



# Cheshire Rural West Citizens Inquiry

## Project briefing paper

- Introduction** We all want public services that respond to what people need and want. Most of us also believe that community members should be involved in deciding what services are provided and how. But what is the best way of involving community members in helping to design and make decisions on such public services in rural areas?
- The Rural West Citizen's Jury project aims to consider that question and what better way to do it than to ask community members themselves?
- How will it work?** Based on the highly successful model of the Citizens Jury this groundbreaking project will bring together 25 diverse rural citizens for a period of eight evenings to share opinions, hear from outside 'experts' and deliberate on this vital issue. The project will target those that traditionally don't take part in such activities and don't often have their voices heard.
- At the end of the eight week period the group will produce a set of recommendations on how best to ensure that community members are at the heart of public sector decision making in rural areas.
- This exciting process gives decision makers in the public and voluntary sector a number of important outcomes. Firstly, a set of recommendations which can guide future policy and practice. Secondly, it is an opportunity to learn how a different approach to decision making can actually work. A workshop for elected members and officers at the beginning and end of the project will present an opportunity to learn about how deliberative community engagement works. The project will be led by professional facilitators from the social enterprise Our Life, who in 2011 was awarded the Centre for Public Scrutiny's national award for community influence.
- When?** Project preparation starts early 2012, with the actual Inquiry starting in April and finishing in June.
- How will it be managed?** This is a joint project of NHS Western Cheshire and Cheshire West and Chester Council. The project will be guided by a project 'oversight panel' whose aim is to ensure that the process is fair and unbiased. Key decision makers who are able to influence future policy making on this issue will be invited to sit on the oversight panel which will meet three times.
- Why now?** All of the major political parties are united in their desire to ensure that citizens are at the heart of public sector decision making processes. Such efforts are enshrined in the Localism Bill, the philosophy of the 'big society', total place and devolved governance. This innovative approach builds on such developments by giving citizens themselves the opportunity to suggest what approaches will work and how. We believe it has never before been attempted in the UK.
- Further information** For further information contact either ???? or Peter Bryant Our Life's Head of Public Engagement [peter.bryant@ourlife.org.uk](mailto:peter.bryant@ourlife.org.uk) 07818 568549