

Rural Proofing Criteria

The Countryside Agency has developed a 'Rural Proofing Checklist' which identifies 15 criteria against which public service policies can be assessed. The criteria are set out below, with assessment on how any change to the denominational transport policy given.

1. Will the policy affect the availability of public and private services?

Although the opportunity of denominational education will remain available, the introduction of charges, especially full charging, could be argued to provide a barrier to children of low income families. However, the proposal to seek a contribution of £80 per term with a further subsidised rate of £25 per term answers this criticism.

2. Is the policy to be delivered through existing service outlets, such as schools, banks and GP surgeries?

Delivery of services through existing outlets remains unaffected.

3. Will the cost of delivery be higher in rural areas where clients are more widely dispersed or economies of scale are harder to achieve?

The imposition of charges based on actual cost would affect to a greater extent those students living further from the provision.

4. Will the policy affect travel needs or the ease and cost of travel?

Yes, the policy concerns cost of travel.

5. Does the policy rely on communicating information to clients?

Yes, any policy change would be subject to wider consultation, and through the more formal framework of the Information to Parents Handbook.

6. Is the policy to be delivered by the private sector or through a public-private partnership?

The policy would be put into practice by Herefordshire Council.

7. Does the policy rely on infrastructure (eg. broadband ICT, main roads, utilities) for delivery?

The services is delivered through the transport system (rail and road). This criterion does not appear relevant.

8. Will the policy impact on rural businesses, including the self-employed?

The policy will not impact on rural businesses.

9. Will the policy have a particular impact on land-based industries and, therefore, on rural economies and environments?

It is not envisaged that the policy will impact on rural economies or environments.

10. Will the policy affect those on low wages or in part-time or seasonal employment?

The policy change towards charges would affect those students from low income families, but the offer of a subsidy for those entitled to free schools meals would help.

11. Is the policy to be targeted at the disadvantaged?

The policy involving subsidy to pupils entitled to FSM would meet this criterion.

12. Will the policy rely on local institutions for delivery?

The service is delivered through local contractors.

13. Does the policy depend on new buildings or development sites?

14. Is the policy likely to impact on the quality and character of the natural and built rural landscape?

15. Will the policy impact on people wishing to reach and use the countryside as a place for recreation and enjoyment?

These criteria do not apply to this policy area.