



Commission for Rural Communities

Tackling rural disadvantage

Barriers to education,
employment and
training for young
people in rural areas

The Commission for Rural Communities acts as the advocate for England's rural communities, as an expert adviser to government, and as a watchdog to ensure that government actions, policies and programmes recognise and respond effectively to rural needs, with a particular focus on disadvantage.

It has three key functions:

Rural advocate:

the voice for rural people, businesses and communities

Expert adviser:

giving evidence-based, objective advice to government and others

Independent watchdog:

monitoring, reporting on and seeking to mainstream rural into the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally

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Foreword

It is clear that as a nation we are experiencing the most difficult economic climate in 60 years. One of our greatest challenges is to address the rising levels of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in England. In its response to the 2010 Children, Schools and Families Committee report on young people NEET, the Government stated:

“We cannot afford this waste of human potential that blights the lives of the individuals concerned. We know that being NEET at this age is associated with negative outcomes later in life, including unemployment, reduced earnings, poor health and depression. These outcomes each have a cost attached and so being NEET is not just bad for individuals but also for our economy as a whole.”

Since the onset of recession in 2008, the number of young people NEET in rural areas has increased from 84,000 to 123,000, or 9.4% to 12.9% of all young people living in rural areas¹. In producing this report, the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) has looked at whether there is a rural dimension to the issue. Moreover, we have explored whether there are any rural barriers to education, employment and training for young people in rural areas, in the context of changing Government policy. We have also tried to identify possible solutions to the problems facing rural young people.

The audience for the report is both the Government and the many organisations whose work impacts on young people in rural communities. I hope that they will be able to use the issues raised to help in their championing of the needs of our young people. My thanks also go to all the people who gave up their time to share their views with CRC over the past year.

Most importantly, I hope the report will lead to action on the issues that matter most to young people in rural communities and I call on the Government, and others who have responsibility, to take this action forward.

Dr Stuart Burgess
Chairman
Commission for Rural Communities

July 2012

¹ Q4 2007 to Q4 2011 – FE Data and Statistics, BIS, 2012 (Independent figures obtained by CRC)

Executive Summary

The number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has been an ongoing concern for communities and policy makers for a number of years.

The purpose of this report is to look at whether there is a rural dimension to this issue, explore whether there are any uniquely rural barriers, and assess the impact that Government policy is having.

The report takes into account the current economic outlook, fragile state of the UK economy, and current programme of deficit reduction.

Since the onset of recession in 2008, the number of young people (16-24) NEET in England's rural areas has increased from 84,000 to 123,000, or 9.4% to 12.9% of all young people living in rural areas. Comparatively, the number of young people NEET in urban areas has increased from 699,000 to 835,000, or 13.8% to 16.5%². However, this is a significant rural issue: whilst the proportion of young people NEET is higher in urban areas, the speed at which levels have increased has been greater in rural areas.

Conclusions

- There are clear challenges associated with education, employment and training for all young people across England, and certain fundamental issues that contribute to a young person not participating in education, training or work.
- However, there is also a rural dimension to this issue. Young people living in rural areas face a number of uniquely rural barriers, particularly concerning access to transport, careers advice, employment and training support, and youth services.
- Changes to Government policy are, in some instances, having a positive effect. For example, widening the market for the provision of public services is resulting in opportunities for providers to tailor their services to more remote parts of the country.
- However, in other respects, the challenges facing young people in rural areas are being compounded. For example, there are concerns regarding the capacity of private and voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers to fill the gap left by the removal or scaling back of services previously delivered by the public sector, particularly in more

² Q4 2007 to Q4 2011 – FE Data and Statistics, BIS, 2012 (Independent figures obtained by CRC)

risks that this will lead to considerable disparities in the level of services and support available to young people living in these areas.

- Difficult decisions are being made by organisations at all levels of government about how best to allocate public resources. In many cases this is leading to resources and attention being targeted at areas of most concentrated need. Whilst this is understandable, decisions are not always being made that reflect the importance of investing in young people as a source of economic return for the country's future, or with a full understanding of the differing nature of poverty and deprivation in rural areas. This is typically more dispersed and often masked by traditional methods of measuring deprivation. Beneath the often proportionately more positive rural statistics lie some very real and difficult challenges.
- Above all, there is a lack of focal point and representation for rural youth affairs within and across central government. There is no clear, overarching responsibility for securing the development and employment of young people in rural areas, and consequently insufficient consideration is being given to addressing the additional challenges associated with this in a co-ordinated and strategic way.

Key factors affecting access to education, employment and training for young people in rural areas

Transport

Young people in rural areas are more dependent than their urban counterparts on public transport, particularly for accessing education and training. However, the high cost and low availability of public transport in rural areas is a significant challenge for young people, and can act as a barrier to their post-16 choices and overall progress into employment. For many rural young people, having a driving licence and being able to afford a car is essential. However, insurance costs are often prohibitive.

Bus services

- The 2010 Spending Review included three decisions that impact upon funding for the UK bus industry: local authority revenue expenditure was cut (in 2011) by 28%; changes were made to the Department for

Transport's formula for concessionary fare reimbursements; and the Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG) was cut by 20% from 2012-13.³

- Rural services are among those being most affected. In many cases, the ability of young people in rural areas to access education, training and work will be severely restricted.
- Where commercial bus services are not viable, community transport, often via mini-bus provision, can play a valuable role in preventing isolation. But provision is often not suitable for transporting people to work, education and training and so take-up from young people, as well as others wishing to use the services for accessing employment, training and post-16 education, is low.

Transport support for further education

- Many local authorities are reducing support for post-16 transport and this is having a number of impacts on rural young people. The annual fees for student travel passes have risen in many areas, and some local authorities are subsidising transport only to the nearest college, thus restricting choice of institution and courses. Whilst the Government is raising the compulsory participation age in education and training to 18, it is not extending the pre-16 duty to provide free school transport and many colleges, particularly those with a non-land based focus, are reviewing the assistance with transport costs they provide to students.
- The removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance could further disadvantage those in rural areas more reliant on higher-cost public transport.

Wheels to Work

- Wheels to Work (W2W) remains an effective model of servicing employment, training and post-16 education in rural areas. However, the ongoing sustainability and viability of schemes is a continuing issue for local coordinators, with a particular concern being the reliance on funding from the public sector.
- Work being led by the Department for Transport (DfT) to establish how to develop a more sustainable future for the schemes is therefore welcome.

Careers Advice

The provision and availability of good quality, independent careers advice for young people, whilst in compulsory and post-16 education or training, is crucial to enabling them to make sound choices about their futures.

³ Bus Services after the Spending Review – Transport Select Committee, 2011

From September 2012 the Government is introducing a new duty on schools, requiring them to secure access to independent careers guidance for pupils in years 9 to 11. A single, all-age National Careers Service was also launched in April 2012, available online, over the telephone and face-to-face locally (for priority groups aged over 18).

Quality of advice

- However, tighter school budgets and the absence of any additional funding for schools to resource the new duty to secure independent advice, could lead to the provision of poor quality careers guidance in some schools.
- Independent careers advice providers may be less likely to engage more isolated areas of the country, where economies of scale are more difficult to achieve. There are also concerns that advisers will have insufficient knowledge of local economies, local labour markets and the range of employment, education and training opportunities available within rural areas.
- Some schools will have no choice but to rely on the online National Careers Service in order to meet the new duty to secure independent advice, resulting in a lack of face to face contact with careers advisers. This raises particular challenges for young people living in rural areas, many of whom have limited access to broadband.

Impartiality of advice

- There remain concerns that some schools may channel pupils towards post-16 options that suit the interests of schools, and their need to fill spaces on courses. This might not be in the best interests of pupils themselves and may be further exacerbated by the introduction of 'lagged pupil funding'. This will leave some smaller schools and colleges in rural areas with no choice but to expand, and begin offering, and channelling students towards, courses that do not always meet their needs. This could also work against the provision of impartial careers guidance.

Employment and Training

Young people in rural areas are more likely to be in low paid work, insecure employment or working within smaller firms than their urban counterparts. An acute issue for young people is the difficulty in progressing in work, particularly due to questions over the range of employment in rural areas, and concentration of small firms which offer limited opportunities for young people to upgrade their skills and take up training.⁴

⁴ CRC 2008; Shury et al., 2006a

Young people in rural areas who are part of the low wage, low skill economy, are more vulnerable to downturns in the economy and many exist in a constant state of insecure employment.⁵

Evidence also suggests that there is a lower uptake of benefits by eligible young people in rural areas due to the perceived complexity of claiming benefits by those in seasonal or irregular employment.⁶ Employment programmes are at particular risk of not picking up such individuals.⁷

Employment and training providers experience a range of difficulties when delivering programmes in rural areas. These are often related to transport and small numbers of customers and businesses. As a result of higher delivery costs, the provision of employment and skills services in rural areas is more limited and sometimes of a lower quality than in urban areas.

In April 2012, the Government introduced a new a £1 billion *Youth Contract* to assist young people into work. Key elements include measures around Work Experience, Wage Incentives, and Apprenticeships. Some of the initiatives are linked to the Work Programme, a new payment-for-results welfare-to-work programme launched throughout Great Britain in 2011.

Apprenticeships

- The limited capacity and flexibility of many small enterprises and micro businesses can often reduce their capacity to take on full time apprentices. 'Shared' apprenticeship schemes are an effective model in rural areas for overcoming some of the associated barriers, although these are unusual and are often more prevalent in land-based industries.
- There are doubts over the extent to which incentive payments to SMEs will result in widespread additional apprenticeship places in rural areas. There is also a lack of integration between some FE institutions and rural businesses, and a lack of flexibility from some colleges when running apprenticeships involving smaller businesses in rural areas.
- National Apprenticeships Service funding criteria does not account for the additional costs associated with transport that can be incurred by providers delivering to more geographically remote parts of the country.
- There are good examples of VCS organisations in rural areas providing apprenticeships, and there is further scope for increasing this type of activity.

⁵ Research into the aspirations of young people in the rural West Midlands, ECOTEC, 2006

⁶ Research into the aspirations of young people in the rural West Midlands, ECOTEC, 2006

⁷ Should I Stay or Should I Go, IPPR, 2006

Work Programme

- There are clear advantages to the Work Programme's delivery model in rural areas, where prime providers involve and commission smaller sub-contractors to deliver services where their use is deemed more effective and appropriate. Successful sub-contractors often have a greater degree of local knowledge and expertise, and possess techniques for overcoming some of the challenges that might face prime providers in delivering to more remote parts of the country.
- However, there are concerns that prime providers will focus on clients that are nearest to the workplace, both socially, and geographically, and that prime providers and smaller sub-contractors will not view hard to reach groups that live in more remote parts of the country as financially viable options.
- VCS organisations have an important role to play in the Work Programme, including those in rural areas, which are often able to tailor their service to rural circumstances. Whilst the number of VCS organisations involved in delivering the Work programme is growing, concerns exist over the degree to which the VCS is being sub-contracted to deliver the Work Programme in rural areas.
- There are also concerns that the payment by results approach, combined with the often substantial cut that prime contractors take from the funding received, is making it difficult for smaller organisations to justify bidding to deliver the Work Programme as sub-contractors. And there is evidence that employment and skills providers are having to streamline their services and become less rural focussed in order to remain viable.

Youth Services

Good quality youth work can make a big difference to the lives and future employability of young people in rural areas. From April 2011, all central funding for youth services was merged into a new, reduced Early Intervention Grant (EIG). Local authorities are free to choose, based on priorities and needs assessments, what proportion of EIG funding is allocated to young people. The Government's vision for the future of local youth service delivery is that there should be a wider market for the delivery of services and more commissioning and mutualisation by local authorities.

Unequal Government funding allocations on services to young people

- Although youth services are funded via a range of government and non-government sources, at an overall unitary authority level, Government funding allocations per head on services to young people (which

includes funding for youth services), are noticeably higher in urban areas than in rural areas.⁸

Focus on areas of highest need

- Local authorities are having to make difficult decisions about how and where to allocate funding for youth services. In many cases this is leading to local authorities targeting all, or the majority of their services, on areas of most concentrated need. However, the often invisible nature of disadvantaged rural young people makes it easier for pockets of deprivation to be overlooked, and their needs to go unmet. This could leave young people in rural areas under-served, and result in a vacuum in the understanding of the issues being faced by young people living in rural areas.

Local authorities externally commissioning youth services

- Where implemented effectively and with necessary levels of local authority officer support, the external commissioning of youth services can work well, particularly in a climate where there are fewer resources available for local authorities to draw on.
- But, as in other service areas, there are concerns over local authorities commissioning large prime contractors to deliver youth services, and the extent to which such providers will understand and be able to properly deliver and tailor their services to smaller communities.

Other local authority measures

- Some local authorities are putting measures in place to try to ensure youth service provision continues, particularly outside areas of most concentrated need. This includes councils encouraging and supporting local organisations, such as town and parish councils, to commission their own youth services. Young Farmers groups across the country also play a valuable role in engaging young people, not only those from farming backgrounds but across the board.
- However, there are concerns over how rural communities that do not have existing cohesive structures in place might go about commissioning youth services.

⁸ This discrepancy is wider still when 'all area types' are included, although such data is less robust due to the large size of counties, their mixed nature and the fact that few are classed as predominantly urban.

NB: Differences in accessibility, uptake, demand and need (e.g. deprivation or multi-ethnicity) may all impact on the amount of expenditure per head in any given place. In addition, services provided in one area type may be accessed by a wider population than those resident in that authority.

National Citizen Service (NCS)

- There are encouraging examples where NCS is being successfully delivered in rural areas, through local organisations such as Rural Community Councils.
- However, there are concerns over whether the NCS model is conducive to delivery in rural areas, due to the challenge of bringing geographically disparate young people together, and higher delivery costs for providers in rural areas.

Recommendations

1. Youth Affairs

To ensure a coordinated, strategic approach to improving education, employment and training for young people, both in rural and urban areas:

- We call on the Government to create a Minister for Youth Affairs.

2. Transport

To mitigate the risk that young people in rural areas are disproportionately impacted by changes to post-16 transport provision:

- We call on the Department for Education to publish, alongside its review of local authority post-16 transport policy statements, the impact of current changes on young people in rural areas.
- We call on the Government to take forward the Education Select Committee's 2011 recommendation that, *'the Government should, as part of its review of school transport, assess the cost of offering free or subsidised travel to all 16 to 18 year olds travelling to and from learning. The aim should be to achieve, through co-operation between schools, colleges, local authorities and transport companies, free or subsidised travel to and from learning for all 16 to 18 year olds.'*

3. Careers Advice

To ensure that careers advice is properly tailored to young people in rural areas, the future Ofsted review of careers guidance should report on:

- The barriers that young people in rural areas face in accessing education, employment and training, as outlined in this report;
- The extent to which young people in rural areas are able to access face-to-face careers advice; and
- Careers advisers' knowledge of local economies, local labour markets and the range of employment, education and training opportunities available within rural areas.

4. Apprenticeships

To increase the number and range of apprenticeships available to young people in rural areas:

- National Apprenticeships Service funding criteria should be re-balanced to take into account the additional costs that can be incurred by providers delivering to more geographically remote parts of the country.
- The National Apprenticeships Service should capture and promote 'shared' apprenticeship models for smaller businesses in rural areas, particularly those in non land-based industries. This should include encouraging organisations such as Apprenticeship Training Agencies and Group Training Associations to act as a single point of contact for shared apprenticeship schemes.

5. Work Programme

To ensure successful delivery of the Work Programme in rural areas:

- Forthcoming evaluations of the Work Programme by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should include an assessment of the extent to which prime providers and their sub-contractors are successfully targeting hard to reach young people in more remote parts of the country. DWP should also consider this issue as part of the monitoring that takes place during routine contract management.
- In the event that evidence from the above shows rural young people are disproportionately impacted, funding criteria for the Work Programme should be re-balanced to take into account the additional costs associated with providers delivering to more geographically remote parts of the country.

6. Youth Services

To assist community organisations to maintain local provision of youth services, including those in rural areas:

- We call on local authorities, and those speaking on their behalf, to capture, share and promote examples where councils have effectively helped build community capacity, especially in rural areas, where public funding for youth services has been withdrawn.

1

Background

Introduction

1. The number of young people (16-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET) has been an ongoing concern for communities and policy makers for a number of years. The alarming rate at which this has risen in recent times, particularly for those over the age of 18, is a trend that must be reversed if the nation's economic recovery is to progress.
2. The purpose of this report is to look at whether there is a rural dimension to this issue, explore whether there are any uniquely rural barriers, and assess the impact that Government policy is having.
3. Four key lines of enquiry sit behind this project:
 - i. How are the changing policies of central Government addressing issues related to education, employment and training for young people living in rural areas?
 - ii. How are the changing modes of service-delivery by sub-national organisations (local authorities, voluntary and community sector groups etc) addressing issues related to education, employment and training for young people living in rural areas?
 - iii. What are the implications of these policies and modes of service delivery, and how are they different in rural areas compared to urban areas?
 - iv. What examples of good practice can be identified which seek to address these issues, and which might be transferable to other areas?
4. Research for the report has been both qualitative and quantitative, and has comprised:
 - A number of visits to rural communities to speak to local people, service managers and decision-makers about issues concerning education, employment and training for young people. This included young people, and representatives from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.
 - Interviews with key people in national bodies, voluntary organisations, local government and Whitehall.

- A literature review.
- An on-line call for evidence.

Economic and policy context

5. One of the most important factors in the context to this report is the relatively fragile state of the UK economy following the onset of recession in 2008-09. ONS figures for the three months to March 2012 show that GDP fell by 0.3%, and the unemployment rate is currently 8.2% of the working age population. The Office for Budget Responsibility is forecasting growth to improve slowly to 3% by 2016, with unemployment projected to reduce to 6.3% by 2016.

6. The Government is currently carrying out a significant programme of deficit reduction. As such, it is unlikely that there will be notable increases in funding for public services in the next few years. The 2010 Spending Review announced reductions in public spending of £81 billion over four years, with the budgets of Government Departments being cut by an average of 19%. The 2011 Autumn Statement extended those plans for public spending to 2016-17, the expected period of time required to remove the deficit.

7. The Government's stated ambition to re-balance the economy, away from the public sector and towards the private sector, has led to the introduction of the Regional Growth Fund and Local Enterprise Partnerships, and the announcement of a plan for growth, which includes:

- Lower planning and regulatory burdens on business;
- Assistance for new businesses;
- Encouragement to increase exports and for the green economy;
- An increase in the number of apprenticeships, and other measures to increase the number of young people in education or training; and
- Specific measures aimed at improving economic competitiveness, and jobs, in rural areas.

8. The Government's 2011 Open Public Services white paper outlined a commitment to widening the market for the provision of public services. There is an expectation that the private and voluntary sectors will grow, which means an increased emphasis on these sectors in service delivery. As such, changes to the services provided to local communities, including in rural areas, have already begun to take place, and there are likely to be further changes in future.

9. Many sub-national organisations are working together to identify ways of providing services at reduced cost, often working under the direction of

local communities. The idea of local communities directing the services they receive, from whichever sector, is also one of the key features of the 2010 Localism Act.

Government's strategy for young people

10. Between the ages of 16-24, young people of different ages have access to different services. The Government has introduced a range of programmes of reform for schools, vocational education, skills and welfare. In 2011 it published *Positive for Youth*, its 'vision for young people and for a society that helps and supports them.'

11. In 2011 the Government also published *Building Engagement, Building Futures*, its 'strategy for maximising the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work.' The document set out how existing reforms to schools, vocational education, skills and welfare provision were intended to contribute towards increasing the number of young people engaged in education, training and work.

Profile of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in England

12. Since the mid-1980s NEET rates were on the whole decreasing in England⁹. However, despite economic growth, the proportion of young people NEET rose steadily from 2004, and following the onset of recession in 2008 the rate began to rise rapidly. Overall between Q4 2007 and Q4 2011 the number of young people NEET rose from 783,000 to 958,000, or 13.2% to 15.9% of the total number of young people in England¹⁰.

The rural dimension

13. Figure 1 below shows the percentage of 16-24 year olds NEET in England's urban and rural areas between Q2 2005 and Q4 2011. It shows that:

- Between Q4 2007 and Q4 2011 the number of young people NEET in rural areas increased from 84,000 to 123,000, or 9.4% to 12.9% of all young people living in rural areas (a 37% rise in the proportion of young people who were NEET).
- Comparatively, between Q4 2007 and Q4 2011 the number of young people NEET in urban areas increased from 699,000 to 835,000, or

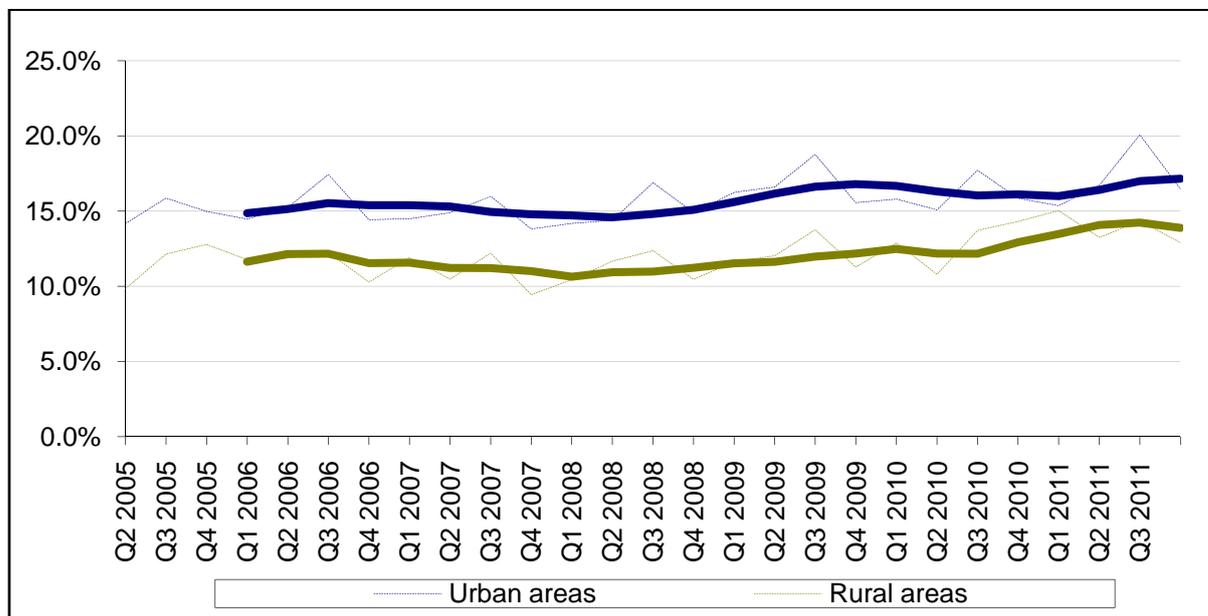
⁹ NEET Statistics – Quarterly Brief (August 2011) Department for Education Labour Force Survey

¹⁰ FE Data and Statistics, BIS, 2012 - Independent figures obtained by CRC

13.8% to 16.5% (a 20% rise in the proportion of young people who were NEET).

- Whilst this indicates that the proportion of young people NEET is higher in urban areas, over this period the rate has risen faster in rural areas.

Figure 1: Percentage of 16-24 year olds NEET in urban and rural areas, Q2 2005 to Q4 2011¹¹



Key issues facing young people in rural communities

14. In October 2006, CRC published a comprehensive study of rural disadvantage, which drew together a raft of evidence on disadvantage in rural England. The following selected statements are taken from this report. They provide a valuable insight into some of the issues faced by young people living in rural communities, particularly concerning employment, education and training.

Rural Disadvantage: Reviewing the evidence – Commission for Rural Communities, 2006

- Young people make up a smaller proportion of the population in rural, than in urban areas, either from choice or necessity. This has a number of implications, not least of which is that those young people remaining in rural areas may feel increasingly isolated. They are also less likely to benefit from services aimed at young people, if provision of such services relies on having sufficient numbers available to make them viable.

¹¹ FE Data and Statistics, BIS, 2012 - Independent figures obtained by CRC

- One form of disadvantage that almost all young people in rural areas under the age of 17 face is a lack of, or very limited, opportunity for independent travel, since they are too young to drive and even if they live in an area served by public transport, it is unlikely to run at the times, such as weekends and evenings, when they want to travel. Those too young to drive often rely heavily on parental lifts, but the extent to which such lifts are available is dependent on household car ownership and parents' work and other responsibilities.
- This reflects the importance attached to car ownership and use among the rural population generally, but means that those young people whose families lack the financial resources to pay for driving lessons and a car, or who are prevented from learning due to illness or disability, are at a particular risk of disadvantage.
- Long term youth unemployment tends to be less common in rural than in urban areas. However, rural labour markets are characterised by low skilled and insecure employment and limited opportunities for young people to undergo training or to upgrade their skills (since much rural employment is concentrated in small firms).
- It has been suggested that there is lower uptake of benefits by eligible young people in rural areas. In one piece of research practitioners suggested that young people in cyclical and seasonal employment perceive it to be too complex to complete and re-complete benefit claim forms every time their employment status changes. Instead, they prefer to subsist on lower incomes and on family support.
- Young people in more remote rural areas often had access to a limited range of professionals, usually known to them and their families, which acted as a significant barrier to seeking advice.
- The lack of employment and further education opportunities in many rural areas leads to a 'to get on, you have to get out' mentality among some and low aspirations among those left behind.

15. Many of the issues identified in the Rural Disadvantage report still resonate today.

Case study: Rural secondary school Headteacher

"I have been a Headteacher in an urban school but I now have a Headship in a large rural secondary school. Both the urban and rural contexts come with significant challenges.

Although many families in a rural area will be relatively affluent, there are also pockets of social deprivation and poverty. This is made worse for people because of rural isolation, poor transport and a lack of jobs and opportunities. Breaking the link between poverty and low educational achievement remains as much of a challenge for rural schools as it is for their urban counterparts.

Some children at my school live below the official poverty line and even where their parents are in work they are mostly in seasonal, low skilled and low paid jobs with few or no prospects of career progression. These children can be missed if they are surrounded by their relatively affluent peers. This makes for greater isolation and exclusion. Often these pockets of rural deprivation can be overlooked and not acknowledged. Children in these families can find it harder to participate in trips and visits and extra-curricular activities.

It can also be difficult to offer the wider curriculum that they need, as it may be a long way to neighbouring schools and colleges. It is a particular challenge to maintain a broad range of courses at Post 16.”

Case study: Quotes from young people – Young People in Rural Isolation, Cumbria Rural Forum event, 2011

“I attended a school with one of the biggest catchment areas in the country. I caught the school bus at 8.00 am and returned at 5.00 pm. It was very hard to attend after school clubs or activities as both my parents work and it was very difficult to get a lift. I felt I had less choice after I left school and the time and cost of travel has meant I have decided to leave the area to attend higher education elsewhere. Some of my friends live over 60 miles away from me. This makes it hard to have a regular social life outside of school.”

“There are very few training opportunities (here). There is a new enterprise centre (nearby) but we have to travel (further) to attend college. There is an agricultural college (nearby) but that does not run courses I am interested in. Most of my friends are moving away or travelling an hour each way to college every day.”

“Employment for young people is at all time low...I have been looking for a job for a while. I do not drive and it can be really hard to get to jobs if you don't drive. A lot of my friends are moving away from this area to find work.”

16. The outmigration of young people from rural areas is an ongoing concern for rural communities. Whilst this report is not seeking to directly address this issue, it is aiming to ensure that young people living in rural areas have as equitable an opportunity to access education, employment and training as those who live in more urban areas. This will ensure that they are not unfairly disadvantaged simply by living in a more rural location, wherever they choose to pursue their careers in the longer term. However, if access to such opportunities is present, it is likely that many young people might like to stay in rural areas or at least to return there¹².

¹² How to promote the youth of rural areas, Shucksmith, 2010

17. The following four chapters look in detail at the key barriers to education, employment and training for young people in rural areas.

2

Transport

18. The need for adequate transport provision is an issue that impacts fundamentally on almost all aspects of the life of a rural young person, but is something that has never been properly addressed by national policy makers. However, it is important to acknowledge that changing service patterns and demand for these services mean that rural transport provision is a complex issue to address, and so therefore is the response.

19. The ability to access transport in order to participate in education, employment or training is a theme that runs throughout this report. However, as a barrier to young people's progress, transport is the most significant issue that has been raised during CRC's research, and as such it is important that the topic is also addressed as a theme in itself.

What are the main issues?

20. The high cost and low availability of public and private transport in rural areas, acts as a significant barrier to the post-16 choices of rural young people, and their overall progress into employment.

Young people and transport in rural areas – Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000

In rural areas, most sixth forms and further education colleges are located in main towns so that staying on in post-16 education often means having to travel further afield; 40 per cent of 15-16-year-olds say that transport issues play a part in their decisions about post-16 education. Where transport is provided to further education centres, getting to the pick-up points often requires linking transport. Usually transport is provided for only one return journey each day so that students can find themselves 'trapped' at school or college if they miss the bus. Young people who leave education at 16 are severely restricted in where and when they can take up employment and training opportunities. As new entrants to the labour market, they often find employers reluctant to negotiate flexible working hours in order to fit the working day around any existing public transport. Young people depend on parents, friends or employers to provide lifts to work or to public transport pick-up points and then learn to drive as soon as they can.

Youth unemployment in rural areas – Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000

Opportunities for education and training in rural areas are frequently severely restricted. While the level of education and training opportunities affects many rural residents, it has a particularly strong impact on poorly qualified youth. For those who dropped out of a particular course, there were also problems in re-engaging as the choices of alternative courses or institutions tended to be limited. A number of young people who attended courses outside of their home area found themselves unable to continue due to financial pressures and those who dropped out of courses tended to drift into low skilled employment or Government training schemes.

Transport restrictions also forced many young people to abandon long-held aspirations, even when they had obtained formal training in a specific field. One, for example, had begun an apprenticeship in panel beating, but training was curtailed due to the bankruptcy of the firm. Despite their efforts, no similar opportunities were identified within travelling distance and the young person was forced to obtain unskilled work.

21. There are substantial differences between the costs and usage of transport in urban and rural areas.

Barriers to participation in education and training – Department for Education, 2010

- Young people who live in rural areas have significantly increased odds (one and a half times more likely) of experiencing transport as a barrier or constraint than similar young people who do not live in rural areas.
- Transport costs were found to be a barrier or constraint for around one in five young people, although it was more likely to be experienced as such by those living in rural areas.
- Learners in urban areas would need to spend about £15 a week on travel and learners in rural areas would need to spend about £18 a week (20% more).
- Young people in rural areas were significantly more likely to report cost of transport as a barrier or constraint – 22% – compared with young people in urban areas – 17%.
- Average travel times to post-16 providers is estimated at 40 minutes per day in urban and 90 minutes per day in rural areas.
- Young people in rural areas were even more dependent on public and school/college transport – only 8% accessed their place of learning by foot, while 70% used either public transport or a school/college bus, compared to 50% in urban areas.

- 34% of those young people who did not participate in learning post-16 indicated that they would have done so if they had received more support to cover the cost of transport.

22. Young people in rural areas also often find that their job search is limited by the transport options available to them, and frequently rely on other people to provide transport solutions. Furthermore, there is an assumption that parents can be relied upon to provide transport for their children.

23. Availability of public transport during evenings and at weekends, particularly if employed in a job involving shift work, can also prove a considerable challenge to finding and sustaining employment. While many shops and other types of business open on Sundays, buses rarely run in more remote areas. Bus timetables can also become more restricted outside of school terms.¹³

24. For many rural young people, having a driving licence and being able to afford a car is essential. Many young people in rural areas prioritise saving to buy an old car as the only viable means of accessing further education, employment and social activities.¹⁴ However, even if a young person, usually with support from their parents, is able to afford driving lessons and purchase a car, high insurance costs are often prohibitive. On a visit to Kendal College, Cumbria, CRC heard from a number of students who were paying upwards of £200 per month in car insurance. One apprentice at the college stated that he was using some savings built up from a previous period of employment to fund his car insurance. Whilst approaches to reducing insurance costs do exist, including the use of 'black box' devices which measure driver behaviour, take-up and promotion of such approaches is modest at present.

Case study: rural parent

As a parish councillor in a rural village...I would like to make a few comments about the unemployment history of my youngest son (now age 26). As a dropout from university and without any strong vocation...he was unemployed for several years. He worked around my small farm and undertook training courses in fork lift truck and telehandler operation using me to taxi him to the nearest bus stop or station.

He was severely hampered in not having a driving licence – he failed his test on his first attempt. We were not able to afford the insurance cover for him to drive my car and the costs for him to insure himself were prohibitive (even after the age of 25). He has now been working since February this year in (a) nearby town...on the industrial estate there. But

¹³ Youth unemployment in rural areas, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000

¹⁴ Research into the aspirations of young people in the rural West Midlands, ECOTEC, 2006

again, being paid £200 / week through a job agency he has not had the income to pass his test. He currently cycles to work each day.

Currently, having been successful in his job in the logistics office of a major haulage company, he is in the process of moving to a salaried job in an adjoining haulage company and they have offered to pay for him to get his licence.

Undoubtedly, lack of transport (because of the absence of any public transport and the extortionate car insurance costs) has been the major impact on his employment history.

How is Government policy changing and what impact is it having on young people in rural areas?

Bus services

Bus Services after the Spending Review – Transport Select Committee, 2011

The 2010 Spending Review included three decisions that impact funding for the UK bus industry: local authority revenue expenditure was cut by 28%; changes were made to the Department for Transport's formula for concessionary fare reimbursements; and the Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG) was cut by 20% from 2012-13.

The combined impact of these funding changes will, in some parts of the country, have a disproportionately adverse impact on the provision of local bus services and the level of bus fares.

As a result of these budgetary pressures, over 70% of local authorities have already decided to reduce funding for supported bus services, and the extent of the reductions varies considerably, although, in general, rural, evening and Sunday bus services will be most affected. In the most extreme cases, some local authorities have decided to withdraw all their subsidised bus services.

25. England's rural areas will suffer particularly adverse effects from the changes to local bus services. In its report on the State of Rural Public Services 2011 the Rural Services Network stated, *'It appears the financially marginal nature of much rural service provision makes it that much more vulnerable.'* Furthermore, a community transport provider in one rural county said to CRC,

“Bus services servicing employment are becoming increasingly limited in rural areas”.

26. The Government has made it clear that decisions to reduce local bus services are matters for individual local authorities. It has also said that where commercial bus services are not viable, community transport can play a valuable role in preventing isolation. There are a range of different types of community transport in operation but they mostly fall into the following categories¹⁵:

- Flexibly routed, demand-responsive or fixed-route bus services;
- Dial-a-ride minibuses, group transport services and assisted travel services; and
- Wheels-to-Work and community car schemes.

27. As part of the research for this report, CRC met with a number of community transport providers serving England's rural areas. When questioned about demand responsive and community bus services, providers said that take-up from young people, as well as others wishing to use the services for accessing employment, training and post-16 education, was low. A number of possible reasons were given for this, including buses not operating at convenient times, a lack of flexibility around timetables, and some providers customising services mainly to meet the needs of older people.

Transport support for further education

Local authority travel concessions

28. There is currently no requirement on local authorities to assist with the costs incurred by 16-18 year olds travelling to and from places of learning. However, local authorities have a duty to publish a transport policy statement each year, outlining how they will support 16-18 year olds to access education and training.

29. In its 2011 report on Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training, the Education Select Committee made reference to a survey commissioned by the Association of Colleges of its members, which indicated that:

- 72% of students travel to college by bus;
- Local authority support for 16-19 transport is extremely varied: 29% provide transport, 20% provide financial support, 18% provide both and 27% provide neither;

¹⁵ Transport select committee report - Bus Services after the Spending Review, 2011

- The majority of colleges (78%) provide some form of financial assistance for transport, either through financial support or provision of services.

30. In response to the tight economic climate, many local authorities are reducing support for post-16 transport. According to figures obtained by the Campaign for Better Transport in December 2011, 51% of local authorities were reviewing or cutting post-16 transport. In order to get a clearer picture of what is happening across the country, the Department for Education (DfE) is reviewing a sample of local authority post-16 transport policy statements, focusing on changes since 2010-11 and seeking out examples of good practice.

31. A number of issues have been identified through CRC's research which could have a particular impact on young people in rural areas:

- The annual fees for student travel passes have risen in many areas, with some local authorities now charging over £500 per year. These levels could be out of reach for some of the poorest students, and there are concerns that young people from lower income households are being denied educational opportunities simply because their parents cannot afford transport fares. Such changes could have a disproportionate impact on young people in rural areas, where students are more dependent on public and school/college transport.
- Approaches to subsidised college transport vary across the country, with some local authorities taking decisions to subsidise transport only to the nearest college, irrespective of whether colleges offer courses students wish to follow. This means that the range of courses available to young people living in rural areas will be more limited, due to FE colleges being less prevalent in rural areas.
- The Government is in the process of raising the compulsory participation age in education and training to 18 by 2015. Local authorities have a number of duties in relation to 16-18 participation in education and training. However, there are no plans to extend the existing pre-16 duty to provide free school transport, in line with raising the participation age. Again, this could have a disproportionate impact on young people living in rural areas, due to their higher reliance on transport.

Support from colleges

32. Many colleges are also reviewing the assistance with transport costs they provide to students.

33. Discussions with Landex, the association for land-based colleges, indicated that many of its members were continuing to provide subsidised support for students' transport costs. In some cases this included the emergence of transport networks across the sub-regions served by some colleges.

Case study: Moulton College, Northamptonshire

As a result of the removal of subsidised local authority transport funding, Moulton College in Northamptonshire has developed a transport network operating 29 coaches, which transport over 800 students daily, and provide access to every significant village in the county.

34. However, many colleges are reducing the level of transport assistance they provide to students. Institutions based in predominantly urban catchment areas have less incentive to keep transport subsidies in place. This could impact adversely on young people living in rural areas, who have to travel further than their urban peers to access colleges. This is particularly the case if they wish to access the wider range of courses offered by urban based institutions, a point that was reinforced by one organisation CRC spoke to,

“If you live in a rural area and can't afford transport, you might only have the agricultural option open to you.”

Bursary Scheme

35. In October 2010 the Government announced the decision to end the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and in March 2011 announced plans to introduce a £180m bursary scheme, with students in most need to be allocated a bursary by schools, colleges and training providers.

36. In its 2011 report on Participation by 16-19 year olds in Education and Training, the Education Select Committee said that the cost of travel for young people in post-compulsory study was cited repeatedly as one which young people struggled to meet and on which EMA was spent. A survey of Association of Colleges members in 2011 also showed that the impact of ending EMA would be particularly felt in terms of transport.

37. The Bursary Fund guidelines encourage colleges to carry out an assessment of local circumstances and individual barriers to participation when deciding exactly how they support access to education and training in rural areas. However, if colleges decide not to take transport needs into account, which could apply particularly to urban based institutions, there remains a risk that young people in rural areas from households on lower incomes will be unable to access these institutions.

Wheels to Work

38. Wheels to Work (W2W) schemes are an effective model of servicing employment, training and post-16 education in rural areas. Typically, they involve the provision of a personal mode of transport to an individual, for example the loan of a moped, small car, electric bike or bicycle. W2W schemes are usually run by local coordinators, using funding from a range of sources, including local authority grants.

Case study: Quotes from Cumbria Connexions

“Rural kids don't have as many options, we have no school bus here and without the W2W service (my granddaughter) would not have been able to get a part time job or go to college. (She) has gained confidence, skills and independence. She has since finished the scheme, bought her own bike and is taking driving lessons.” **Participant's Grandmother**

“W2W has been a lifeline. It has enabled the boys to continue study and gain employment. This not only helps them in the short term but provided opportunities that benefit their life skills and CV, as well as giving them confidence, road sense, better ability to cope with crisis, as well as responsibility and independence. With the loss of the school bus service and many local public transport links the wheels to work scheme has allowed two young men in the care system to achieve.” **Participant's Foster Mother**

“I work shift work, sometimes two split shifts a day. I was spending half my money on taxi fares as some of the shifts finished late at night. It has given me more independence and I can save some money for my own bike.” **Participant**

“I have been able to work different shifts due to having transport. This has allowed me to work more hours and I have now been promoted to shift manager.” **Participant**

“The scooter has been a godsend. We live in a very rural area and the scooter makes a big difference for getting to education and to having a better private/social life.” **Participant's Parent**

“The scooter means I can get to and from work through the week and be independent at weekends. I couldn't do that without it.” **Participant**

“I couldn't have made it to 6th form without my scooter and that would've really limited my choices and my chances in the future.” **Participant**

39. W2W schemes have benefits to both users and employers.

Wheels to Work in 2010: A review of the nationwide moped loan scheme for young people – The Motor Cycle Industry Association, 2010

(Schemes) provide transport to individuals who are unable to access training, employment or education, due to a lack of suitable public or private transport. They are particularly important for people living in isolated rural communities where public transport is inadequate. Individuals who have taken part in W2W have commented on how empowering the scheme has been, how it has opened doors that would have previously been closed and how training has enhanced their career prospects. Many schemes are designed to help those who have a firm offer of employment, training or further education; although some have widened the criteria to include those seeking work. The majority of schemes have clients less than 25 years of age. Local employers are also able to benefit from the schemes as they increase the pool of potential employees available.

40. According to the Motor Cycle Industry (MCI), W2W schemes also contribute towards the work of national government departments and agencies. For example, schemes support the work of the Department for Work and Pensions in developing and implementing strategies aimed at people who need help to get work (including the Work Programme). They also assist agencies such as Jobcentre Plus to offer a wider package of initiatives to help people get into work or training.¹⁶

41. It is also apparent that W2W can lead to savings in public expenditure, through an individual being in employment and not claiming benefits. It has been estimated that over a six month period, the savings to the public purse are approaching £3,000 per individual.¹⁷

42. However, the ongoing sustainability and viability of W2W schemes is a continuing issue for local coordinators, with a particular concern being the reliance on funding from the public sector. Some organisations are joining up delivery of W2W with other community focussed projects and initiatives.

Case study: Adapt North East, Northumberland

Adapt North East, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee in Hexham, runs a range of multi-functional schemes to support local

¹⁶ Wheels to Work in 2010, A review of the nationwide moped loan scheme for young people – The Motor Cycle Industry Association, 2010

¹⁷ Wheels to Work in 2010, A review of the nationwide moped loan scheme for young people – The Motor Cycle Industry Association, 2010

people into employment and training. This includes delivering a contract for Jobcentre Plus under the Flexible Support Fund, and running a range of work experience schemes with partner organisations across Northumberland.

Adapt runs 'Green Light to Work', a W2W scheme which loans out mopeds and small cars to people who have secured work or training but cannot take this up due to a lack of access to transport. The joined up nature of its work portfolio has helped Adapt to successfully network and promote the scheme to local employment providers, Jobcentre Plus and the local Connexions Service. Crucially, funding generated by its varied portfolio of activities also helps to support Green Light to Work.

43. At present, figures for the total number of young people that have benefitted from W2W are not available, although since 2001, one West Country W2W scheme has helped over 2000 young people. The MCI estimates that approximately 800 young people currently benefit from schemes across the country. However, it should be noted that due to the factors outlined above concerning long-term sustainability, in recent years the number of W2W schemes has halved to around 30.

44. The Department for Transport (DfT), alongside the Community Transport Association and MCI, is currently reviewing W2W, including how to develop a more sustainable future for the schemes. This has led to DfT funding a W2W co-ordinator for a short period, to assist schemes to become better at networking, share best practice, raise the profile of W2W, and hear about different management models, including social enterprise and other self-sustaining models. DfT are also planning to carry out a cost benefit analysis of W2W, with the aim of establishing what W2W schemes are worth in terms of the number of young people that have gained long term employment through accessing the schemes.

Conclusions

45. The availability of public, community and private, transport is the most significant barrier to young people in rural areas in accessing education, employment and training opportunities.

46. Government and local authority funding decisions are adversely affecting the provision of public transport in rural areas. Furthermore, transport support for college students is being reduced across many parts of the country. The combined consequences of those factors for young people in rural areas who are seeking to reach work, training or education, particularly those from families on lower incomes, are likely to be severe.

47. The Government's decision not to extend the pre-16 transport duty alongside the increasing of the compulsory participation age to 18 in 2015 must also be called into question. This could have a highly detrimental effect on young people living in rural areas, particularly those from families on low incomes.

48. Where commercial bus services are not viable, community transport, often via mini-bus provision, can play a valuable role in preventing isolation for many rural residents. But take-up by young people is low and we call into question whether community transport models based around mini-bus provision are in fact appropriate for those requiring transport to access employment, training and post-16 education.

49. Wheels to Work (W2W) schemes continue to provide a lifeline for young people in rural areas. But the ongoing sustainability of schemes is a continuing issue and it is clear that a sustainable future for W2W cannot rest on schemes using core funding from the public sector. However, it is in the interests of the Government, local authorities and people living within rural communities, to ensure that the W2W model continues, and that sufficient attention and support is given to maintaining the provision of W2W.

50. CRC welcomes discussions the Department for Transport (DfT) is having with the Community Transport Association and Motorcycle Industry, to establish how to develop a more sustainable future for the schemes, including DfT's planned cost benefit analysis of W2W. CRC hopes that this will include an analysis of the number of young people that have benefitted from W2W, and that a strong case can be made for embedding W2W within Government back to work initiatives such as the Work Programme.

Recommendation

We call on the Department for Education to publish, alongside its review of local authority post-16 transport policy statements, the impact of current changes on young people in rural areas.

Recommendation

We call on the Government to take forward the Education Select Committee's 2011 recommendation that, *'the Government should, as part of its review of school transport, assess the cost of offering free or subsidised travel to all 16 to 18 year olds travelling to and from learning. The aim should be to achieve, through co-operation between schools, colleges, local authorities and transport companies, free or subsidised travel to and from learning for all 16 to 18 year olds.'*

3

Careers Advice

51. The provision and availability of good quality, independent careers advice for young people, whilst in compulsory and post-16 education or training, is crucial to enabling them to make sound choices about their futures. However, there are concerns about the lack of quality independent careers advice available to young people in rural areas.

How is careers advice provided and what changes are being introduced?

52. Previously, local authorities, via schools, had a duty to provide pupils with a programme of careers education, from the start of Year 7 until the end of Year 11. Careers guidance was provided by local authority Connexions services for individuals up to the age of 19 (or 25 for those with learning difficulties and disabilities), alongside wider support services targeted, in general, at more disadvantaged groups.

53. The Education Act 2011 transferred responsibility for careers guidance from local authorities to schools, and removed the duty for schools to offer a programme of careers education. From September 2012 there will be a new duty on schools, requiring them to secure access to independent careers guidance for pupils in years 9 to 11 (up to the age of 16).¹⁸ Schools will be free to determine how to fulfil the duty, although statutory guidance has been published which highlights the most important issues that schools need to consider, such as securing face-to-face guidance for pupils where it is the most suitable form of support. The Department for Education is also currently considering what additional practical information might be helpful to support schools in interpreting their new responsibilities. No additional funding is being provided to schools to support the cost of careers guidance services.

54. In April 2012 the Government launched the National Careers Service. The service has: a website with information and resources available to all; a helpline and web chat service for young people and adults; and for adults face-to-face support from over 3,500 community based locations. A walk in service is also being trialled, where people are directed to the best source of help and advice.

¹⁸ The Department for Education recently launched a consultation on extending the age range of the new careers duty down to year 8 and up to young people aged 16-18 in schools and further education institutions. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the age range will be extended from September 2013.

55. As part of the new duty on schools to secure access to independent careers guidance, schools are able to make arrangements that best suit the needs of their pupils. This can involve working, where appropriate, in partnership with external providers, including those delivering the National Careers Service.

56. The Government has also accepted the recommendation of the Careers Profession Task Force to ask Ofsted to carry out a thematic review of careers guidance as a means of identifying excellent provision and establishing a baseline for future policy development. This will report in summer 2013.

What impact is this having on young people in rural areas?

Quality of advice

57. In its 2011 report on Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training, the Education Select Committee stated, *'There is unease about the quality of career guidance services available to young people even once the all-age service and the duty on schools to secure independent advice are in place.'*

58. Tighter school budgets and the absence of any additional funding for schools to resource the new duty to secure independent advice, may lead to the provision of poor quality careers guidance in some schools.

59. Whilst statutory guidance encourages schools to collaborate or co-locate with other services to pool their resources and achieve economies of scale, independent careers advice providers may also be less likely to engage more isolated areas of the country, where economies of scale are harder to achieve.

60. Furthermore, current financial pressures mean that many smaller independent careers advice providers, which are often able to respond in a flexible manner and tailor their services more effectively within geographically dispersed communities, are either closing or having to merge with larger providers. This is leading to rural-specific services being diluted.

61. There is a danger that some schools will have no choice but to rely on the online National Careers Service in order to meet the new duty to secure independent advice. This could result in a lack of face to face contact with careers advisers. There are clear problems with this, as outlined by the

Education Select Committee¹⁹, 'Online career guidance, which allows young people to explore at their own pace and according to their own interests, is valuable, but is no substitute for personal advice, given on the basis of an understanding of a young person's circumstances and ambitions.' There are also related concerns around the ability of some young people living in rural areas to access broadband due to the lack of modern ICT infrastructure in parts of rural England.

Impartiality of advice

62. The statutory guidance published by the Government in March 2012 places an expectation on schools to cooperate with other local post-16 providers to help make pupils aware of the different academic and vocational options available locally. However, in its 2011 report the Education Select Committee also stated,

Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training – Education Select Committee, 2011

'Some written submissions were apprehensive about schools' abilities to ensure that (careers) guidance was impartial. The fear is that schools, however legislation is worded, will provide it in such a way that pupils are encouraged to stay at school post-16, even though it might not be in the child's best interests. The Association of Colleges noted "powerful financial incentives for schools to retain their pupils", while LEACAN was more critical and described the Government's proposal as "a high-risk strategy, when perverse incentives such as league tables, school autonomy and funding methodology will cause some schools to prioritise the needs of the school above those of the learner".'

63. The below comment was made by a young person CRC spoke to on one visit. Whilst its reliability cannot be verified, it illustrates the risks that can be associated with handing schools sole responsibility for careers guidance.

"Schools prefer careers advisers who don't advise young people to leave – the careers adviser did this at my school but they didn't last long."

64. A further issue of concern is the introduction of 'lagged pupil funding', a new approach to funding 16-19 education and training whereby providers are mainly funded on the basis of their previous year's activity. This could lead to a scenario whereby the easiest way for schools and colleges to increase their funding is to become larger. In order to remain viable, some

¹⁹ Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training, Education Select Committee, 2011

schools and colleges in rural areas may have no choice but to expand, and begin offering, and channelling students towards courses that do not necessarily meet their needs, or that they are not properly resourced to deliver.

65. The 2011 Wolf Review of Vocational Education was critical of schools delivering skills they do not have the capability to deliver. Some schools are widening the range of courses on offer without being properly qualified to deliver these, which can result in the delivery of low quality courses. This was echoed by a land-based training provider CRC spoke to, who raised concerns that some schools and colleges were directing students towards in-house training and courses that would have been better delivered by independent expert providers.

Knowledge of local opportunities

66. Some schools and careers advisers have poor links with business, particularly local businesses. Furthermore, when it comes to linking with local businesses, schools, even in rural areas, are reported to have stronger links with large, urban businesses and often have very weak links to rural businesses.²⁰

67. A number of young people CRC spoke to felt that the availability of more vocational options, as well as advice on setting up businesses, was limited and they would have benefitted from their schools having better links with local businesses. Tangible benefits have resulted from initiatives designed to address this.

Case study: Careers event – Yorkshire Food and Farming Network

An event run by the Food and Farming Forum in Yorkshire at Askham Bryan College, York, in October 2011, aimed to increase the awareness of careers advisers to the wide range of career opportunities available within the food, farming and environment sectors in Yorkshire. The event was very well received by the 100 delegates and 48 businesses involved and demonstrates a good example of a local initiative where public and private organisations worked together to highlight career opportunities, at every level, in rural areas. One attendee stated,

“All the people I spoke to seemed very enthusiastic...and full of questions. The highlight would be talking to one young lad who’s desperate to go into pig farming as a career – he currently has a couple of Berkshires at home, and you could just see the passion that I always say is the staple ingredient to a career in farming. Wonderful to see especially in this climate when it’s

²⁰ Rural Opportunities, NESTA, 2008

such a challenging time. Let's hope we can ignite some passion in more youngsters like him and the careers advisers went away with a broader picture of the opportunities available."

Case study: Allendale Forge Studios, Allendale, Northumberland

Allendale Forge Studios, run by Allendale Creative Artists Community Interest Company (CIC), is an independent social enterprise aimed at encouraging the development of small businesses, creative practitioners and musicians in the Northumberland area. The visitor centre and studios carry out a range of work with local young people, including a free youth programme for prospective entrepreneurs involving monthly workshops and tutoring.

A Young Entrepreneurs' Scholarship Scheme was set up in 2010 to enable new business start-ups and encourage young people to explore their business ideas. Run by Allendale Forge Studios, the scheme enables young people to apply for mentoring and business support, and the use of a studio free of charge. It aims to provide young entrepreneurs with the tools needed to start their own business, gain experience and build up connections, including with other businesses at the studios.

Conclusions

68. The provision and availability of good quality, independent careers advice for young people, whilst in compulsory and post-16 education or training, is crucial to them being able to make sound choices about their futures.

69. The lack of additional funding to support the new duty on schools to provide independent careers advice could mean that some schools will have no choice but to rely on the online careers services, resulting in a lack of face-to-face contact with careers advisers. This will be compounded in rural areas, where economies of scale for independent careers advice providers are harder to achieve. Furthermore, the lack of modern ICT infrastructure in parts of rural England could mean that young people in rural areas might fall behind their urban counterparts in terms of their ability to access such advice.

70. It is crucial that those providing careers advice, as well as being impartial, have a sufficient knowledge of local economies, local labour markets and the range of employment, education and training opportunities available within specific localities. Furthermore, it is important that advice is properly tailored to young people living in more remote parts of the country.

Recommendation

The future Ofsted review of careers guidance should report on:

- The barriers that young people in rural areas face in accessing education, employment and training, as outlined in this report;
- The extent to which young people in rural areas are able to access face-to-face careers advice; and
- Careers advisers' knowledge of local economies, local labour markets and the range of employment, education and training opportunities available within rural areas.

4

Employment and Training

71. There are a limited range of employment and training opportunities available to young people in rural areas.

72. The effectiveness of programmes that seek to support young people into work and training in rural areas is mixed. Employment and skills services are often more limited and of a lower standard in rural areas due to higher delivery costs for rural providers, and there is often an overreliance on the voluntary sector to fill the gap.

What are the main issues?

Rural labour market

73. Smaller businesses (with fewer than 50 employees) play a relatively strong role in rural areas, accounting for over half of employment in rural areas compared with around a quarter in urban areas. Conversely, large firms employ a relatively small share of labour in rural areas compared to urban areas.²¹ There is also a greater proportion of sole traders in rural areas compared to urban.²²

74. There are certain key characteristics associated with labour markets in rural areas which can make it challenging for young people to find opportunities, and difficult for businesses to take on young people. These include:

Rural Labour Markets, Skills and Training – Institute for Employment Research, 2003

- Limited range of job opportunities.
- Transport and accessibility issues.
- Relative importance of self-employment and small businesses.
- Greater than average prevalence of part-time working.
- Seasonalised / casualised labour markets meaning there is little incentive for investment in training.
- Importance of informal networks in accessing employment.
- Relatively low wage levels.

²¹ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/rural/the-rural-economy/regr/>

²² Statistical Digest of Rural England 2012

75. The general labour market picture for rural areas, as measured by employment rates, appears relatively favourable, with a greater number of rural districts in England having achieved fuller employment levels than urban areas in England. However, these measures alone reveal little of the experience of employment in rural areas and the often intensified problems around low pay, in-work progression or informal working – all of which impact upon a number of vulnerable rural groups that do not show up on aggregate data.²³

76. Much of rural employment is also concentrated in small firms which further limits opportunities for young people to upgrade their skills and take up training (CRC 2008; Shury et al., 2006a).²⁴

77. Young people in rural areas who are part of the low wage, low skill economy are more vulnerable to downturns in the economy and many exist in a constant state of insecure employment. However, employment programmes are at particular risk of not picking up such individuals, as they either do not claim benefits, or do not claim them for long enough to qualify for support. Evidence suggests that there is a lower uptake of benefits by eligible young people in rural areas due to the perceived complexity of claiming benefits by those in seasonal or irregular employment. This means that unemployment counts in rural areas may underestimate the number of young people out of work.²⁵

Employment and skills services

78. Employment programme and training providers experience a range of difficulties when delivering programmes in rural areas.

Delivering national employment and skills programmes to vulnerable groups in rural England: Needs, barriers and Solutions – SQW, 2009

- Local providers encounter significant barriers to delivery in rural areas, primarily to do with transport and small numbers of customers and businesses.
- These barriers result in higher delivery costs for rural providers, in the order of 20% to 60%.
- As a result of higher delivery costs, the provision of employment and skills services in rural areas is more limited and sometimes of a lower quality than in urban areas.
- Programme commissioning arrangements do not reflect these additional costs as they work on a standard cost per outcome.

²³ Working in 21st Century Rural England: A scoping study, Institute of Employment Studies, 2008

²⁴ Working in 21st Century Rural England: A scoping study, Institute of Employment Studies, 2008

²⁵ Research into the aspirations of young people in the rural West Midlands, ECOTEC, 2006

- Contracts in more rural areas are less attractive to private sector operators and so there is a threat of the withdrawal of services, or an over-reliance on not-for-profit providers, with implications for service delivery and customer/commissioner choice.
- The move to regional commissioning arrangements and larger area contracts may exacerbate problems of rural delivery by making it easier for providers to focus on urban areas.

Apprenticeship provision

79. There are a number of barriers to participation in apprenticeships in rural areas.

Apprenticeships Task Force – Rural and Regional Dimension Working Group, 2005

Transport:

- Employers in rural areas often believe that working with them (apprentices) is unappealing to training providers because of the distances and consequent costs.
- Potential trainees often face immense difficulty in getting between centres of population in rural areas: getting to the main town is usually challenging but journeys between villages are almost impossible. Examples were provided of young people undertaking staggering journeys to try and maintain an Apprenticeship only to be defeated by changes in bus times or their removal altogether.
- Even if adequate transport is available it has cost implications for the employer and young person, for which (generally) there is no additional funding support.

Limited demand and supply:

- It is difficult to deliver Apprenticeships where there are small numbers of apprentices dispersed around a rural area.
- Provider costs can be considerable, with providers having to travel a good deal in order to spend a limited time with the learner.
- Many providers choose to concentrate on urban areas – it is easier, and involves less travel time. In consequence, many rural areas are faced with limited choices.

Structure of employment:

- There can be particular problems where people are working in seasonal occupations, in providing continuity of learning with the same or different employers.
- In some sectors employers may not be willing to take on a local young person as an apprentice because of confidentiality or business reasons.

Funding:

- Rural counties, because of the nature of their topography, have to spend proportionately more on learner support than many other areas. The costs of learning delivery are higher in rural areas but there is no extra funding available.
- Hotels and restaurants may collaborate, for example in rotating trainee chefs to cover the framework requirements, but funding is insufficient to employ facilitators to establish and maintain a network of SMEs. SMEs do not have the capacity themselves to establish such networks.

Quality of the Apprenticeship experience:

- Being in a rural area may involve the isolation of the apprentice and the lack of any significant, regular contact with an apprentice peer group.

Other consequences of rurality:

- Young people migrate out of rural areas to study or train, and do not return to the area on becoming qualified.
- SMEs sometimes have problems in releasing young people for off-the-job learning. This can be exacerbated in rural areas by the extra time off required for travel time.

In-migration of workers from overseas

80. Questions exist around the impact that in-migration of workers from overseas is having on employment opportunities for young people in rural areas. In 2007 CRC produced a briefing paper²⁶ which explored some of the issues concerned. It stated that, '*There is a lack of information and evidence on the attitudes, concerns and long-term impacts of migrant workers on hosting communities, and in particular the impact on the indigenous unskilled, early entry workers, aged 16-19.*' The uncertain and intractable nature of this issue is such that it lies outside of the scope of this report, although there is a good case for others to explore the changing impacts of in-migration of overseas workers on the rural labour market, including the reasons why some employers are not employing an indigenous workforce.

How is Government policy changing?

81. In April 2012, the Government introduced a new £1 billion *Youth Contract* to assist young people into work. Key elements include providing:

²⁶ A8 migrant workers in rural areas, Briefing Paper, CRC, 2007

- Wage incentives worth up to £2,275 each for employers who recruit an 18 to 24 year old who is participating on the Work Programme (see below).
- 250,000 extra work experience places, including those that offer training and guaranteed interviews, ensuring that there is an offer of a place for every 18 to 24 year-old who wants one, before they enter the Work Programme
- A range of funding to support the growth of 16-24 apprenticeships, including incentive payments to SMEs worth £1,500.
- Intensive support for the most disengaged and disadvantaged 16 and 17 year olds to help them re-engage in education, training or employment with training.

82. In June 2011, the Government introduced the *Work Programme*, a new payment-for-results welfare-to-work programme. It is being delivered by a range of private, public and voluntary sector organisations, which are supporting people who are at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to find work. The main elements of the programme are as follows:

- Service providers are paid almost entirely for results and receive higher rewards for hard to help participants.
- Service providers themselves identify the most effective way of helping people into work.
- Work Programme contracts last seven years, enabling providers to build long term partnerships with specialist supply chains of local providers.

What impact is this having on young people in rural areas?

83. The majority of feedback CRC has received on the Youth Contract has related to Apprenticeships and the Work Programme. The remainder of this chapter is focussed on these key areas.

Apprenticeships

Funding

84. The Government's overall emphasis on apprenticeships, and recognition of the need to provide smaller businesses with additional support to provide apprenticeships, is viewed positively by many apprenticeship providers. However, there are concerns regarding the extent to which incentive payments to small and micro businesses will

result in widespread additional apprenticeship places. One apprenticeship provider CRC spoke to stated,

“It is very difficult for us to persuade smaller businesses, particularly in rural areas, to take on an apprentice...the £1,500 is unlikely to make much difference.”

“There needs to be a specific scheme developed for these businesses as they don't have the time to take on a full time apprentice. They would rather carry out short, sharp training and take someone on full time, than support a long term apprenticeship.”

85. There are also concerns that the criteria used by the National Apprenticeships Service for distributing funding for apprenticeships does not include or account for the additional costs associated with transport that can be incurred by providers delivering to more geographically remote parts of the country.

Relationship between SMEs and colleges

86. A number of apprenticeship providers and rural business representatives told CRC that there is a lack of integration between FE institutions and local economies. A representative from an organisation representing small businesses said to CRC that,

“There needs to be an integrated system where FE colleges are built into the support structure for rural businesses. There needs to be an intelligent rebalancing of FE versus the needs of the employer.”

87. The capacity of smaller businesses to absorb and accommodate the necessary responsibilities that colleges require of employers, such as the need to allow necessary time to attend college, is more limited than that of a large employer. The above organisation also said that,

“In many cases the impractical nature of some apprenticeship schemes, particularly concerning the balance of on the job experience and classroom work, is disproportionate. There is no reluctance on the part of SMEs to train their staff, but small business friendly and rural friendly approaches to the delivery of training and apprenticeships are almost impossible to find as the education community simply cannot bear the additional costs associated with it.”

88. In some cases, apprenticeship providers are now making greater use of IT to support learners, especially in rural areas. Whilst this is sometimes restricted by limited access to broadband, this approach can counter some of the issues small businesses and their apprentices face in striking a balance between job experience and classroom work. For example, IT

can be effectively used to enable learners to submit work, hold group discussions with assessors, and record evidence of work.

89. Apprenticeship providers also often face challenges in engaging with businesses in rural areas, particularly micro businesses. One voluntary sector based apprenticeships provider said to CRC,

“Most businesses in (the county) have less than five employees and being in touch with these effectively is highly time-consuming. Therefore placing young people takes more time and effort than in urban areas.”

Apprenticeship models for smaller enterprises

90. The limited capacity and flexibility of many small enterprises can often limit their capacity to take on a full time apprentice. There are a number of approaches which seek to address this including:

- ***Apprenticeship Training Agencies***, which directly employ and hire out apprentices as a flexible workforce to other employers, known as “host companies”; and
- ***Group Training Associations***, apprenticeship training providers set up on behalf of, and governed by, groups of employers from within particular industries.

91. Models also exist that involve small businesses sharing apprentices, usually where single businesses are not able to commit to taking on a full-time apprentice themselves.

Case Study: DART Ltd, Derbyshire

DART is a land-based training provider based in Derbyshire whose work includes running apprenticeship programmes in agriculture, animal care, arboriculture, horticulture, environmental conservation, local environmental services and veterinary nursing across the East Midlands, West Midlands and South Yorkshire.

DART facilitates a number of shared apprenticeships with smaller businesses. It has built up a network of employers that it works with, some of which are not in a position to accept a full-time apprentice but would like to be part of a consortium of businesses that share responsibility for employing a full-time apprentice. In these instances, DART runs tailored programmes which suit both the apprentices and the businesses involved. The experience is mutually beneficial to employers and apprentices, with businesses benefitting from employing an apprentice, and young people achieving a rounded and broad experience.

A crucial ingredient in the success of this approach is the understanding that DART has of both the apprentices and businesses. This is built up over a period of time, with young people often beginning their involvement with employers as school age learners, for example taking part in supervised managed farm placements for one day per week whilst at school. This early intervention ensures young people have an awareness of the industry they are entering. It also enables employers to have confidence in taking on apprentices.

92. This shared approach to providing apprenticeships presents an effective model for overcoming some of the barriers associated with smaller businesses taking on apprentices. However, there are few examples of such approaches being utilised in non-land based industries. For example, during a discussion CRC had with a small tourism business in Derbyshire, great interest was expressed in taking on a shared apprentice, but they did not know of any local contact to help them arrange this.

Role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS)

93. The VCS plays a pivotal role in generating apprenticeships, and also work experience, for young people in rural communities.

Case Study: Access / Build Your Future, Lincolnshire

Access Your Future in Lincolnshire runs a Wheels to Work programme operating a moped and electric bike loan scheme for those unable to get to work, education or training due to lack of transport. The scheme works in tandem with *Build a Future*, a social enterprise providing training and qualifications to individuals at risk of exclusion from school.

As part of the joint work between the two programmes, *Access Your Future* employs a number of apprentices, which are taken on through *Build a Future*. The apprentices work as mechanics, providing an invaluable role in maintaining the fleet of vehicles owned by *Access Your Future*.

The two projects also work in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council, various local schools, training providers and colleges, and Jobcentre Plus.

Case study: Horndean Parish Council

Since 2009 Horndean Parish Council has developed a seasonal work scheme for young people, which utilises developer funds to improve parish council sites and other community facilities by employing and up-skilling young people aged 15-18 in the local area.

During the summers of 2010 and 2011 young people worked at Merchistoun Hall in Horndean, a high profile site in the local area. Projects included clearing a pond, planting trees and wildflower seed, and creating footpaths in the grounds of the hall. The young people were also trained in boardwalk construction and environmental conservation, and built a new stock proof fence and created new footpaths on another Parish Council nature reserve.

94. Whilst such examples are encouraging, there is further scope for the VCS in generating apprenticeships and work experience. A representative from a voluntary sector body in one county said to CRC that,

“Young people need to be better informed of the kinds of opportunities available to them, and what they need to do to realise these. The voluntary sector could be doing more to encourage apprenticeships across the sectors, and also take on more young people themselves. This should be included within their workforce strategy.”

Work Programme

Delivery model

95. The Work Programme is based on the premise that ‘prime providers’ will involve and commission smaller ‘sub-providers’ to deliver services where their use is deemed more effective and appropriate.

96. In November 2010 CRC and the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) organised a meeting with a variety of employment and training providers. It was apparent that useful conversations were taking place between large and small providers. One prime contractor said,

“Because we are unable to deliver in rural areas ourselves, we are aware that in some areas delivery is better by those organisations already working in the locality.

It can take three hours to travel across some parts (of our area). Therefore it may be better to deliver through the nearest market town organisation.”

97. Organisations operating as sub-contractors often have a greater degree of local knowledge and expertise, and are used to tailoring their services. They also often have in place techniques to overcome some of the challenges that might face prime providers in delivering to more remote parts of the country.

98. It is clear that voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations have an important role to play in the Work Programme, both as sub-

contractors and prime contractors. Work Programme bidders' supply chains include substantial VCS involvement, with some supply chains consisting of nearly 60% VCS organisations²⁷. It is also the Government's expectation that supply chains and delivery partners will grow and evolve over the lifetime of the contacts.

99. However some organisations have concerns over the degree to which the VCS is being sub-contracted to deliver the Work Programme in rural areas.

“(The VCS) is being used as ‘bid candy’ – nothing has come through.”
Youth Work Provider

“The Work Programme invited expressions of interest from private companies, and asked for those companies to indicate which VCS providers they might sub-contract to. When the contract was awarded the prime contractor only sub-contracted to private companies. This sort of practice leaves the Work Programme in the hands of the private sector, and the Government's intention that a bigger part would be played by the VCS unrealised.” **Rural Community Council**

Payments to providers

100. Work Programme providers receive additional money for placing hard to tackle, 'challenging' groups into work. Furthermore, Work Programme contracts stipulate that providers must meet a participant's travel costs. However, 'rurality' is not included in the criteria for 'challenging' clients.

101. Distance from providers is a particular issue in rural areas, as many people accessing the Work Programme have to travel to access employment programmes. The expectation from many providers is that people need to be able to travel to them. As outlined in Section 2, Wheels to Work (W2W) schemes can offer a useful route to employment and training for young people without access to public or private transport. However, the Motor Cycle Industry has expressed concerns that very few Work Programme providers are diverting funding towards W2W schemes. This is leading to some W2W schemes having to turn down young people referred by Work Programme providers.

102. There are a number of other concerns regarding whether people in more remote parts of the country are being sufficiently supported by the Work Programme. In particular:

²⁷ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wp-supply-chains.pdf>

- There is a danger that prime providers will focus on people that are nearest to the workplace, both socially, and in the case of more remote areas, geographically.
- There is a risk that hard to engage clients based in more highly populated parts of the country might receive more attention than those in rural areas.
- There are worries that the payment by results approach is leading prime contractors to target clients in parts of the country that produce quick hits and quick results.

103. The Work Programme is only based on payment by results for its prime providers, with prime providers being free to pay their sub-contractors upfront. However, concerns still exist that the payment by results approach, combined with the often substantial cuts that prime contractors take from the funding received for placing an individual into work, is making it difficult for smaller organisations to justify bidding to be sub-contractors. One organisation stated,

“The fact that the Work Programme is delivered on a ‘funding after results’ model means that many smaller organisations are unable to justify bidding for contracts.”

104. There are also additional risks to sub-contractor provision in rural areas. One prime contractor stated,

“In rural areas you have low volumes per locations. If you go to small organisations they have a disproportionate risk of loss. The risk may be too great.”

105. The current financial climate is also making it difficult for smaller providers, with some having to merge with larger providers in order to remain viable. This is resulting in less attention on specific localities. In the case of rural areas, there is a real risk that services are becoming diluted and rural expertise is being lost as smaller providers merge with larger organisations.

106. Furthermore, there are cases where, in order to remain viable, employment and skills providers that were previously delivering services to rural areas have had to streamline their services. This has resulted in their services becoming less rural focussed.

Case study: Westward Pathfinder, Devon

Westward Pathfinder is a VCS organisation which delivers skills and back to work services across a variety of programmes including acting as a sub-contractor to the Work Programme, as well as providing skills support for

unemployed people and delivering work based learning and apprenticeships.

The organisation used to provide services purely to rural parts of North Devon but over the last few years it has had to shift its focus to bigger towns as rural delivery has become less and less viable due to the costs associated with delivery.

During 2011 the organisation had to close two of its centres in smaller locations (despite there being the demand to keep them open), replacing them with one centre in a larger location between the two, meaning that people in rural areas now have to travel further in order to access their services. This is a direct result of a reduction in the per head funding provided by the Skills Funding Agency for delivery of work related training, coupled with the reduction in grant availability from the local authority. This has made it particularly difficult to deliver and tailor their service to more rural parts of the county.

Conclusions

107. Small enterprises play a relatively strong role in providing employment in rural areas, but the limited capacity and flexibility of many small enterprises can often limit their capacity to take on apprentices. This can significantly reduce the availability of apprenticeship places for young people living in rural areas. Innovative schemes do exist, such as businesses sharing apprentices, but more needs to be done to promote such models. There are examples where voluntary and community sector organisations are successfully assisting young people in rural areas into apprenticeships. But again, more needs to be done to increase this activity.

108. Many apprenticeship providers would also welcome the inclusion of geographic remoteness in the criteria used by the National Apprenticeships Service for distributing apprenticeships funding.

109. It is too early to properly assess the impact of the Government's Work Programme on young people in rural areas. However, concerns that hard to engage clients based in more highly populated parts of the country might receive more attention than those in rural areas must not be borne out. If this does occur, young people living in rural areas who require access to the Work Programme will be put at a significant disadvantage.

110. There is also a risk that prime providers and sub-contractors delivering the Work Programme will not view as financially viable those individuals in hard to reach groups that live in more remote parts of the country. Without the additional delivery costs being acknowledged within providers payments, such providers might focus their attentions more on

clients in areas where costs, including those associated with transport, are likely to be lower.

111. The current financial climate is also leading to some employment and skills providers that were previously delivering services to rural areas having to streamline their services and become less rural focussed in order to remain viable. This has the potential to impact negatively on young people living in rural areas.

Recommendation

The National Apprenticeships Service should capture and promote 'shared' apprenticeship models for smaller businesses in rural areas, particularly those in non land-based industries. This should include encouraging organisations such as Apprenticeship Training Agencies and Group Training Associations to act as a single point of contact for shared apprenticeship schemes.

Recommendation

National Apprenticeships Service funding criteria should be re-balanced to take into account the additional costs that can be incurred by providers delivering to more geographically remote parts of the country.

Recommendation

Forthcoming evaluations of the Work Programme by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should include an assessment of the extent to which prime providers and their sub-contractors are successfully targeting hard to reach young people in more remote parts of the country. DWP should also consider this issue as part of the monitoring that takes place during routine contract management.

Recommendation

In the event that evidence from the above shows rural young people are disproportionately impacted, funding criteria for the Work Programme should be re-balanced to take into account the additional costs associated with providers delivering to more geographically remote parts of the country.

5

Youth Services

112. Good quality youth work can make a big difference to the lives and future employability of young people in rural areas. Rural youth organisations and projects perform an invaluable role in providing information, advice and guidance to young people, particularly around accessing education, employment and training.

113. However, there are considerable concerns over the impact of reduced resources for these services, and the damage that is resulting to the future employability of young people as these services are scaled back.

How are youth services provided and what changes are being introduced?

114. The role of youth services is wide ranging but typically involves providing young people with structured leisure time activities outside of the school environment, assisting young people to access and engage in education, training and learning, and providing them with other information, advice and guidance.

115. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 includes a duty on Local Education Authorities to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, for young people aged 13 to 19, and aged 20 to 24 with learning disabilities:

- Sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities; and
- Sufficient recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

116. Despite the above statutory duty, funding of youth services by local authorities is not mandatory. The localised nature of provision has meant wide variation in spending on youth services across the country.²⁸

117. Youth services are funded and delivered via a range of central government and local authority budgets, charitable and private sector sources, and individual fundraising. In April 2011, all central funding for youth services was merged into a reduced 'Early Intervention Grant' (EIG) for children and young people. Local authorities are free to choose what proportion of EIG is allocated to young people.

²⁸ Education Committee report on Services for Young People, 2011

118. The Government's vision for the future of local youth service delivery is that there should be a wider market for the delivery of services and more commissioning and mutualisation by local authorities. The Department for Education submitted the following statement to the Education Select Committee's inquiry on Services for Young People:

'We want to stimulate a fundamental shift in the role of local authorities in services for young people to enable a radical re-engineering of provision so more is delivered by voluntary and community organisations, greater private sector involvement leads to greater leverage for public funding, and local authorities themselves become strategic commissioners rather than default providers of services with a greater emphasis on value for money and the effectiveness and impact of funded services.'

119. Another element of the Government's approach to young people is National Citizen Service (NCS), a voluntary six to eight week summer programme for 16-year-olds.

What impact is this having on young people in rural areas?

120. Reductions in central government funding and the removal of ring-fencing for youth provision, has had a direct impact on the amounts local authorities are spending on discretionary services. In its 2011 inquiry on Services for Young People, the Education Select Committee commented that this was,

'Leading some local authorities to prioritise statutory and higher-risk services, such as children's services, above youth services.'

121. This is supported by a survey carried out last year by the Local Government Association which showed that services for young people were near the top of a list for those which local authorities were targeting for proportionately large budget cuts.²⁹

122. The Chief Executive of the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services also told the Education Select Committee,

"Right across the board, all we are seeing is significant reductions to services for young people."

²⁹ Local Government Association Analysis & Research, 2011

123. Whilst changes to youth service provision are affecting young people across the country there are a number of specific impacts on young people living in rural areas.

Unequal Government funding allocations on services to young people

124. As stated above, youth services are funded via a range of government and non-government sources. However, at an overall unitary authority level, government funding allocations per head on services to young people (which includes funding for youth services) are noticeably higher in urban areas than in rural areas.³⁰ The Department for Communities and Local Government publishes annual information on local authority revenue expenditure and financing in England³¹, including a specific breakdown of funding allocations for local authority services to young people. Analysis of the 2011-12 data³² implies that there is an imbalance between urban and rural local authorities³³:

Funding for services to young people aged over 16 in 2011/12 – average per head (£) – unitary authorities only	
Predominantly urban	48
Significant rural	33
Predominantly rural	40

125. The Government has committed to a 'limited technical update'³⁴ of the formula used to allocate funding to local authorities in rural areas. This may go some way towards addressing this type of imbalance within local authority funding to urban compared to rural areas. Nevertheless, as a statutory body charged by Parliament with representing the interests of disadvantaged groups in rural areas, the CRC would be failing in its duty if it did not highlight the apparent disparity in the current funding distribution.

Focus on areas of highest need

126. The presence of youth workers and youth centres in rural locations is vital to providing information, advice, and support to rural young people.

³⁰ This discrepancy is wider still when 'all area types' are included, although such data is less robust due to the large size of counties, their mixed nature and the fact that few are classed as predominantly urban.

³¹ Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2011-12 budget – Individual local authority data. CLG, June 2011

³² Independent analysis carried out by Defra.

³³ Differences in accessibility, uptake, demand and need (e.g. deprivation or multi-ethnicity) may all impact on the amount of expenditure per head in any given place. In addition, services provided in one area type may be accessed by a wider population than those resident in that authority.

³⁴ Local Government Resource Review, Government response to consultation on business rate retention, CLG, 2011

They also provide a bridge to, and support the work of, administrative centres and employment and training schemes, which are often a considerable distance from rural communities.

127. In the current financial climate, local authorities are making difficult decisions about how and where to allocate funding for youth services, with the majority of funding going to areas of greatest need.

128. There are concerns that this is leading to resources being targeted mostly towards urban areas, where need is most concentrated and resources are easier to target. Moreover, there are doubts over whether decisions are accounting for the different nature of poverty and deprivation in rural areas, which can be more dispersed and is often masked by traditional methods of measuring deprivation. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), the Government's main tool for measuring deprivation, can hide 'pockets' of disadvantaged groups among more affluent rural communities, whereas this is less likely to occur in urban areas.³⁵

129. The presence of youth workers in rural areas is vital in identifying vulnerable young people, for example those that are not claiming benefits. To a small extent, this mitigates the issue of vulnerable young people not being identified via the IMD. There are therefore concerns that the absence of such workers will increase the isolation of vulnerable young people.

Diluting of rural youth work

130. Even in areas where local authorities are continuing to provide and fund youth services, the reduced number of youth workers, streamlined management structures and reduced number of rural sites is leading to concerns that rural youth work is being diluted.

131. A member of the local Youth Parliament in one rural county said that the number of areas covered by youth services within the county had been reduced from seven to three. This was leading to youth workers having to cover much larger areas with fewer people.

132. Where such arrangements are now in place, it is unlikely that service managers will be able to justify staff spending significant amounts of time travelling around large rural areas. This is giving rise to concerns that in many rural communities, the reduced availability of professional expertise and support could lead to a vacuum in the understanding of the issues being faced by young people. Worries also exist over the negative effect that the loss of skills, experience and networks is having on the quality of rural youth delivery.

³⁵ Scharf and Bartlam, 2006

Local authority external commissioning of youth services

133. Many local authorities are adopting an external commissioning approach to delivering youth services, where some or all of the budget the authority has allocated for the provision of youth services is outsourced to external public, private or voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers.

134. Where implemented effectively and with necessary levels of local authority officer support, the commissioning of youth services is working well. In 2011 Ofsted published findings of an evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services:

'Examples were seen where a well-managed approach to commissioning, over a period of time, had contributed to improvement. In the best cases, young people had access to a wider range of provision in their locality which reflected their needs and interests, and specialist services were targeted effectively in supporting those identified as being at risk.'

135. The need for councils to support local organisations in this process is of great importance. The Ofsted report included an example of a local authority, Northumberland County Council, which had put in place sound arrangements to build capacity within local areas:

Ofsted evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services, 2011

Experienced workers within the youth service, known as 'advanced practitioners' played a vital development role in support of key voluntary and community sector organisations dispersed across a large rural county. They worked effectively alongside organisations to lever in additional funding; helped them to access training opportunities, recruit suitable volunteers and network with groups in similar situations; and used the professional and legal services of the local authority to resolve staffing issues. The advanced practitioners were enterprising, professional, and forward-looking, helping the organisations in strengthening their own affairs. Moreover, having managed substantial youth service budget reductions across the county more generally, the approach adopted by the 'advanced practitioners' maximised income generation to the benefit of the local organisations and the service more broadly.

136. However, there are also concerns regarding local authorities commissioning youth services. The 2011 Education Select Committee report on Services for Young People identified problems regarding the

types of organisations local authorities might choose to commission. One organisation that contributed to the report stated,

“There is a real danger that we could get national organisations who come in and pick up a contract ... it should really be about local provision, rooted in communities.”

137. This was reinforced by the Ofsted report, which said,

‘Insufficient consideration had been given to engaging alternative providers from the voluntary and community sector, charities, or other arms of the public sector.’

138. These concerns resonate strongly in rural areas. One youth organisation stated to CRC,

“National and private youth service providers are often very urban focussed, and charge high prices for delivery to rural areas. This is a particular concern in the context of the local authority moving towards becoming a central commissioning body for delivery of services. Smaller providers may find it difficult to compete with larger providers.”

Other local authority measures

139. As stated previously, due to the need to lower budgets, many local authorities are significantly reducing the services they provide to young people, including youth services. To attempt to mitigate this, some councils are putting measures in place to try to ensure youth service provision continues, particularly outside areas of most concentrated need.

140. For example, some councils are supporting local community organisations, including parish and town councils, community, voluntary and faith sector organisations, to commission their own provision. Often this is coming in the form of provision of transitional funding, as well as local authority officer support, designed to encourage local commissioning of youth services. This includes helping local organisations to identify funding from other sources. Some councils are also supporting youth workers to become self-employed or set up social enterprises, and to provide youth services which can be commissioned by community organisations.

141. The network of Young Farmers Clubs across the country also play a valuable role in engaging young people in rural areas, not only those from farming backgrounds but across the board. There are examples where specific support from local authorities has made a big difference to bringing together young people and highlighting their needs. For

example, in Cumbria, the County Council is funding a member of staff to support the county's 12 Young Farmers Clubs.

142. There are however concerns over how the gap in youth service provision will be sustainably bridged if organisations such as town and parish councils, as well as other VCS organisations, are not able to raise funds locally, or either do not feel capable of taking on such a service or do not feel that it is their responsibility to do so.

143. Furthermore, there are questions over how rural communities that do not have existing cohesive structures in place might go about commissioning youth services.

National Citizen Service

144. The introduction of National Citizen Service (NCS) as a personal and social development programme for young people has been welcomed by many young people and youth practitioners as being a positive step towards engaging young people in community activities, which will help aid the future prospects, including those related to employment, of the young people taking part.

145. However, NCS has also been criticised for the scale of resources being invested into the programme at a time when youth services across the country are being reduced. There are also concerns over the relatively small number of people the NCS is reaching, and whether NCS is reaching more vulnerable young people.

146. There are encouraging examples where NCS is being successfully delivered in rural areas, through local organisations such as Rural Community Councils.

Case study: Youth Action Wiltshire

Youth Action Wiltshire, the youth arm of Wiltshire and Swindon's rural community council, delivered an NCS pilot during summer 2011. Through this project they provided a 9 week programme which included engagement activities, and a week-long skills development residential. 15 young people in total took part in the programme, with 11 completing an OCN Leadership Level 1 qualification, 11 completing a foundation level in sports leadership, 10 gaining a NCFE level 1 conservation award, and 12 obtaining an ASDAN activities award. 14 members of the team are now attending college or 6th form and 1 young person is attending Resolve, a training and employment service run by Swindon College.

147. However, concerns exist over whether the NCS model is conducive to delivery across rural areas.

148. The seasonal nature of employment in many rural areas, particularly for young people seeking part time work, means that many are faced with a difficult choice between carrying out NCS or earning money in a paid role over the summer holiday.

149. NCS is based around young people getting together in one place, which assumes they are able to reach these places easily. However, many young people, particularly those on lower incomes, face considerable transport barriers.

150. There are often higher delivery costs in providing programmes in rural areas. Economies of scale are harder to achieve due to the large catchment areas programmes are required to cover. The considerable financial commitment required by organisations running NCS is leading to doubts over whether sufficient numbers of providers will come forward to deliver NCS in rural areas. In order to take part, some organisations are having to subsidise the additional costs associated with rural delivery, which is putting additional strain on already limited finances.

Conclusions

151. Good quality youth work can make a big difference to the lives and future employability of young people in rural areas. However, reductions in central government funding, as well as the removal of ring-fencing for youth provision, has had a direct impact on the amounts local authorities are spending on discretionary services, including youth services.

152. This is having a disproportionate effect on young people living in rural areas. Government funding allocations per head on services to young people (which include funding for youth services), appear noticeably higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Furthermore, with local authorities having to make difficult decisions about how and where to allocate funding for youth services, attention is mostly being focussed on areas of most concentrated need. However, this means that the needs of vulnerable rural young people are being overlooked, as the nature of their disadvantage is less visible. This is leading to a vacuum in the understanding of the issues being faced by rural young people. There is now a real risk that young people in rural areas will be less able to access the professional expertise and support often needed to assist them into training and employment.

153. In some cases, local authorities, conscious of ensuring some youth service provision is kept within areas of less concentrated need, have put measures in place to try to address this. This includes authorities encouraging and supporting local organisations, such as town and parish councils, to commission their own youth services. However, in rural areas that do not have existing cohesive structures in place, the needs of vulnerable young people could go unmet.

Recommendation

We call on local authorities, and those speaking on their behalf, to capture, share and promote examples where councils have effectively helped build community capacity, particularly in rural areas, where public funding for youth services has been withdrawn.

6

Further conclusions

154. There are clear challenges associated with education, employment and training for all young people across England, and certain fundamental issues that contribute to a young person not participating in education, training or work.

155. This report set out to identify whether there is a rural dimension to this issue, explore whether there are any uniquely rural barriers, and assess the impact that Government policy is having.

156. The four themed sections in the report illustrate a range of specific issues that a young person living in a rural area will face when seeking to access education, training or work. Alongside the separate conclusions that follow the themed sections, there are also a number of further conclusions that can be drawn.

Allocation of public resources

157. Difficult decisions are having to be made by organisations at all levels of government about how best to allocate public resources. In many cases this is leading to resources and attention being targeted at areas of most concentrated need. Whilst this is understandable, decisions are not always being made with a full understanding of the differing nature of poverty and deprivation in rural areas, which is more dispersed and often masked by traditional methods of measuring deprivation. Beneath the often proportionately more positive rural statistics lie some very real and difficult challenges.

158. The rate at which the number of young people NEET has risen over the past few years also means that there are more people both in, or at risk of becoming, NEET. If approaches and resources identified to tackle this issue are only targeted at the most concentrated areas of need, there is a great risk that vulnerable young people located within smaller pockets of deprivation, which are often more prevalent in rural areas, will be less likely to receive the sufficient support they require to help them into employment, education or training.

Shift to a local model of delivery of public services

159. The move towards a more local model for delivery of public services, whereby the state is no longer the default delivery body, will, in some cases, enable a more tailored and locally responsive approach to service delivery. It has also created a valuable opportunity for private and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to become involved in delivery of public services.

160. However, concerns exist regarding the capacity of private and VCS providers to fill the gap left by the removal or scaling back of services previously delivered by local authorities and other public sector organisations, particularly in more remote areas where service delivery is often more costly. There are risks that this will lead to considerable disparities in the level of services and support available to young people living in these areas.

161. Local authorities have a crucial role to play in assisting local organisations to meet some of these challenges, and overall, build capacity within communities. Local authorities and others need to ensure that communities are kept well informed where changes are to be made to services, are made aware of the options and models that local groups might consider utilising to fill a future gap in service, and ensure that the right advice and guidance is available to facilitate and encourage this.

Lack of focal point for rural youth affairs across Government

162. It has become apparent through CRC's research that there is a lack of a focal point, representation and appreciation of rural youth affairs within and across central government. There is no clear, overarching responsibility for securing the development and employment of young people in rural areas. Consequently insufficient consideration is being given to addressing, in a co-ordinated and strategic way, the challenges associated with this, many of which are identified in this report.

Recommendation

To ensure a coordinated, strategic approach to improving education, employment and training for young people, both in rural and urban areas, we call on the Government to create a Minister for Youth Affairs.

163. This report acknowledges the new economic realities that the country is now subject to, and the reduction in spending on public services that has led from this. Whilst in some instances there is a good case to be made for additional funding to be provided to support education, employment and training for young people in rural areas, we are cautious about calling for that in this report. We have kept this at the forefront of our thinking when drawing up our recommendations and, where possible, have based these around the need for different ways of working, rather than specific injections of funding. However, where we have made recommendations with financial implications, they are made on the basis that such injections, in our view, will have a positive impact on economic growth, as well as being of significant benefit to young people themselves.

164. Whilst this report focuses mainly on highlighting issues that impact on the ability of young people in rural areas to secure long term employment, an overarching and fundamental issue for young people at present is the availability of employment itself. Addressing the barriers to education, employment and training for young people in rural areas will not, on its own, lead to a rise in the number of young people in education, employment and training.

165. The Government is taking a range of steps to address the economic climate and promote economic growth and employment, including measures connected to the 2011 Rural Economy Growth Review. This included a welcome recognition that England's rural areas play an important role in delivering economic growth. However, only by addressing some of the barriers and challenges that exist for young people in rural areas in participating in education, employment and training, and by creating the right economic environment for young people to live and work in rural areas, will the contribution of rural areas to the country's economic recovery be fully realised and the future sustainability of rural communities be achieved.

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