

## **“Example – Application of ICT services for rural job seekers”**

Regional Information Network, Copenhagen  
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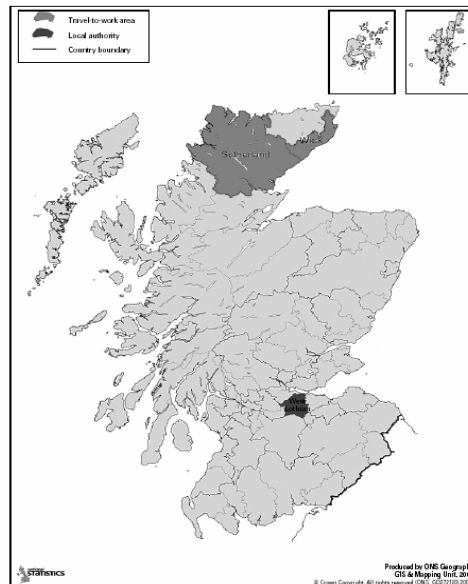
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## **Rurality, service accessibility and the role of ICT**

- **A range of multi-disciplinary approaches and theories are required to fully analyse the issues. Some relevant areas include:**
- **Employability e.g. Commission Of The European Communities, Scottish Govt**
- **Travel to work - intelligent transport systems**
- **Public service and interaction between provider and client**
- **But WHO are the users of the data? – In this presentation I look at *Job Seekers***

## The study areas

- **Wick TTWA - remote rural town, NE Highlands**
- **Sutherland TTWA - large, sparsely populated remote rural area, scattered settlements; a key role for ICT in delivering services for unemployed job seekers**
- **West Lothian – peri-urban, centrally located**



**Transport - Potential for Demand Responsive Transport Services to co-ordinate social work, non-emergency ambulance, school bus, public transport, post bus, other public service vehicles.  
Role of ITS?**

**Link to other Public services**



## Methodology

- **National statistics**
- **Survey research (c 500 interviews)**
- **Focus group research (12 groups, 72 participants)**
- **Employer interviews (c 50 employers)**
- **Key actor interviews**

<i>Respondent characteristic</i>	<i>Home Internet access</i>		<i>Weekly Internet job search</i>	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
<b>Level of qualifications</b>	0.270	0.054*	0.438	0.002***
<b>Perception ICT skills</b>	1.340	0.000***	1.167	0.000***
<b>Income group</b>	0.484	0.000***	0.148	0.126
<b>Resident West Lothian</b>	1.257	0.006***	0.517	0.281
<b>Resident Sutherland</b>	1.925	0.000***	1.389	0.011**
<b>Unemployment duration</b>	-0.607	0.074*	-0.731	0.049**
<b>Age 18-24</b>	-1.193	0.004***	-0.897	0.039**
<b>Male</b>	-0.943	0.012**	-0.149	0.689
<b>Children under 18</b>	-0.570	0.108	-0.281	0.455
<b>Constant</b>	-4.170	0.000***	-3.919	0.000***

## Survey findings

- Internet-based job seeking limited impact
- Access to ICT: there is a digital divide
  - Young people, low skilled, people on low incomes
  - Long-term unemployed, unqualified
- Remoteness associated with Internet access (Sutherland), but so is 'connectedness' (West Lothian)
- Use of ICT for job seeking defined by digital divide
- Location matters - remote rural job seekers more likely to use ICT to look for work

see: McQuaid, R.W., Lindsay, C. and M. Greig (2004) "Re-Connecting' The Unemployed: ICT and Services for Job Seekers in Rural Areas," *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 7, No. 3 .

## Focus groups: Is there a role for ICT?

“I preferred the old card system.... I used to walk in and look at things and think, ‘I’ll try that’. Now, you’ve got to have a specific idea. I mean, I’m a manual labourer; I don’t have a specific idea.”

**Peter, 53, unemployed two years, Wick**

“They’ve got it set up for big urban areas, where you need categories of jobs, but up here there’s no need for it. You could fit a list of local jobs on half a page.”

**John, 34, unemployed one year, Sutherland**

## Focus groups: is there a role for ICT?

- Perception that Internet database over-complicated the job search process:
  - for those seeking to browse across a range of jobs
  - for those in isolated rural areas with few vacancies
- So internet search protocols do not reflect how people actually want to search the database
- Internet-based services seen as providing accessible and accurate job information

## Focus groups: Limits on the role of ICT

The terminal gives you a slip. You take the slip to the staff. You ask about the job, they tell you about it. Not very interactive is it?

**Alan, 51, unemployed six months, West Lothian**

I'm in my sixties and I know nothing about the new technology. To try to learn about that technology now is way beyond my comprehension. A computer sitting in the corner that's blank would stay blank as far as I'm concerned. Every job in my working life has been a manual job, I couldn't work computers.

**Dennis, 65, unemployed one year, West Lothian**

## Focus groups: Limits on the role of ICT

***On informal networks:*** "It's about getting yourself established... There are jobs, but word of mouth goes a long way. If you know people, you can get a job. It's not what you know, it's who you know."

**Andrew, 63, unemployed 7 months, Sutherland**

***On lack of demand:*** "It sounds great. But number one we need jobs, number two we need transport. Forget about the Internet"

**Robbie, 45, unemployed two years, Sutherland**

## **Focus groups: Limits on the role of ICT**

- The impact of social networking – so database does not reflect the real labour market
  - crucial in rural areas, marginal in peri-urban areas
  - formal services often by-passed in rural areas
- The impact of labour demand
  - lack of opportunities limiting impact of interventions
- Need for ICT resources and facilities that have a local dimension and tap local knowledge

## **Conclusions**

- Job seekers can adapt to ICT-based services
- An emerging but limited role in rural areas
- A digital divide affecting the most disadvantaged
- The design of software must reflect the realities of local labour markets in rural areas
- Acknowledging the role of informal networking (how can databases on labour market information capture these?)
- Integration with other services and databases



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