

# Action in rural Sussex

News Release: AirS 10/06

November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006

## Action in Rural Sussex campaigns to end child poverty

Action in Rural Sussex is calling on Government to devote more money to end child poverty. The organisation, established as a champion for rural communities, wants to highlight the problems faced by thousands of children across East and West Sussex.

It is playing its part in the national **Campaign to End Child Poverty**, which is using Universal Children's Day on Monday November 20<sup>th</sup> to urge the Treasury to commit an extra £4 billion to help halve child poverty by 2010. **AirS** Chief Executive Jeremy Leggett has also written to Chancellor Gordon Brown to press home the case.

Some 3.4 million children live in poverty in the United Kingdom. The UK has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the industrialised world, despite being the fourth wealthiest nation. Of the 25 European Union countries, only Italy, Portugal and the Slovak Republic have higher rates.

In many parts of Sussex, research shows that 20 per cent or more of local children live in poverty - and in some areas the figure is more than 30 per cent.

**AirS** runs the Local Network Fund for Children and Young People for Sussex. This nationwide grant scheme is aimed at supporting communities to address disadvantage and poverty among children and young people between the ages of 0-19 years. This year it has more than £740,000 available for grants in East Sussex, West Sussex, Brighton and Hove.

Said **AirS** Chief Executive Jeremy Leggett: "Sussex is seen by many as an affluent area - often people tend to associate poverty as an issue for the inner city. Nothing could be further from the truth. We know that in rural areas there are many people who cannot share in the general prosperity of Sussex, living alongside those who are well off.

"Poor children are excluded from participating in society. They can't afford school trips and activities, school uniforms or warm winter clothes. They are unable to go swimming, have friends round for tea or celebrate their birthdays. Many will never have a holiday.

"In isolated rural communities, life can be even harder; children and their families need access to better public transport and to facilities like healthcare, playgroups, after school clubs, activity schemes in the school holidays - at prices they can afford."

**AirS** provides active support with a range of projects for children and families across Sussex - these include helping village communities arrange activities and create facilities for children and young people, as well as running mobile outreach services and centres to support children and families.

Affordable and responsive childcare is a key part of the government's anti-poverty strategy - in West Sussex **AirS** strives to create and sustain quality rural childcare through our **Rural Childcare Development Programme**. In addition, work such as the **COPEs** and **Your Bus Your Call** project in East Sussex take specialist support directly to those in need and lobby others who provide that support, creating a fairer chance for children and families wanting help.

## Ends

For interviews and further information please contact either Chief Executive Jeremy Leggett 01273 407331 or Caroline Nicholls, media relations 07836 342495

## Note to Editors

Detailed figures for child poverty in Sussex are attached, by local authority and council ward. The statistics, published by the **End Child Poverty** campaign, were compiled for a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and are based on numbers of children living in families in receipt of workless benefits. As more than half of children living in poverty are actually living in households where one or more parent is working, this may actually be an underestimate of poverty. It is however the closest measure available of local levels of child poverty

**AirS** agenda includes supporting communities to develop local action plans, distributing valuable grants for rural projects, developing innovative schemes for young people and campaigning on a range of key issues from affordable housing to rural transport. Information on applying for grants is available from the website.

[www.ruralsussex.org.uk](http://www.ruralsussex.org.uk)

[www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)