim(s) of the TRPSI Framework in tackling rural poverty and social isolation.

#### Issue

There is a perception that at least one of TRPSI's current projects/programmes i.e. MARA, is finding it more difficult to identify their key target groups/individuals.

#### Recommendation 18

Programmes funded under any future TRPSI Framework should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to determine the continuing need for the intervention.

## Annex A: Programme Summaries for TRPSI Framework

Returns completed by Programme Managers for following Framework programmes:

1. Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS)
2. BOOST (Rural Youth Employability)
3. Rural Borewells Scheme
4. Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated (CERI)
5. Farm Families Health Checks
6. Health in Mind
7. Libraries in a Box
8. Maximising Access Rural Areas Project (MARA)
9. Fuel Poverty - Power NI
10. Rural Challenge 2009 and 2012
11. Rural Community Development Support
12. Rural Support
13. RYE NI (Rural Youth Enterprise)
14. Fuel Poverty - DSD/DARD

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>ASSISTED RURAL TRAVEL SCHEME (ARTS)</b>
Brief Description	The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) has been developed in conjunction with the Department of Regional Development (DRD). DRD are responsible for the Rural Transport Fund and one aspect of this is their Dial-a-Lift scheme. With DARD funding DRD have been able to develop the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) through which passengers with a valid SmartPass can travel free or half fare on the Dial-a-Lift services provided by the Rural Community Transport Partnerships.
Timeframe	The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme was originally piloted from 1 December 2009 – March 2012 and following evaluation (DRD July 2012) was formally adopted and implemented across Northern Ireland for a period of 3 years to run from April 2012 to March 2015. An extension to the ARTS scheme for a further year 15/16 has been agreed in principle subject to the completion of the necessary paperwork.
Cost & how funded	<p>The ARTS element is DARD funded (pick up of passenger to destination), and DRD fund the other operational costs associated with the journeys including back office costs but this is not quantifiable.</p> <p>£2,110,000 has transferred to DRD during in year monitoring rounds for the period 11/12 to 14/15.</p> <p>It has been agreed subject to the necessary paperwork being completed that a further years funding of ARTS (£450K) in 15/16 is provided from the TRPSI budget.</p>
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	DRD over the years up to 2009 funded community transport most of which was group travel. With a change of policy to focus on individual travel needs and the launching of the DRD's Dial-a-Lift Scheme came the opportunity to work in tandem with DRD to develop the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme. These schemes brought equivalency to what was operating in Urban areas.
Funders	DARD (see above)
Partners	DARD, DRD and Rural Community Transport Partnerships
Delivery Agents	DRD and Rural Community Transport Partnerships
Geographical coverage	All Rural Areas of N. Ireland.
Objectives	To complement the Programme for Government.

	<p>To make a positive contribution to tackling poverty and social isolation.</p> <p>To promote equality of opportunity.</p> <p>To be consistent with the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and its wider contribution to the social and environmental agenda.</p> <p>To be consistent with DARD’s Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework.</p> <p>To provide the same opportunities and access to facilities as are enjoyed by people using the mainstream transport network.</p> <p>To target expenditure towards projects which will provide the best value for money.</p> <p>To result in a high volume of passenger trips made by the target population.</p> <p>To be administered within existing resources.</p>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below)</i>	
--- Access Poverty	The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme provides a transport option for individuals living in rural areas that are unable to, or have difficulty accessing local basic services due to a lack of transport.
--- Financial Poverty	The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme allows any passenger with a valid SmartPass to travel for free or half fare on the Dial-a-Lift service operated by Rural Community Transport Partnerships thereby providing financial savings to rural dwellers.
--- Social Isolation	The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme seeks to promote social inclusion through a transport intervention whereby funding discounted travel on Community Transport for members of the community who are most vulnerable or face social exclusion\rural isolation. The creation of viable and affordable transport options leads to a reduction in social isolation.
Targets	<p>A 5% increase of RCTP individual membership per year.</p> <p>An increase of at least 10% in the volume of ARTS trips made by older people over the next 3-year period (2012 – 2015).</p>



	<p>An increase of at least 10% in the volume of ARTS trips made by people with disabilities over the next 3-year period (2012 – 2015).</p> <p>An increase of at least 10% in the number of ARTS trips made on services provided by RCTPs using a SmartPass over the next 3-year period (2012 – 2015).</p> <p>Be capable of operating within existing DRD, DARD and RCTP administrative staffing complement.</p> <p>Scheme operates within budget limits.</p>
<p>Target Groups</p> <p>Elderly Lone parents Disabled Ethnic Minorities Unemployed Sexual Orientation (LGBT) Carers Children Older Children &amp; Young People</p>	<p>People benefitting from these free or half fare trips are in the main the elderly and the disabled.</p>
<p>Achievements (to date)</p>	<p>Since April 2011 to February 2015 a total of 772,516 passenger trips for rural dwellers have been delivered across the north. (A breakdown of user type and the services availed off through usage of ARTS is available if required) benefitting approximately 5,000 individuals</p> <p>The number of individual users of ARTS continues to increase reaching a peak in July 2014 with over 2,400 users.</p> <p>The benefits to those who use the service are integration in wider society, a reduction in isolation, greater independence and access to transport solutions which allows users to carry out everyday tasks such as shopping, post office, attending church, visiting friends, health appointments etc.</p>
<p>Unexpected Achievements</p>	<p>33,000 more passenger trips were delivered in 13/14 as opposed to 12/13 thereby showing an increasing demand year on year for ARTS.</p>

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>“BOOST” Rural Youth Employability</b>								
Brief Description	The BOOST Programme aims to reduce economic inactivity among unemployed rural young people by helping them to gain the core skills needed for employment and by addressing barriers to employment such as the lack of skills/qualifications, lack of self-confidence and lack of employment support.								
Timeframe	This was originally a 3-year programme, which DEL/ESF extended for a further year. The programme ran from December 2011 to March 2015.								
Cost & how funded	<p>DEL/ESF provided 65% funding, DARD provided 31.1% (28.4 in Year 1) and Advantage 3.9% (6.6% in Year 1)</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="655 846 1385 920"> <tr> <td>Total Committed</td> <td>DEL/ESF £508,356</td> <td>DARD £239,164</td> <td>Advantage £34,568</td> </tr> </table> <table border="0" data-bbox="655 981 1385 1081"> <tr> <td>Total Paid (inc Accrual)</td> <td>DEL/ESF £454,570</td> <td>DARD £215,104</td> <td>Advantage £29,664</td> </tr> </table>	Total Committed	DEL/ESF £508,356	DARD £239,164	Advantage £34,568	Total Paid (inc Accrual)	DEL/ESF £454,570	DARD £215,104	Advantage £29,664
Total Committed	DEL/ESF £508,356	DARD £239,164	Advantage £34,568						
Total Paid (inc Accrual)	DEL/ESF £454,570	DARD £215,104	Advantage £29,664						
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	<p>Advantage Foundation Ltd secured funding from the European Social Fund managed in NI by DEL.</p> <p>Advantage Foundation Ltd submitted a proposal to DARD in September 2011 as they felt that their Boost Programme had links which met the objectives in DARD’s Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Framework.</p> <p>This proposal was accepted by the Grade 7 and a Contract for Funding was issued to Advantage Foundation Ltd in December 2011.</p>								
Funders	<p>ESF (European Social Fund Programme) provided 40% funding.</p> <p>DEL provided 25% funding</p> <p>DARD provided 31.1% funding (28.4 in Year 1)</p> <p>Advantage Foundation Ltd provided 3.9% funding (6.6% in Year 1)</p>								
Partners	<p>DEL</p> <p>ESF</p> <p>DARD</p>								

	Advantage Foundation Ltd																		
Delivery Agents	Advantage Foundation Ltd delivered the Boost project and all payment claims were checked by DEL as lead funders.																		
Geographical coverage	All rural wards within Northern Ireland																		
Objectives	To support 1792 unemployed young people in rural areas by 31 March 2015 (180 in Year 1, 640 in Year 2, 640 (reduced to 486) in Year 3 and 486 in Year 4)																		
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below</i>																			
--- Access Poverty	<p>Advantage Foundation Ltd attended all the job markets to engage the rural young people as well as issuing information to postal signers in rural areas.</p> <p>Workshops were also booked for community venues so that the young people were able to attend a local venue without having the additional burden of travelling a long distance.</p>																		
--- Financial Poverty	By providing workshops/mentoring/ employability support to the young people to help them become more employable, resulting in tackling financial poverty.																		
--- Social Isolation	By providing the workshops to all rural wards throughout Northern Ireland and in local community venues, helped the young people to attend further training and/or gaining employment and therefore making them less socially isolated.																		
Targets	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Target</th> <th>Achieved</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Year 1</td> <td>180</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Year 2</td> <td>640</td> <td>362</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Year 3 (funding/ Target reduced by DEL)</td> <td>486</td> <td>498</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Year 4</td> <td>486</td> <td>495</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>1,792</b></td> <td><b>1,355</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Target	Achieved	Year 1	180	0	Year 2	640	362	Year 3 (funding/ Target reduced by DEL)	486	498	Year 4	486	495	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,792</b>	<b>1,355</b>
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Year 4	486	495																	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,792</b>	<b>1,355</b>																	
Target Groups																			
Elderly Lone parents Disabled Ethnic Minorities	This programme targeted unemployed Young People between the age of 16 and 24																		

<p>Unemployed Sexual Orientation (LGBT) Carers Children Older Children &amp; Young People</p>	
<p>Achievements (to date)</p>	<p>A total of 1,355 young people have completed the Boost Programme which ended at 31 March 2015.</p>
<p>Unexpected Achievements</p>	<p>DEL adopted BOOST as a voluntary pre-cursor to the mandatory Youth Employment Scheme for unemployed 16-24 year olds</p> <p>DEL has purchased 10,000 of the BOOST support-platform CD-ROM's from Advantage to issue to NEETS participants</p>

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>RURAL BOREWELLS SCHEME</b>
Brief Description	To provide financial assistance towards the construction of a private borewell (and installation of appropriate treatment works) to enable applicants to obtain a wholesome water supply in rural areas where accessing the public water mains is not technically or financially possible
Timeframe	June 2012 to date.  During 15/16, there will be no public call for applications.
Cost & how funded	The Rural Borewells Scheme is an extension of DRD's existing policy to provide an allowance for a public water mains requisition, but the Department has no legislative basis to provide grants for private water supplies, but DARD has legislative power to make grants for the purposes of rural development.  £1,044,000 was transferred from DRD to DARD during various monitoring rounds from 2012-2014.
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	A DRD review and public consultation exercise concluded that, on average, it would cost £40,000 to provide un-served properties with public water. The development of a grant scheme for a private borewell was seen as a more sustainable and cost effective solution for providing a wholesome water supply for households in isolated rural areas.
Funders	DRD provided the funding and DARD administered the scheme.
Partners	DRD and DARD were joint partners  White Young Green – scheme hydrogeologist  CPD – Central Procurement Directorate  DWI – Drinking Water inspectorate  GSNI – Geological Survey Northern Ireland
Delivery Agents	2 x eligible contractors were used for drilling and installation of treatment – Causeway Geotech Ltd and Meehan Drilling Ltd.
Geographical coverage	All rural areas within Northern Ireland
Objectives	To increase access to a basic service – a wholesome water supply - for 330 domestic isolated rural households through the provision of a borewell and approved water

	treatment
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below)</i>	
--- Access Poverty	By providing a borewell and/or approved treatment, applicants have now access to a wholesome water supply.
--- Financial Poverty	
--- Social Isolation	
Targets	To provide a wholesome water supply for 330 domestic isolated rural households through the provision of a borewell and approved water treatment
Target Groups Elderly Lone parents Disabled Ethnic Minorities Unemployed Sexual Orientation (LGBT) Carers Children Older Children & Young People	No specific target groups
Achievements (to date)	73 borewells have been drilled to date with a further 15 awaiting drilling in the next few months.
Unexpected Achievements	Economic benefit as a result of work created for local drillers  Increase in geological data available to inform relevant government departments and agencies (DETI/Geological Survey NI)

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>“CERI” Connecting Elderly Isolated</b>
Brief Description	The Connecting Elderly Isolated intervention has been developed to address social isolation for vulnerable elderly people living in rural areas within the Western Health and Social Care Trust’s (WHSCT) catchment area, with a focus on health promotion, healthy lifestyles and supporting independent living.
Timeframe	14/15-15/16
Cost & how funded	100% DARD funded transferred over to the WHSCT during monitoring rounds.  £100k in June 2014  £102k in January 2015  £100k in June 2015 (proposed)  £102k in October 2015 (proposed)
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	An evaluation of the previous CERI programme was completed and a further business case was submitted to DARD to continue delivering services under the CERI services until March 2016.
Funders	DARD 42% WHSCT 58%
Partners	WHSCT DARD
Delivery Agents	Lakeland Community Care (LCC) Strabane & District Caring Services (SDCS) The Churches Trust (CT) Limavady Community Development Initiative (LCDI)  These 4 organisations were contracted in by the WHSCT to deliver awarded contacts in each of their areas.
Geographical coverage	WHSCT catchment area – Fermanagh, Tyrone, Strabane, Derry and Limavady
Objectives	To achieve circa 102,101 CERI (DARD specific) rural contact hours by 31 March 2016  To increase the range of services addressing elderly isolation delivered in the West by 20% over the 2 year period ending 31 March 2016  To mainstream the overall CEI intervention (Flexicare 1 and CERI) within one of the delivery components of the

	WHSCT Reablement plan post 31 March 2016
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below)</i>	
--- Access Poverty	
--- Financial Poverty	
--- Social Isolation	This model supports older people in rural areas to remain active and engaged with their own communities, living in their own homes even with their ability to function independently declines.
Targets	21,707 additional contacts in 2014/15 21,707 additional contacts in 2015/16
Target Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	Elderly
Achievements (to date)	80,725 contacts hours made from January 12 to March 2015 24,292 made in the 2014/15 year.
Unexpected Achievements	Derelict/vacant community buildings have now been put to use as rural hubs where more accessible services/activities to address elderly rural isolation are now provided.



<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>FARM FAMILIES HEALTH CHECKS</b>
Brief Description	This is an inter-departmental programme which is funded in the main by DARD and delivered by the Public Health Agency (PHA) in conjunction with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT). The NHSCT have recruited a Nursing Project Co-ordinator and an Administer to roll out the Programme across all of NI. The Nursing Co-ordinator is assisted by on average 15 Band 5 Nurses who, on call, assist with the screening of clients at the various events. A van driver has also been sourced from an Agency to assist the Nursing Co-ordinator.
Timeframe	2011/12 – 2015/16
Cost & how funded	The total cost of this programme is <b>£720,500</b> with DARD contributing <b>£611,000</b> and PHA contributing <b>£109,500</b> . £477,000 has transferred over to DHSSPS during in year monitoring rounds for the period 11/12 to 14/15 with a further transfer of £134,000 taking place in June 2015.
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	The Northern Health and Social Care Trust had identified a need for Farmers Health Checks and trialed these at marts in Ballymena and Pomeroy in 2010. After liaising with the Public Health Agency (PHA), a scoping paper was produced and submitted to DARD in June 2011. This paper outlined the rationale for a health checks programme specifically targeting farmers and their families. On the basis of this paper, a working group, led by the PHA submitted a business case to DARD in November 2011, which was successful in securing funding until March 2015. The programme became operational in July 2012. DARD funding for a further year was approved in the amount of £134k following the receipt and consideration of an addendum to the previous Business Case.
Funders	DARD: 85% PHA: 15%
Partners	DARD, PHA, NHSCT and DHSSPS
Delivery Agents	Public Health Agency (PHA) in conjunction with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT).
Geographical coverage	The Farm Family Health Checks screening van attends agricultural marts, other agri/food industries and various community events in rural areas across all of N. Ireland.

<p>Objectives</p>	<p><b>Aim</b></p> <p>To improve the health and social wellbeing of rural farmers and farm families in Northern Ireland by increasing local access to health screening services, by providing health related advice and information and to signpost to existing services for further advice and support</p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To improve the health and social wellbeing of rural farmers by providing a regional health check programme at farmer’s marts and local rural community events.</li> <li>2. Ensure an effective onward referral/signposting process is in place for those clients identified as requiring medical treatment or further support.</li> <li>3. To effectively use existing resources and local community infrastructure to promote and advertise a service that is accessible and appropriate to the specific health and social wellbeing needs of the farming community.</li> <li>4. To complete an extensive programme evaluation that will provide guidance as to future programme direction and sustainability.</li> </ol>
<p><i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below</i></p>	
<p>--- Access Poverty</p>	<p>Farm Families Health Checks uses the local community infrastructure to promote and advertise a service that is accessible and appropriate to the specific health and social wellbeing needs of the farming community. It has been identified that farmers due to the nature of their work neglect their own health issues. This Programme therefore provides farmers with access to Health Checks in their “workplace”</p>
<p>--- Financial Poverty</p>	<p>Where appropriate, Farm Families Health Checks clients are referred to the MARA project where they could potentially benefit from financial assistance following a holistic assessment of their household and individual needs.</p>
<p>--- Social Isolation</p>	<p>The Health Checks programme offers a tailored service specific to the needs of farmers and their families. It has been identified that farmers are reluctant to seek help and this is reinforced by barriers including stoicism, self sufficiency, lack of time and difficulty in accessing</p>

	<p>primary care services due to isolation. This Programme addresses these issues by bringing the service to the farmers. As well as availing of a Health Check farmers are signposted to the MARA project and Farm Safety Awareness Training, both initiatives being highlighted in the TRPSI strategic framework as a priority for mitigating the impact of poverty and social isolation in rural communities.</p>
<p>Targets</p>	<p>Each of the Objectives above have measurable targets as outlined below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To improve the health and social wellbeing of rural farmers by providing a regional health check programme at farmers marts and local rural community events             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a health improvement advice and health check service to farmers via the 28 marts and also 12 specific events targeting other agri-food sector farmers equating to 100 visits per annum</li> <li>• To provide a health improvement advice and health check service at 31 community based events in rural areas accessible to rural farmers and their families</li> <li>• To achieve a average of 20 clients receiving health check screening per market/community event equating to 2740 clients per year</li> <li>• To evaluate the effectiveness of the programme including evidence of behavioural changes to improve health</li> </ul> </li>   <li>2) Ensure an effective onward referral/signposting process is in place for those clients identified as requiring medical treatment or further support.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of clients needing referral to GP</li> <li>• Number of clients referred to MARA project via health check</li> <li>• Number of clients referred to Rural Support Financial Support Service</li> <li>• Number of clients referred to DARD Farm Safe Awareness courses</li> <li>• Number of clients signposted to specialist smoking cessation services</li> </ul> </li>   <li>3) To effectively use existing resources and local community infrastructure to promote and advertise a service that is accessible and appropriate to the specific health and social wellbeing needs of the</li> </ol>

	<p>farming community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective linkages developed with appropriate organisations including HSENI, UFU, Rural Support and the GAA</li> <li>• Evidence of collaborative partnership working to ensure the health check programme has access to appropriate rural community events to ensure the programme is supporting the more vulnerable, isolated farmers and their families.</li> </ul> <p>4) To complete an extensive programme evaluation that will provide guidance as to future programme direction and sustainability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation report to be completed by September 2015</li> </ul>
<p>Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	<p>No specific group targeted but the programme benefits farmers and farm families.</p>
<p>Achievements (to date)</p>	<p>Since the commencement of the Programme in July 2012 the following has been achieved:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7,325 clients have presented for a Health Check at 355 venues (232 marts and 123 community events).</li> <li>• 1,606 presented in 12/13 (late commencement of programme), 2,775 in 13/14 and 2,773 in 14/15.</li> <li>• A total of 171 people have presented in 15/16 (to end of April 2015).</li> <li>• 3,783 (52%) have been advised to visit their GP as a result of the health check.</li> </ul> <p>The Programme nurses make follow up calls to these clients within 12 weeks after the screening to determine whether the client has presented to the GP. This call also allows the nurses to reinforce any health messages, signpost clients to appropriate services as well as establishing impacts and outcomes resulting from the intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,751 clients have consented to be referred to the MARA Project.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 997 clients have consented to be referred to DARD's Farm Safe Awareness training programme.</li></ul>
Unexpected Achievements	The qualitative feedback received from participants in the Health Checks Programme has been hugely encouraging. The number of people that have made life changing adjustments to their lifestyle has been very significant. An interim evaluation of the Programme completed in January 14 acknowledged it as a very much needed and valued intervention which was very popular with the farming community.

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>Health in Mind</b>
Brief Description	To promote positive mental health through reading, learning and information activities. Delivering these activities in a library provides a neutral environment and can help to remove some of the stigma associated with mental health.
Timeframe	Health in Mind has been running for a few years but has only been rolled out in rural areas in the last 3 years. The current programme will run until January 2016.
Cost & how funded	To date DARD has contributed £50k to fund the roll out of the programme in rural libraries (Maureen – libraries NI should be able to provide an overall cost of the project).
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	Promoting positive mental health and well being is a key priority for both DARD and DCAL. (Libraries NI may give you some more detail on the background). DARD were approached by Libraries NI to consider funding the roll out of this project to some rural areas.
Funders	Libraries NI, DARD, DCAL
Partners	Libraries NI, DARD, DCAL, Aware Defeat Depression
Delivery Agents	Aware Defeat Depression
Geographical coverage	Libraries NI should be able to give you a breakdown of the geographical areas. DARD doesn't hold information on the location.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide Health in Mind activities in 8 rural libraries by January 2016.</li> <li>• To attract 300 participants to these programmes by January 2016.</li> <li>• To offer a range of 9 different activities by January 2016</li> <li>• To develop 4 new local partnerships by January 2016</li> </ul>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below</i>	

--- Access Poverty	The programme will provide access to mental health provision/awareness which is somewhat limited in rural areas. As the programme is hosted within library buildings which run a wide range of activities this helps to remove some of the stigma attached to mental health.
--- Financial Poverty	
--- Social Isolation	The aim of the programme is to promote positive mental health and through the running of activities the project helps address social isolation.
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To attract 300 participants to the programmes by January 2016</li> <li>• To develop 4 new local partnerships by January 2016</li> </ul>
Target Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	The programme is open to all persons aged 16 and over.
Achievements (to date)	To date, the project has met all its targets and objectives and has been hugely successful.
Unexpected Achievements	The Health in Mind project recently received a highly commended certificate in the recent DCAL Learning and Innovation Awards 2015.

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>Libraries in a BOX</b>
Brief Description	This project was developed by Libraries NI. The aim of the project is to trial the idea of a small, self service library facility in community buildings in 3 rural areas which don't have a library building and depend on the mobile library service.
Timeframe	The trial commenced in 2015 however it has been delayed due to the lack of availability of broadband. These issues have now been overcome and the trial is now underway. The trial will run until March 2016.
Cost & how funded	DARD has contributed £16k to this project which has been paid to date. (Maureen- I'm not sure how much the project costs in total but perhaps Libraries NI could advise when you meet with them. If not come back to me and I will ask them directly).
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	Both libraries NI and DARD have a commitment to protect and sustain library provision in rural areas. In the current financial climate rural library provision is under threat and this concept will make a recommendation on whether this is a useful way to increase the number of library users in rural areas. The results of this trial will inform Libraries NI's review of mobile service and rural service delivery.
Funders	Libraries NI and DARD
Partners	Libraries NI and DARD
Delivery Agents	Libraries NI
Geographical coverage	The trial is being rolled out in 3 rural areas, Clonmore, Eskra and Trillick.
Objectives	<p>The objectives of the project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By March 2016 to test the concept of 'library in a box' and provide a recommendation of whether this is a useful way to increase the number of library users in rural communities.</li> <li>• By March 2016 to test various types of host organisations and variant models of provision to inform future roll out of the concept.</li> <li>• To inform Libraries NI's review of the mobile service and rural service delivery as it is implemented.</li> </ul>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline</i>	



<i>under the 3 priority areas below</i>	
--- Access Poverty	The 'Library in a Box' provides rural communities with access to a taste of the range of services offered by Libraries NI's in areas where there is no library building. Access is currently only provided through the mobile service provision.
--- Financial Poverty	
--- Social Isolation	By placing the 'library in a box' in a community building it will encourage people to visit the community building, who may not have a current reason to visit that facility and potentially meet and interact with other rural dwellers. One of the pilot areas identified are planning to introduce a book club and also are engaging with older people in the area so that they can make use of the facilities better.
Targets	As this is a trial, with the aim of testing the concept and the software there are no specific targets set. The trial will be fully evaluated upon completion and the information used to inform Libraries NI's Review of Mobile Service and Rural Service Delivery.
Target Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	As library provision is open to all, this project has potential to reach all targets groups.
Achievements (to date)	The major achievement to date is getting the software operational. The availability of broadband is a major issue throughout rural areas and the project was delayed due to problems with broadband.
Unexpected Achievements	None to date.

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>Maximising Access Rural Areas Project (MARA)</b>
Brief Description	<p>The Maximising Access Rural Areas Project is a significant inter-departmental programme which is funded in the main by DARD and delivered by the Public Health Agency (PHA). Other departments and agencies involved are SSA, NIHE, DRD, DSD, DHSSPS and the Health Trusts. The project also involved 13 community based delivery organisations who in turn recruited and trained over 120 Enablers to carry out household visits.</p> <p>The MARA Project is based on the premise that identifying vulnerable households, and with their consent visiting them in their homes using a “personal touch” encourages them to avail of services, grants and benefits which they would not otherwise have known about or had the wherewithal to apply for. By placing local rural community networks at the heart of the MARA Project and using local knowledge, it is easier to identify and connect with people within the locality who could benefit from a household visit.</p> <p>Using local information the project seeks, to identify the most vulnerable households across all of the 286 rural super output areas in the north. At the visits a detailed household and personal assessment is completed and a range of information is provided to occupants regarding regional and locally available services.</p> <p>Using the information gathered from the holistic assessment, automated referrals for grants, benefits and services are made to various partner departments and agencies for immediate processing. A key strength of the project is the active partnership developed across government to take referrals and deliver outputs.</p> <p>All referrals will be followed through until such times as the householder receives the grant, benefit or service they are entitled to. A second home visit will also be carried out for those households that received a referral to ensure the process is followed through to its conclusion with the “personal touch” and trust built up between the enabler and the householder again a key element.</p>
Timeframe	<p>The initial Maximising Access to Grants, Benefits and Services Project which targeted 4,135 households in the top 88 most deprived rural super output areas commenced in 2009 and concluded in 2011. Following</p>

	<p>the success of that Project the current Maximising Access Rural Areas (MARA) Project which reached out to 12,025 households across all 286 rural super output areas across the north commenced in early 2012. Targets for this Project were achieved and MARA was further extended to target 4,239 households in 14/15 and 15/16. The Project will therefore conclude in March 2016.</p>
Cost & how funded	<p>The Project is now referred to as Core MARA - 12,025 Household visits and MARA Extended - 4,239 visits.</p> <p>Total Costs – <b>Core MARA</b> £3,009,000, DARD allocation £2,618,000 and PHA contribution £391,000.</p> <p>Total Costs <b>MARA Extended</b> £927,000 DARD allocation £866,000 PHA contribution £61,000</p>
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	<p>New Programme developed in conjunction with PHA who had in conjunction with the NIHE trialled a much smaller scale project in the West during 2007 and 2008.</p>
Funders	<p>As above DARD and PHA with buy in from a range of Departments and Agencies who through partnership agreements process referrals generated by the project.</p>
Partners	<p>A key aspect of this Project is partnership working across a range of statutory departments and agencies. These are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Social Security Agency (SSA) – Benefit Entitlement Checks,</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) – Boiler Replacement Scheme and Disabled Facilities Grants,</li> <li>• Department of Regional Development (DRD) – SmartPass,</li> <li>• Department of Social Development (DSD) – Warm Homes energy efficiency grants (now closed),</li> <li>• DHSSPS – policy guidance</li> <li>• Health Trusts – Social Services and Occupational Therapy referrals,</li> <li>• Rural Community Transport Partnerships – membership of local community transport organisations,</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme – energy efficiency grants and</li> <li>• Local Councils – Home Safety Checks.</li> <li>• Localised Community Groups – local services</li> </ul> <p>Delivery of the Project is in tandem with the Public Health Agency.</p>
Delivery Agents	<p>As above</p>

Geographical coverage	All of rural Northern Ireland (286 rural super output areas)
Aim /Objectives	<p><b>Aim</b> The aim of the MARA Project is to improve the health and well being of rural dwellers in Northern Ireland by increasing access to services, grants and benefits by facilitating a co-ordinated service to support rural dwellers living in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The MARA Project will proactively target the vulnerable households in identified rural communities using a community development approach.</p> <p><b>Objectives</b> <b>‘Core’ MARA</b> To provide a home visit to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 households across each of the 198 SOA’s not previously targeted, and</li> <li>• 24 households across each of the 88 SOA’s previously targeted by November 2014 using local knowledge with outcomes referred and / or signposted to local services, grants and benefits (12,024 households).</li> </ul> <p><b>MARA ‘Extended’ 14/15</b> To provide a home visit to 1,639 households across the north in 14/15.</p> <p><b>MARA ‘Extended’ 15/16</b> To provide a home visit to 2,600 households across the north in 14/15.</p>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below</i>	
--- Access Poverty	At the core of the MARA Project is the aim to provide access to various grants, benefits and services. By targeting the most vulnerable and calling with them in their households and providing them with access to a range of grants benefits and services addresses the priority area of Access Poverty.
--- Financial Poverty	Householder’s that avail of various grants benefits and services are in many cases financially better off as a result of the MARA Project. Numerous individuals have received new welfare entitlements or enhanced entitlements, others have saved money by having energy efficiency measures installed, received a SmartPass or joined their local transport partnership and in doing so have received

	free or half fare travel all of which has addressed financial poverty issues.
--- Social Isolation	By connecting householders with local and regional services, community transport and a range of other services the MARA Project has played a key role in addressing social isolation for those households visited.
Targets	<p>See objectives above and below an extract from the Project Business Case</p> <p>In achieving the main objective above, the project will also seek to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase access to home improvement schemes particularly energy efficiency grants for at least 20% of targeted households</li> <li>• increase access to full Benefit Entitlement Checks for at least 35% of targeted households</li> <li>• increase access to a range of local services for at least 20% of targeted households</li> <li>• Increase access to a range of regional/universal services for at least 15%</li> <li>• increase access to community transport for at least 25% of targeted households</li> </ul> <p>All of the above targets have been greatly succeeded apart from the community transport target which sits around 21%</p>
<p>Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	All of these.
Achievements (to date)	<p><b>POSITIVE OUTCOMES – CORE MARA</b></p> <p>Through the Core MARA Project 12,265 household visits have received a 1<sup>st</sup> visit which has resulted in 13,915 individual assessments. These holistic assessments of the needs of those living in the households have generated 32,647 referrals for various grants, benefits and services. From these referrals the following outcomes have accrued:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,703 households have benefitted from advise and the installation of an energy efficiency measure through Warm Homes and NISEP (Levy)</li> </ul>

	<p>schemes totalling £2,107,450</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5,495 households have been issued with advice and equipment following a Home Safety Check.</li> <li>• For the 12/13, 13/14 and 14/15 (to December) financial years, Social Security Agency have advised that 502 people have received additional welfare benefits from 562 successful claims. These 562 claims alone amount to £1,426,956 per annum going into vulnerable rural households. A further £27,888 of arrears and one off grants have been paid across these financial years while over 500 individuals have been signposted for various services e.g. blue badge, TV licensing etc.</li> <li>• 864 householders have registered with their Rural Community Transport Provider.</li> <li>• 425 householders have received a Smart Pass.</li> </ul> <p>A total of 459 boiler replacement applications have been approved totalling £315,200. To date 390 of these successful applications have been claimed totalling £271,900.</p> <p><b>POSITIVE OUTCOME – MARA EXTENDED</b></p> <p>1,987 household visits have received a 1<sup>st</sup> visit which has resulted in 2,223 individual assessments. These holistic assessments of the needs of those living in the households have generated 5,172 referrals for various grants, benefits and services. From these referrals the following outcomes have accrued:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 143 households have benefitted from advise and the installation of an energy efficiency measure through Warm Homes and Levy schemes totalling £173,230</li> <li>• 580 households have been issued with advice and equipment following a Home Safety Check.</li> <li>• 154 householders have registered with their Rural Community Transport Provider.</li> <li>• 83 householders have received a Smart Pass.</li> <li>• A total of 26 boiler replacement applications have been approved totalling £18,800. To date 12 of these successful applications have been claimed totalling £7,900.</li> </ul>
<p>Unexpected Achievements</p>	<p>1) The unexpected level of interest from Ministers, MLA’s and Councillors in this Project has on the one hand added pressures to achieve the targets as per the business case and ensure that householders ultimately receive the grant, benefit or service they are entitled too but on the other</p>

	<p>hand their interest in the Project has helped local Lead Community Delivery organisations to promote the project and in some cases identify vulnerable rural households.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2) The numbers of referrals has far exceeded what was envisaged and the numbers benefitting has also surpassed what was expected.</li><li>3) The partnership working between the PHA, DARD and a multitude of other statutory departments and agencies has been fundamental in terms of delivery of this project and in bringing referrals to a successful conclusion. It is widely recognised that this Project has shone a light on the need for Departments and Agencies to consider working in tandem so as to assist those in need.</li><li>4) The MARA Project has greatly assisted the Lead Delivery Organisations (mainly Rural Support Networks – also core funded by TRPSI) build their profile in their local area. Rural dwellers are now aware that they can approach their local Rural Support Network to assist them with a variety of issues. The recruitment and training of over 120 enablers has also built the capacity of local individuals and this can be utilised locally in the years to come.</li></ol>
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<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>POWER NI (Fuel Poverty)</b>
Brief Description	To help alleviate rural fuel poverty through partnership working with government and energy stakeholders by supplementing the Power NI Free Loft Insulation scheme, reduce heating costs and create warmer, more comfortable homes for vulnerable rural households in Northern Ireland
Timeframe	July 14 – March 15
Cost & how funded	£411,586 was paid to Power NI upon receipt and vouching of 3 x claims  A final claim of £169,912 has been received in the DARD office.
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	Previous Contract for Funding offers was issued to Power NI in 2011/12 and 2012/13.  Power NI submitted a proposal to DARD in July 2014, which was subsequently approved by the Grade 7. A contract for Funding was issued in July 2014 for a total of £586,500 to supplement up to 680 rural homes.
Funders	DARD - TRPSI support of the Power NI Free Insulation Schemes during 2014/15 has been supplementary to their core award through the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) which targets low income households just above benefit level.
Partners	DARD Power NI
Delivery Agents	Various contractors install the loft insulation throughout Northern Ireland. These are contracted by PowerNI.
Geographical coverage	All rural areas throughout Northern Ireland
Objectives	TRPSI support of the Power NI Free Insulation Schemes during 2014/15 has been supplementary to their core award through the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) which targets low income households just above benefit level.
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below</i>	



--- Access Poverty	
--- Financial Poverty	Addressing Fuel Poverty remains a key objective within the “Financial Poverty” Priority Area for Intervention, detailed in DARD’s Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework and the impact that high fuel costs are continuing to have remains a major concern, particularly on the vulnerable in rural areas.
--- Social Isolation	
Targets	680 in 2014/15 – 640 achieved.
<p>Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	Low income households
Achievements (to date)	<p>2011/12 – target 771 – achieved 578</p> <p>2012/13 – target 340 – achieved 323</p> <p>2014/15 – target 680 – achieved 640</p>
Unexpected Achievements	

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>Rural Challenge 2009 and 2012</b>
Brief Description	The RCP 2009 was a small grants programme that provided rural community and voluntary groups with grant aid of up to £5,000 to deliver a wide range of projects which aimed to address local poverty and/or social isolation issues. A total of 78 groups were funded to deliver projects across eight target beneficiary groups. The RCP built on the success of the RCP 2009 and the findings of a longitudinal study completed by NISRA in respect of RCP 2009. This programme provided grant aid of up to £10,000 to rural voluntary & community groups over a period of 21 months. A total of 41 projects were completed, providing benefit to 7 target beneficiary groups and over 6,600 individuals.
Timeframe	RCP 2009 – April 2010 to March 2011 RCP 2012 – September 2011 to 31 December 2014
Cost & how funded	National monies RCP 2009 - £300,785 RCP 2012 – initial commitment of £371,670. Final claims still being processed. Final spend figure anticipated £300k.
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	RCP 2009 developed as one of the initiatives identified under DARDs Anti-Poverty and Social Exclusion Policy Framework (Economic Appraisal completed by BDO Stoy Hayward). The RCP 2012 was developed in response to the results of the evaluation/longitudinal study completed by NISRA of the RCP 2009
Funders	DARD
Partners	NA
Delivery Agents	NA
Geographical coverage	All of NI
Objectives	RCP 2009 Key Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To allow rural people and rural groups to determine practical actions and projects required in their local area.</li> <li>• To inform future policy on tackling poverty and social exclusion, by assessing the projects funded and assessing the impact of these projects on the Programme’s intended beneficiaries</li> </ul>

	<p>RCP 2012 Key aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To allow rural people and rural groups to identify issues and provide solutions that address the particular and distinct challenges faced by rural areas/communities in relation to their local poverty and exclusion issues</li> <li>• To identify actions with a sustainable legacy that can be used to overcome specific rural poverty and social isolation barriers</li> <li>• To share the evidence and learning of the impact of funded actions with other Departments to influence the positive development of other mainstream Government interventions</li> </ul>
<p><i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below)</i></p>	
<p>--- Access Poverty</p>	<p>Contributed to all 3 priority areas</p>
<p>--- Financial Poverty</p>	
<p>--- Social Isolation</p>	
<p>Targets</p>	<p>RCP 2009 Key Targets:</p> <p>To inform policy on tackling poverty and social exclusion by June 2011 by carrying out longitudinal research on beneficiaries of a challenge programme where the challenge is ‘to identify initiatives, to be delivered between January 2010 and March 2011, which will deliver a needed service to local, socially excluded, rural groups or those in rural areas experiencing poverty, which will inform policy on those services which are best placed to impact upon rural poverty and social exclusion. It will also identify which initiatives, meeting the programme objectives that can be delivered in a viable and sustainable manner from April 2011 onwards.</p> <p>RCP 2012 Key Targets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To have minimum 10,000 programme participants by March 2015</li> <li>2. To have a minimum of 5,000 programme</li> </ol>

	<p>beneficiaries by March 2015</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. To increase applications from Ethnic Minority groupings by 10%</li> <li>4. To increase applications from Carers by 5%</li> <li>5. To increase applications from unemployed Groups by 5%</li> <li>6. To assign clearly defined outcome measures to each funded project</li> </ol>												
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<p>Achievements (to date)</p>	<p>RCP 2009 – the longitudinal study completed by NISRA concluded that this was a successful Programme. The study made 5 key recommendations which were taken on board when developing the RCP 2012.</p> <p>RCP 2012 Evaluation on-going at present. Some key findings to date:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="655 1308 1382 2011"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="655 1308 1114 1364">Target</th> <th data-bbox="1114 1308 1382 1364">Actual</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="655 1364 1114 1503">1. To have a minimum 10,000 programme participants by March 2015</td> <td data-bbox="1114 1364 1382 1503">Achieved – 23,674</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="655 1503 1114 1637">2. To have a minimum of 5,000 programme beneficiaries by March 2015</td> <td data-bbox="1114 1503 1382 1637">Achieved – 6,783</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="655 1637 1114 1807">3. To increase applications from Ethnic Minority groupings by 10%</td> <td data-bbox="1114 1637 1382 1807">Achieved – 20% increase (6 Apps 2012 vs 5 Apps 2009)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="655 1807 1114 1977">4. To increase applications from Carers by 5%</td> <td data-bbox="1114 1807 1382 1977">Not Achieved – 10% decrease (9 Apps 2012 vs 10 Apps 2009)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="655 1977 1114 2011">5. To increase applications from</td> <td data-bbox="1114 1977 1382 2011">Achieved – 23%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Target	Actual	1. To have a minimum 10,000 programme participants by March 2015	Achieved – 23,674	2. To have a minimum of 5,000 programme beneficiaries by March 2015	Achieved – 6,783	3. To increase applications from Ethnic Minority groupings by 10%	Achieved – 20% increase (6 Apps 2012 vs 5 Apps 2009)	4. To increase applications from Carers by 5%	Not Achieved – 10% decrease (9 Apps 2012 vs 10 Apps 2009)	5. To increase applications from	Achieved – 23%
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4. To increase applications from Carers by 5%	Not Achieved – 10% decrease (9 Apps 2012 vs 10 Apps 2009)												
5. To increase applications from	Achieved – 23%												

	Unemployed Groups by 5%	increase (16 Apps 2012vs 13 Apps 2009)
	6. To assign clearly defined outcome measures to each funded project	Completed – Performance Indicators agreed for each Project
Unexpected Achievements	RCP 2012 Enagh Youth Forum, Strathfoyle – this project trained 6 young people as Kayak Instructors. As a result of the project 2 of the beneficiaries secured full-time employment and another part-time employment with local out-door adventure companies	

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>Rural Community Development Support</b>
Brief Description	<p>DARD's aims for the Rural Community Development Support Programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to ensure regional coverage and local delivery of rural community development support across Northern Ireland;</li> <li>• to support individuals and communities in rural areas in improving their economic and social sustainability;</li> <li>• to support the increased participation of minority protestant communities in border areas in community development; to support rural communities, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders in the face of the restructuring of local government and the reorganisation of public policy and service delivery.</li> </ul>
Timeframe	1 April 12 to 31 March 15
Cost & how funded	£3,477,339
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	Mainstream from previous programme Building Sustainable Prosperity BSP
Funders	DARD
Partners	DARD only
Delivery Agents	Cookstown & Western Shores Network, County Down Rural Community Network, Fermanagh Rural Community Network, Rural Area Partnerships in Derry Ltd, South Antrim Community Network and Tyrone Armagh Down and Antrim Network
Geographical coverage	Throughout the North of Ireland
Objectives	<p>Supporting Implementation of the NIRDP 2007 / 2013 and Animation of RDP 2014 / 2020</p> <p>Assisting Development of the Rural Economy</p> <p>Supporting Access to the TRPSI Programme</p> <p>Developing Capacity and Leadership</p> <p>Community Development Service for the Unionist Population</p>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline</i>	

<i>under the 3 priority areas below</i>	
--- Access Poverty	Measures supported under this priority will focus on access to statutory services such as advice on welfare benefits, health and social care, public transport, advice and support and education and training.
--- Financial Poverty	This priority will focus on measures that ensure vulnerable rural dwellers can maximise their income. Measures supported may focus on addressing fuel poverty, maximising benefit uptakes in rural areas, or focus on addressing the additional costs people face by living in rural areas
--- Social Isolation	This priority which forms an n important part of TRPSI will focus on measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups. The RDCSP assists this priority through community development approaches using community development to address local needs, or supporting organisations that work in rural areas supporting those suffering from different types of stress or mental health issues. This priority will also focus on researching the needs and challenges of “hard to reach” vulnerable groups in rural areas.
Targets	
<p>Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>
Achievements (to date)	All objectives achieved over and above the targets in all areas.
Unexpected Achievements	Large number of individuals and groups assisted and over 900 charities assisted with Charity registration

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>RURAL SUPPORT</b>
Brief Description	<p>Rural Support was initially established in Autumn 2001 to help farmers and rural dwellers across N Ireland that were affected by the foot and mouth crisis in the agricultural industry at the time. It was registered as a charity in 2002. DHSSPS and DARD core funded Rural Support up until 2007 when at that time DARD took sole responsibility for funding.</p> <p>Rural Support provide a range of services, its primary activity is a telephone helpline service for rural residents. This also provides a means to make available contact information and to refer callers to appropriate support services, agencies and stakeholders.</p> <p>33 volunteers give their time, knowledge, expertise and experience to those who call the helpline. As and when required, they provide support, mentoring, guidance and counselling.</p>
Timeframe	11/12 – 15/16
Cost & how funded	<p><b>DARD &amp; Rural Support match funding:</b></p> <p>Total allocation via a Contract for Funding for the years 11/12 – 13/14 was £266k. Following the receipt and approval of the Rural Support Strategy Document funding has been extended for a further 2 years (1/4/14 – 31/3/16) with allocation of £183,000.</p> <p><b>Match Funding:</b></p> <p>NFU Mutual Charitable Trust, Ulster Bank, Simple Power, Linden Foods, The Bank of Ireland, The Prince’s Countryside Fund and Farming Life and Danske Bank’s Awards plus various other fund raising activities allows Rural Support to provide in the region of 25% match funding per annum.</p>
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	As per introductory paragraph above.
Fundors	DARD: OTHER FUNDING
Partners	<p>DARD/ Rural Support</p> <p>Rural Support also has very strong linkages with a variety of organisations linked to the Farming Industry. The makeup of their Board highlights this fact.</p>



Delivery Agents	N/A
Geographical coverage	All of rural N. Ireland
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maximise awareness and knowledge of the Rural Support Helpline and its support services for farmers and rural families</li> <li>• To work with key stakeholder organisations to ensure the support needs of the rural community are met in an efficient and effective manner.</li> <li>• Upscale existing services, reduce barriers and provide increased methods of communication for clients to access services.</li> <li>• Develop proactive approach in Tackling Rural Stress and Promoting Positive Mental Health.</li> </ul>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below</i>	
--- Access Poverty	Rural Support, through its helpline service and outreach activities provides the opportunity to access information/services which in turn will help tackle poverty and social exclusion issues in rural areas.
--- Financial Poverty	<p>By providing support and signposting to farmers and rural dwellers via the telephone helpline and outreach activities, Rural Support are providing rural communities with the opportunity to access information/services which in turn will help tackle poverty in rural areas.</p> <p>In Sept 2014 Rural Support also launched a six month pilot project ‘Tackling Rural Stress: Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing’ one element of which provided one-to one support directly related to debt or financial management for individuals experiencing financial distress.</p>
--- Social Isolation	Rural Support provides a network of support for all individuals living in rural areas to help them address issues of social exclusion, stress and mental health issues.
Targets	<p>Objective 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop one-year marketing and communications plan</li> <li>• Develop new promotional materials</li> <li>• Develop enhanced relationships with DARD, Rural Support Networks, CAFRE and UFU</li> </ul>

	<p>Objective 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and report to DARD on the issues which are affecting farming and rural families</li> <li>• Build relationships with the Rural Support Networks and Community Voluntary groups</li> <li>• Actively participate in network meeting / steering committee meeting</li> <li>• Develop strategic relationships with other support organisations</li> </ul> <p>Objective 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upscale Rural Support Helpline, Emotional and Technical support available</li> <li>• Introduce new means of communication with clients and develop future Helpline and Outreach activities</li> </ul> <p>Objective 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop proactive approach in tackling Rural Stress and Promoting Positive Mental Health</li> </ul>
<p>Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	<p>No specific target group, service is open to all farmers and rural dwellers.</p>
<p>Achievements (to date)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural Support has achieved all targets set out in THEIR contract for Funding for 11/12 – 14/15.</li> <li>• From January 12 to date Rural Support helpline has received 1,461 calls.</li> <li>• Board members and volunteers contributed approximately 14,537 hours.</li> <li>• Since September 14, 32 information sessions promoting the Rural Stress and Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme were delivered and one-to one financial mentoring of 106 individuals has taken place.</li> </ul>
<p>Unexpected Achievements</p>	

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>“RYE NI” Rural Youth Entrepreneurship</b>
Brief Description	To contribute to rural economic growth by developing business creation potential among vulnerable young in Northern Ireland. Through upskilling, networking, mentoring and sharing ideas RYE aims to create the foundations for the development of future rural businesses.
Timeframe	June 2014 to end March 2016
Cost & how funded	100% DARD funding Year 1                    £200,869 (reduced from £201,669) Year 2                    £244,658 (reduced from £245,253)
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	This programme emanated from a previous RYE NPP transnational programme. Following an independent evaluation and new business case, approved by DARD PED, an extension to the pilot was approved for 2 years until 31 March 2016, in NI only, to test recommended enhancements to the RYE model. The RDC remain as lead partner with DARD funding the extension at 100% through TRPSI.
Funders	100% Funded by DARD
Partners	Rural Development Council Advantage Foundation Ltd DARD
Delivery Agents	Rural Development Council as lead partner Advantage Foundation Ltd
Geographical coverage	Top 50% rural multiple deprivation areas throughout Northern Ireland.
Objectives	The objectives of the extended pilot are to test the recommended enhancements to the initial transnational RYE model through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of outreach workshops to 450 young people by end of March 2016</li> <li>• Supporting 100 of these young rural people to complete a Business Action Plan (BAP) by end March 2016</li> <li>• To formally refer 100 young rural people for further business support (e.g. INI, Cafre) by end March 2016.</li> </ul>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas</i>	

<i>below</i>											
--- Access Poverty	Workshops were booked for community venues so that the young people did not have to travel 10-15 miles to complete the workshops.										
--- Financial Poverty	By encouraging self-employment among rural youth the participant generates their own income from their business but also to the wider potential job creation.										
--- Social Isolation											
Targets by end March 2016	<table> <tr> <td>Challenged</td> <td>450</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Actively Engaged</td> <td>450</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The First Step</td> <td>300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BAP complete</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Onward Referrals</td> <td>100</td> </tr> </table>	Challenged	450	Actively Engaged	450	The First Step	300	BAP complete	100	Onward Referrals	100
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Achievements (to date)	<table> <tr> <td>Challenged</td> <td>215</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Actively Engaged</td> <td>207</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The First Step</td> <td>175</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BAP complete</td> <td>55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Onward Referrals</td> <td>55</td> </tr> </table>	Challenged	215	Actively Engaged	207	The First Step	175	BAP complete	55	Onward Referrals	55
Challenged	215										
Actively Engaged	207										
The First Step	175										
BAP complete	55										
Onward Referrals	55										
Unexpected Achievements	<p>It was anticipated that 20 new rural businesses would be created by March 2017.</p> <p>To date, 9 new businesses have been created.</p>										

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	<b>DSD / DARD Fuel Poverty</b>
Brief Description	<p>To help alleviate rural fuel poverty through partnership working across government by supplementing the Warm Homes Plus Scheme enabling the provision of whole house solutions for rural “Hard to Treat” homes.</p> <p>Applicants cannot access the energy efficiency measures they require because of limited funding availability within the core DSD Warm Homes budget (£6,500/property).</p>
Timeframe	11/12-13/14
Cost & how funded	<p>2011/12 - £23,000 transferred to DSD</p> <p>2012/13 - £450,000 transferred to DSD</p> <p>2013/14 - £465,000 transferred to DSD</p>
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	Extension of existing programme – monies were transferred to DSD in 08/09 and 09/10
Funders	DARD provided the top-up funding for ‘Hard to Treat’ rural properties
Partners	DSD DARD
Delivery Agents	Bryson H&A Mechanicals - engaged by DSD.
Geographical coverage	All rural areas throughout Northern Ireland
Objectives	To supplement the “Warm Homes Plus Scheme” enabling the provision of whole house solutions for rural “Hard to Treat” homes.
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below)</i>	
--- Access Poverty	
--- Financial Poverty	<p>To supplement the Warm Homes Plus Scheme enabling the provision of whole house solutions for rural “Hard to Treat” homes.</p> <p>Addressing Fuel Poverty remains a key objective within</p>

	the “Financial Poverty” Priority Area for Intervention, detailed in DARD’s Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework and the impact that high fuel costs are continuing to have remains a major concern, particularly on the vulnerable in rural areas.
--- Social Isolation	
Targets	2011/12 – target 4 – achieved 4 2012/13 – target 165 – achieved 233 2013/14 – target 165 – achieved 267
Target Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	Low income households
Achievements (to date)	504 applicants received energy efficiency measures from 2011/12-2013/14
Unexpected Achievements	Previous support of the DSD Warm Homes Scheme has achieved our TRPSI objective of highlighting the distinct rural perspective of Fuel Poverty to the extent that DSD is raising grant levels to facilitate the higher cost nature of rural jobs in the current scheme.

<b>TPRSI Project/Programme Summary</b>	Research into <i>‘The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender people in rural areas’</i>
Brief Description	Research into the needs of the LGB&T community in rural areas.
Timeframe	2013/14-2014/15
Cost & how funded	DARD has contributed approximately £5k towards the cost of the project
Origins of programme e.g. mainstream or continuation from previous programme	DARD recognised that there was a gap in information on the effects of social isolation on the LGBT Community in rural areas and agreed to part fund research into the experiences of the LGB&T community in rural areas to be undertaken by the Rainbow Project.
Funders	The Rainbow Project and DARD
Partners	The Rainbow Project and DARD
Delivery Agents	The Rainbow Project
Geographical coverage	Regional Wide
Objectives	<p>The objectives of the research are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help to address gaps in the knowledge of the experiences of LGB&amp;T people in rural areas.</li> <li>• to help inform the development of interventions including those being proposed under the next Rural Development Programme</li> <li>• To help inform policy areas in other government departments.</li> </ul>
<i>Programme contribution to Priority Areas for TRPSI intervention (please outline under the 3 priority areas below</i>	
--- Access Poverty	

--- Financial Poverty	
--- Social Isolation	The project has increased knowledge of social isolation issues for the LGBT Community in rural areas. This knowledge will help inform interventions by government aimed at addressing issue around social isolation for the LGBT community in rural areas.
Targets	The information from the research will help to address gaps in the knowledge of the experiences of LGB&T people in rural areas. It will also help to inform the development of interventions including those being proposed under the next Rural Development Programme as well as informing policy areas in other government departments.
<p>Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Ethnic Minorities</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Older Children &amp; Young People</li> </ul>	Sexual Orientation (LGBT)
Achievements (to date)	A draft Report has been completed
Unexpected Achievements	None to date.



Annex B: ARD Committee Position Paper on DARD's Anti-Poverty And Social Inclusion Programme

**COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**POSITION PAPER ON DARD'S ANTI-POVERTY  
AND SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMME**

## BACKGROUND

1. The Committee agreed to review the Department's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme and to make recommendations to the Minister on what should be included in any successor programme.
2. The terms of reference for the review are included below:
  - Seek views of organisations who are actively involved in rural and farming communities exploring the successes and otherwise of the current APSI programme and focusing on key elements for any successor programme.
  - Examine the partnership approach taken by DARD in this programme including its communication methods.
  - Consider the recommendations arising from the interim evaluations and progress made by DARD in implementing the recommendations.
  - Consider and compare approaches taken by other jurisdictions on this issue; and
  - Commission research and consider, at a strategic level, how rural deprivation is measured and used.
3. The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework aims to help to tackle poverty and social isolation in rural areas via a range of measures in partnership with a range of voluntary/community groups and Departments.
4. The TRPSI framework is a key commitment for the Department. It is one of the Department's targets in the Programme for Government and within the Rural White Paper Action Plan. It is also referenced in the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.
5. The framework focuses on three priority areas for intervention; access poverty (focus on access to statutory services), financial poverty (focus on measures that ensure vulnerable rural dwellers can maximise income) and social isolation (focus on

measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups).

6. The aim of the TRPSI Framework is to cover target areas such as the elderly, lone parents, disabled, ethnic minorities, unemployed, sexual orientation, carers, children and older children and young people.
7. The framework seeks to work in partnership with other key Departments and includes a range of policy interventions and programmes as listed below:
  - Assisted Rural Travel Scheme – with DRD;
  - Maximising Access in Rural Areas (MARA) – with PHA;
  - Community Development – with Rural Support;
  - Farm Families Health Checks Programme – with PHA;
  - Rural Support – with Rural Support;
  - Rural Challenge (Small Grants) Programme;
  - Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated (CERI) – with WHSCT;
  - Youth Employability Programme (BOOST) – with DEL;
  - Rural Youth Entrepreneurship (RYE) Programme with NPP;
  - Rural Borewells Scheme – with DRD; and
  - Fuel Poverty Initiatives – with DSD.
8. TRPSI measures also strive to encourage rural communities to help themselves via the practical delivery of on the ground interventions which compliments existing government strategies. The Framework covers the period 2011-15 and builds on the previous programme which operated in 2008-11. In the current budget period 2011-15, £16 million has been allocated and the programme hopes to extend to March 2016.
9. Each programme within the framework has its own objectives and targets and will be evaluated at the end of the funding period, with an overall evaluation of TRPSI planned during 2015.
10. The Committee heard that during the evaluation, the Department aims to meet with a range of stakeholders to make an informed assessment of the impact of the

initiatives, whether value for money has been achieved and how to identify future funding can be best spent.

11. The Department also intends to engage with other relevant Departments during the evaluation process in order to gain a full assessment of the multi-agency approach which TRPSI has taken.

## **COMMITTEE APPROACH**

12. The Committee took oral evidence from the following organisations and a record of that evidence can be found at the following link:-

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

- DARD on 7 October 2014
- Rural Support on 21 October 2014
- Rural Community Network on 4 November 2014
- Rural Development Council on 11 November 2014
- UFU/NIAPA on 18 November 2014
- Public Health Agency on 25 November 2014
- Mr Trutz Haase on 2 December 2014
- NISRA on 9 December 2014

13. Considerable written evidence was also received and can be found at the following link:-

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

## **Stakeholder Event**

14. The Committee also hosted a stakeholder event on 20 November 2014 at the Greenmount Campus CAFRE, which was attended by a wide range of voluntary and community groups which benefit from the TRPSI programme, as well as departmental officials. The Committee were delighted to see such a good turnout at the event with individual Members commenting on the commitment and passion that the various attendees had regarding their individual work programmes.

15. Attendees were split into four discussion groups. Each discussion group discussed a specific issue as follows:
- a. Partnership Working,
  - b. Rural Proofing,
  - c. What initiatives should be included in the successor programme? and
  - d. What are the key elements which make the current programme a success?

16. A link to the record of the discussions from the event can be found here:

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

17. The Committee also commissioned research papers on the following topics:-

- a. Rural isolation, poverty and rural community/farmer wellbeing – scoping paper
- b. Current DARD Programmes/Supports specifically designed to address issues of rural poverty, rural isolation and farmer welfare, rural isolation, poverty and rural community/farmer well-being – scoping paper and;
- c. Mechanisms utilised for the measurement of deprivation and rural deprivation across the UK and Ireland.

18. The link to the research papers can be found here:

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

19. The Committee agreed that it was content with the current TRPSI programme in terms of the approach taken to date, the projects and measures it has focused on, the positive impacts that it has made and the allocation of finance to each project. The Committee were particularly interested in the point made by the Rural Community Network and the PHA that *“the social return on investment for MARA in its first phase showed that for every £1 invested by DARD and PHA over £8 was returned”*. This identification of leverage came from an independent project evaluation by Deloitte 2011. The Committee requested further information on this from DARD and noted the written response which indicated that DARD had provided £12,508,904 of funding and that this had levered in £11,100,488 in match funding from a range of organisations. A link to this information can be found here:

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

## KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Community and Voluntary Sector

20. Throughout the review there has been a high level of praise and support for all who help deliver the various TRPSI Framework programmes at a local level. Ranging from the larger regional based rural organisations to the smaller bodies often run on a largely voluntary basis, the Committee firmly believed that these groups have demonstrated a far reaching local knowledge of problems and concerns that exist within their rural community. It is the opinion of the Committee that such organisations and groups have the mechanisms to offer the support required. This has been demonstrated by the successes of the various programmes.
21. Community and voluntary groups, many of whom have been in existence for a number of years, have been very successful in the identification of vulnerable people in rural areas and signposting of services that they can avail of with various successes achieved to date.
22. In oral evidence to the Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014 Rural Support stated”  
*“they (RDC and RCN) often signpost our services to people who contact them... they do an excellent work in highlighting some of the policy issues that we do not have the resources to put behind. There is a good working relationship”.*
23. The Committee noted that the evidence presented to it suggests that these groups offer an effective voice for rural communities and appear to have worked collectively with each other to ensure that the best possible outcome is achieved for the person/persons in need. In giving evidence to the Committee on 21 October 2014 Rural Support noted:-

*“While a lot of volunteer effort and skills go in, we all agree that it takes a certain amount of coordination. That is where our executive team works morning, noon and night to pull this all together and, indeed, to liaise with all the other organisations, MARA and the PHA included. There needs to be more joined-up thinking.”*

24. Community groups were considered best placed to commence the outreach work and specific targeting of rural dwellers for the MARA project. In oral evidence to the Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the Rural Development Council stated:-

*“The programme put local enablers in place, people with local knowledge, to identify those who are most vulnerable. Our mantra is that local people are best placed to identify local solutions”.*

25. In oral evidence to the Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the Rural Community Network stated:-

*“We do work very closely together. We are a sister organisation of the Rural Development Council, and the rural support networks were established through the Rural Community Network. It advocated the support and establishment of those organisations across Northern Ireland to ensure complete coverage. I see the organisations as being very strong, but the rural support networks have done a phenomenal job in rolling out MARA. The fact that the infrastructure was in place enabled the Department to put something on the ground very quickly. As an organisation, our job is more about policy and strategic intervention, but the organisations are very much connected: the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN), the rural support networks, the Rural Development Council and us. Those links are building and becoming stronger all the time. We are a very functional family of organisations, but we have a niche market, and our organisation is very much focused on advocating for changes in rural development policy.”*

26. The various community organisations and individuals, who gave evidence to the Committee, were generally content with the approach and support given by the Department in respect of the TRPSI Programme. Many considered it to be a success in so much as it has numerous innovative programmes which aim to address the issues of rural poverty and social isolation; and they are delivered in partnership with rural stakeholders. The partnership working aspect was commended by stakeholders, for example:

27. The Rural Development Council stated in oral evidence to the Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014:-

*“We welcome the programme and commend DARD for its approach to implementation, which is largely focused on partnership working, collaboration and, most importantly for us, engaging rural stakeholders in communities”.*

28. The Committee agreed that it was impressed with type, variety and size of the group and organisations who were involved with the delivery of the TRPSI Framework. It further noted that it was this which had provided a depth and range that had ultimately contributed to the success of the Framework.
29. **Recommendation: The Department has indicated that there will be successor TRPSI programme when the current programme ends in 2016. The Committee recommends that the Departments build on the successes of the current programme, including the vast knowledge already available from the grass roots organisations in rural communities to help inform and shape a new TRPSI programme.**

#### **The Individual Programmes and Projects within the TRPSI Framework**

30. The Committee was clear at the start of its Review that it would take an overview and strategic approach to its consideration of the individual programmes and projects within the TRPSI Framework. It nevertheless took the opportunity to inquire about which programmes had, in the opinion of those who provided evidence to the Committee, been most successful and why.
31. The overall opinion of those who give evidence to the Committee was that they were generally content with the approach and support given by the Department in respect of the TRPSI Programme. Some of the opinions are stated below:-

The Farm Families Health Checks Programme, which is delivered regionally across all rural livestock markets and various community based facilities, provides health screening, advice and signposting to services for farmers, their families and rural dwellers. This programme was commended by the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association who said *“the Farm Families Health Checks Programme is excellent, and we congratulate the Department on bringing them into existence”.*



Organisations commended the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS), which is delivered in conjunction with DRD and the Support for vulnerable elderly project, with the Rural Community Network stating that the projects *“have reduced isolation and kept people well in their homes”*.

The Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (RYE) was also highly commended. RDC stated *“The programme (RYE) is addressing issues that lie at the heart of the tackling rural poverty and social isolation framework: deprivation, inequalities, poverty and social exclusion”*. RDC felt that in order to *“develop sustainable rural communities; it is essential that the young in those communities do not leave but instead have adequate support and opportunities for employment within their local area”*.

*As we know, the maximising access in rural areas (MARA) initiative has released previously unclaimed money that benefits the wider economy of Northern Ireland and, specifically, the rural economy. Community development funding and the rural challenge fund have secured resources to support and advise individuals and communities. They have supported and sustained communities through community development, and they have helped those who need services to access the right support in the right ways. The assisted rural transport scheme and the contacting elderly rural isolation project have reduced isolation and kept people well in their homes (RCN)*

32. However, the Committee heard again and again from various organisations that one of the most successful project was the Maximising Access to services, grants and benefits in Rural Areas (MARA) project. This is an interdepartmental regional service which aims to support rural dwellers in need. Given that there was consensus that the MARA project was one of the most successful elements of the Framework, the Committee sought and heard from the Public Health Agency in oral evidence on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

The MARA project set out to proactively target the vulnerable households in identified rural communities using a community development approach. Its overall aim was “to improve the health and wellbeing of rural dwellers in Northern Ireland by increasing access to services, grants and benefits by facilitating a co-ordinated service to support rural dwellers living in, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion. Its project objectives were:

- increase access to home improvement schemes particularly energy efficiency grants for at least 20% of targeted households;
- increase access to full Benefit Entitlement Checks for at least 35% of targeted households;
- increase access to a range of local services for at least 20% of targeted households;
- increase access to a range of regional/universal services for at least 15%; and
- increase access to community transport for at least 25% of targeted households.

33. The Committee heard that MARA has visited approximately 14,000 households across rural Northern Ireland and was impressed with some of the outputs generated. In written evidence to the Committee DARD provided the following table:-

Estimated Finances levered in through benefits/outputs to date – these and other outputs will be confirmed through scheme evaluation.	
MARA	Warm Homes £1,950,000 Welfare Benefits £1,055,000 per annum Boiler Replacement £202,700 Total = £3,207,700

34. The Committee heard that one of the strengths of the MARA project and a major rationale behind its success was its ability to tap into local knowledge and expertise and to thus target those in most need. The ability to do this quickly and effectively was a key to its success. In oral evidence to the Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014, Rural Community Network stated:

*“I see the organisations as being very strong, but the rural support networks have done a phenomenal job in rolling out MARA. The fact that the infrastructure was in place enabled the Department to put something on the ground very quickly”.*

35. In giving evidence to the Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> October Rural Support stated:-

*“We refer to MARA people who contact us wondering whether they are entitled to some benefits. Very often, a landowner or farm owner thinks that, because they have a bit of land as an asset, they are not entitled to anything. That was one of the key values of the MARA project: to be able to sit down and go through what benefit entitlements they might have.”*

36. The Committee noted that considerable amount of data has been generated as a result of the MARA project. It is the opinion of the Committee that this data would provide a valuable insight into the issues around poverty and deprivation that the rural community are facing. In providing evidence to the Committee Rural Support indicated:

*“I have no doubt that the MARA project is gathering a lot of information that should be used to influence policy and makes changes.”*

37. The Committee heard from the Public Health Agency that a detailed analysis of the MARA data is expected to be completed in June 2015. It was generally agreed by all organisations that this evaluation will provide an effective and beneficial means for the Department to build into a successor programme.

38. The Rural Community Network also stated, *“The Department should consider how it can best use the data that TRPSI has generated....MARA is a massive data source and could provide valuable insights into rural poverty and deprivation”.*

39. The Public Health Agency provided additional information to the Committee on statistics on the number of farmers who have used the MARA project as well as a list of super output area by zones. The link to this information can be found here:  
INSERT LINK
40. The Committee were disappointed to note that there appears to be no plans for a coordinated approach to making effective use of the MARA data to inform other projects or a future TRPSI programme.
41. **Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the Department, in conjunction with other departments, fully utilises the data capture and evaluation which MARA has produced and uses it to inform and shape the TRPSI successor programme.**

#### **Responsibility for Rural Issues and Rural proofing**

42. The issue of who is responsible for rural issues, rural proofing and the next issue considered by the Committee – that of Rural Deprivation – are very closely linked and integral to one another.
43. Practically all those who give evidence to the Committee indicated that it would appear that there is an acceptance by other Government Departments that rural poverty and social isolation is a DARD responsibility. In its written evidence to the Committee The Ulster Farmers' Union noted the following:-

*"For this reason, it is very encouraging that DARD are designing and delivering programmes which are 'tailor-made' for rural areas but this does not take away from the responsibilities of other Departments to rural dwellers as well as urban ones. It makes sense for DARD to take the initiative on this, and their joined-up work with the PHA, DRD, DSD, DEL and DCAL is very encouraging. However, going forward, might it make sense for an inter -departmental working group to exist on rural wellbeing? All departments can have a positive role to play in improving the lot of rural areas and in our opinion it makes sense for them all to be involved. Part of the issue seems to be that other Government Departments do not factor in the specific issues surrounding rural deprivation in their policy-making and service delivery. "*

**And**

*While it is right and proper that DARD should continue to take the lead on this issue, we believe that there needs to be a joined-up approach to this issue. Just because DARD is the only department with "rural" in its name does not mean that it is the only Department with responsibility for rural dwellers.*

44. The Committee also heard concern expressed at the lack of importance or expertise that other departments place on rural issues. It was felt that there needs to be full engagement in all aspects of rural life and that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the differing needs of the rural dweller. RCN told the Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 that "a one size fits all" approach by Departments does not work for rural issues:

*"RCN believes that the challenge remains that other government Departments are not taking rural poverty and social isolation into account to the degree that they should in their service delivery".*

45. At the stakeholder event, concern was expressed that not every Department was working with the Rural White Paper and their policies were not rural proofed. Rural Community Network stated on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014:

*"It is the responsibility of all Departments to take the lead.... Every Department has a responsibility to police its money and its priority for rural as well as for urban people".*

46. The implementation of the TRPSI programme has focused on partnership working and engaging with rural communities. RDC believe "that the practical engagement of local people and communities and projects... have made a difference. We very much doubt whether the same results could have been achieved without community connections, and we believe strongly that this is an approach that could be adopted in the delivery of schemes across government".

47. **Recommendation: The Committee acknowledges the work that DARD has done through its Rural White Paper Action Plan. The Committee recommends that DARD should undertake an evaluation of the extent to which other government departments and the wider public sector considers rural issues in respect of**

**policy, services and resources. The Committee further recommends that DARD develops an inter-departmental working group with the buy in of Senior Civil Servants within the relevant Departments.**

### **Local Government and Local Action Groups**

48. The Committee heard at its stakeholder event that there is concern around the new super councils and what impact that would have on the delivery of services, particularly the urban and rural split. There was a concern expressed by many that the new councils may not always have a rural focus. Those concerned also noted that as Super Councils “bed down”, the focus of policy and service delivery may be on urban areas.
49. The Committee noted with interest that the Community Planning process being undertaken by the Councils were generating considerable interest. In its evidence to the Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 the Rural Community network stated:  
*“There is a great interest in rural areas, certainly in the Mid-Ulster council area. A community planning process has just started, and there are community engagement events; the first was in Dungannon about three weeks ago. A venue was booked for 50 people, and I think that 120 turned up. It was the same in Cookstown, and Kate was at that meeting. In those areas, there is significant interest from rural community and community groups generally in local government, their new powers and community planning in particular.”*
50. The Committee was aware that the expectations of rural people and communities had perhaps been raised as a result of the community planning process. The Committee also understood that the new Councils will have limited budgets and that rural communities are concerned that there may be less services to rural areas as a result. The Committee are likewise concerned that Councils actively ensure that a fair and equitable share of the resources goes into rural and farming communities.
51. Concern was also expressed on how the new Local Action Groups or LAGs would be developed, fit into council structures and the TRPSI Framework. In evidence to the Committee on 11 November 2015, the Rural Development Council noted:

*“For us, the new model of delivering LEADER, which has a wider local action group membership and is really about trying to get as many people involved in the process as possible, provides the best opportunity to tackle poverty. The range of measures in priority 6, which includes things like rural services, rural broadband and village renewal, has huge potential in delivering services and reaching those most in need. I think the key challenge will be when it comes to developing strategies. Obviously there is a limited budget and we have to manage expectations, and the key thing will be to align the local needs to the funding priorities, but I think it is achievable”.*

52. **Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development engages proactively with the new Councils to ensure that they are active and vigorous in taking rural issues into account in the development of policy and delivery of services in rural and farming communities. Furthermore the Committee recommends that the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development engages with the Councils to ensure that there is full and meaningful cognizance given and interaction with those community and voluntary groups currently successfully involved in delivery of the TRPSI Framework so as to prevent duplication of, or the overlooking of such groups.**

### **Rural Deprivation**

53. The Committee heard that there is a need for better understanding of the dynamics of rural poverty and deprivation for departments, councils and other public sector agencies involved in service delivery. In its written evidence to the Committee the Rural Community Network stated:

*“Unlike urban areas which are socially segregated, deprivation in rural areas exists amongst relative affluence. This presents challenges for policy makers as area based interventions which can work well in urban areas where deprivation is spatially concentrated will not work as well in rural areas where poor people live alongside others who are relatively affluent. “*

54. Rural Community Network further stated that there needs to be a *"change how the multiple deprivation measures capture rural deprivation"*.
55. The Committee also heard from Mr Trutz Haase on 2<sup>nd</sup> December when he stated:  
  
*"We have to think about how we actually measure deprivation, and whether we are aware, when we measure deprivation, that there are different forms of deprivation"*.
56. Mr Haase also referred to "opportunity deprivation" and asked how can you measure opportunities in a rural area. He states, *" if you go into rural areas and ask people what makes it difficult there, it is always the interaction of their situation with the access to where things are happening.... What characterises rural deprivation is mediated through the difficulty of access to centres of decision, key services and career opportunities"*.
57. The Committee heard evidence that there is concern amongst stakeholders in rural and farming communities that those who develop policy, design services and allocate resources to those policies and services do not fully understand how the multiple deprivation measures are constructed and can be used. There was concern that when asked to take "deprivation" into account, policy makers used the multiple deprivation indices and when you look at these it is clear that none of the top 10% deprived wards are rural. The issue for stakeholders is that there are clearly vulnerable people living in rural areas who are being missed because of the spatial and geographical basis on which deprivation is currently measured.
58. In discussing this with the Committee the Ulster Farmers Union stated:  
  
*"The multiple deprivation measure (MDM) used by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) seems to focus disproportionately on the financial aspect. Trutz Haase is coming to brief the Committee in the near future, so I will not say any more on that in the meantime, because he is much more qualified to speak on that than I am. However, we would like to see the human aspect of poverty and deprivation factored into these things and we would like to be able to pinpoint rural areas where poverty exists. It is not like in urban areas, where specific regions, which are almost fenced off, have issues with poverty and others do not. In rural areas, they exist intermingled. One person could be in poverty and the person down the road*



*could be in relative affluence. We are not sure that the MDM takes that into account at present.”*

59. And in its oral evidence the Rural Development Council stated:

*“I think we all see the challenges in measuring deprivation, particularly if you use multiple deprivation measures that bring together a range of domains, which, basically, skew the funding, or whatever, to more urban centres because they have higher populations and demonstrate higher needs in the deprivation indices. If you were to separate those out and look at access to services you would get a different picture. You would get more rural communities coming forward regarding deprivation against access to services. So, there are key ways of measuring isolation. If you focus on some indices that are more relevant you would get a different picture.”*

60. The Rural Community Network provided the following concrete examples of the issue and these did create a degree of concern amongst the Committee:

*“An outworking of that was the social investment fund programme, which targets the 10% most deprived, the criterion being the 10% most deprived rural wards. At the time, we raised the issue of rural deprivation with OFMDFM. In fairness, it came back and said that, if any community could make a specific case for their area using other evidence, it would look at it. The social investment fund, which used that 10% measure, was about tackling deprivation and poverty and, to an extent, tackling the legacy of the Troubles. It will be interesting to see whether any rural projects are funded through the social investment fund. I suspect not because it will be very difficult for a rural community to produce objective evidence of deprivation if their area is not high in the multiple deprivation measure. That is a practical example of the outworking.”*

61. The Committee heard from NISRA (DFP) on this issue on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and noted the following:

*“As you will have heard from many of your witnesses, because the super output areas, which cover about 2,000 people, cover large physical areas, it is difficult to find concentrations of deprivation in rural areas, whereas it is easier to find them in urban*

*areas. As you will see in your papers, NISRA has developed rural guidance for use in policy areas that deliberately want to target rural areas."*

62. NISRA further advised the Committee that Wales has just published its updated deprivation measures, England is consulting on an update and Scotland will do something similar, aiming to publish in 2016. NISRA advised, "*We are waiting for OFMDFM and the Statistics Co-ordinating Group, which is a cross-departmental group, to give us direction on the way forward and what it might like us to do*". This is considered by many of the stakeholders as a vital to ensuring the needs of the rural community are met by both councils and departments.
63. The Committee noted with concern and agreed with the many witnesses who indicated that government departments and the wider public sector did not fully appear to understand or use correctly the NI Multiple Deprivation Indices. The Committee was also concerned that there appeared to be a lack of even basic awareness of the "Guidance for Rural Areas" which had been issued by NISRA. The Committee was concerned that despite this Guidance being available there was no evidence to suggest that it was being used (other than the Rural Development Fund).
64. The Committee discussed the extent of the use of the Guidance for Rural Areas with NISRA and in its oral evidence to the Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> December it stated:
- "Centrally, since I have been here, I have not done that work, but I intend to kick it off at a meeting next Monday. I want the Departments to tell us how they are using the indices, and we will have that information. As I said earlier, it is part of the user engagement side of having it being a national statistic. It just so happens that the meeting is next Monday. They will then feed back to us centrally how they are actually using the measures to target their policies."*
65. **Recommendation: That the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development actively engages with DFP to ensure that NISRA is commissioned to undertake an update or review of the NI Multiple Deprivation Indices and that review should also consider the identification of rural deprivation, and specifically the suitability of the indicators employed and geographical areas used. The Committee also recommends that the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development engages with DFP to ensure it undertakes to establish how**

**government departments are using the indices and if indeed any cognizance is given to the Guidance for Rural Area.**

#### **Budget for the successor programme**

66. RCN also state that "*Rural areas require a flexible approach to service delivery, with a focus on outreach and partnership with grassroots organisations. TRPSI has demonstrated that that approach can work and deliver concrete results*". This has been as a result of the allocation of budget to resource as opposed to capital.
67. The Committee heard from the Department that £1.7 million of the TRPSI budget will move from resource to capital, with a proviso that this is spent within one year.
68. The Department advised that the capital element should provide more sustainable development; however the Committee expressed concern that the monies would be allocated to capital, which is considered more difficult to spend and is not necessarily where the need is.
69. The Committee also agreed that the TRPSI budget allocation 2015/16 with its inclusion of £1.7 m capital does not appear to have allocated based on the needs of the programme or consultation with stakeholders.
70. **Recommendation: That the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development acknowledges that the funding for the TRPSI Framework has been resource based and that consequentially engagement with the stakeholders will be required to ensure that (i) suitable capital projects can be identified and (ii) that such projects can be delivered within the framework.**