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MONEY FOR IMPROVING RURAL ACCESS TO SERVICES

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) has been appointed to manage funds made available by South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) under the Rural Access to Services Programme (RASP). The funds will be used to provide grants for projects meeting the aims of the programme. Grants will normally be up to £20,000 but larger amounts may be available.

RASP aims to look to develop new ways of connecting rural residents with services such as education, employment, health, shopping and leisure. This can be by locating services in suitable local premises, extending existing service centres or establishing viable transport links to existing centres.

The key goals of the Programme are to:

- a) *Prompt service providers and/or communities to initiate and/or develop projects to improve the reach of and/or access to a service or services in rural areas with particular reference to the RASP priorities which are:*
 - *Access to NHS services*
 - *Local support for healthy lifestyles*
 - *Access to learning, play and leisure opportunities*
 - *Support for homeworkers and small businesses in rural communities*
 - *Improved information about existing services*
- b) *Test at least 6 different approaches to achieving improved access to a service(s) over 3 years:*
 - *Increasing awareness of service(s) available through improved information*
 - *New use of community transport*
 - *Promoting increased use of a service by establishing a more user-friendly access point or promotional tool*
 - *Supporting the retention of an existing service through diversification and service improvement*
 - *Supporting community self-help initiatives*
 - *Resource sharing and joint working between different service providers*
 - *Co-ordinating design of service provision with available (or adjusted) transport provision*
 - *Easing cost barriers to access*
- c) *Increase awareness among service providers and communities of the lessons learned through the Programme by the end of each year in order to prompt further new sustainable initiatives.*

If you or your organisation would like more information contact Philip Newbould at ORCC – (t: 01865 883488 e: philip.newbould@oxonrcc.org.uk)