

# READING "COUNTRY KIDS"

Living in the countryside can be very difficult for teenagers. Their nearest friend lives miles away and it's impossible to get into the town to go shopping or attend a club. 13-year-old Fiona Timson, who lives in Carneath in Wales, says 'Everyone else in my class seems to have such interesting weekends. They meet each other by chance when they're out shopping, and they decide there and then to do something cool together. That never happens to me.'

Fiona's mum, Helen, realises it's a problem. 'We moved here because it was quiet and we knew we wouldn't have to worry about her going out alone. But we possibly made the wrong choice. Fiona hardly ever leaves home, not because she's scared, but because there is simply nowhere for her to go. The village is tiny, and most of the people living here are old. I can't drive her around because we only have one car, and my husband uses it for work.' Fiona can't spend the evening with friends because the last bus to Carneath is at ten past five in the afternoon. She even has to leave her school orchestra practice early in order to catch it.

The *Country Kids* organisation aims to help children like Fiona, and their families. A grant from Country Kids gives families money for four taxi rides per month, up to a distance of twenty five miles each. This allows children like Fiona to attend an after-school club once per week or visit friends on Sundays. Country Kids also organizes trips to theatres and sports events in nearby cities at weekends. The parents don't have to do anything. A minibus comes directly to the house and picks the kids up.

To qualify for a grant from Country Kids, children must be between the ages of eleven and sixteen, and live in a village with a population of less than 1000 people. The village must be more than twenty miles from a town. The family's income must also be below a certain level. For Fiona's schoolfriend Emma, who lives in nearby Dolbury with a population of 894, it's perfect. Unfortunately, Fiona misses out. The population of Carneath is 1159.

The number of families applying to Country Kids for a grant is increasing, and its president, Judith Sankey, is finding it more and more difficult to find funding. 'There are so many great organisations looking for money. A lot of people feel that curing diseases and helping animals is more important than the work we do, so they prefer to give their money to them. We're always worrying that we won't be able to carry on. But the families we help really do appreciate what we do, so I hope the organisation can continue to run in the future.'

Write T or F next to the sentences.

- 1 Fiona would like to have fun without having to making plans.
- 2 Fiona's family moved to the countryside because of their work
- 3 Fiona's mother does not allow Fiona to go out alone.
- 4 Very few children and teenagers live in Carneath.
- 5 Fiona is unable to play in the school orchestra because of where she lives.
- 6 A child with a *Country Kids* grant gets free transport home twice per week
- 7 *Country Kids* takes children to see plays in nearby towns.
- 8 Fiona doesn't qualify for a *Country Kids* grant because her family earns too much.
- 9 Fewer and fewer families are requesting money from *Country Kids*.
- 10 Judith Sankey is worried that the *Country Kids* organisation may close down.

