



Rural Public Health Inequalities Meeting - 2 May 2024

Meeting purpose

English rural and coastal Directors of Public Health and Health leads to share ideas and current areas of work; explore the potential for an ongoing group to work on issues and explore solutions in more detail; and consider whether there would be value in some on-going collaboration in this area for sharing good practice and possibly engaging in dialogue with policy makers and national bodies

Meeting Summary

Speakers highlighted the challenges of delivering healthcare in rural and coastal areas, including lower transport connections, fewer health institutions, and inequalities. They emphasized the need for a more open conversation involving key stakeholders to enhance policy understanding and influence a national discussion on rural inequality. Data analysis was seen as crucial to addressing these inequalities, and speakers discussed the importance of research and evidence to inform policy decisions. Speakers also discussed the unique challenges faced by rural and coastal areas in addressing health inequalities, including social isolation. The need for more targeted and adequate funding for rural healthcare services was a recurring theme throughout the conversation.

Key themes discussed

- Aging population, higher proportion of over 85s and growing
- Challenges in providing universal health care with limited resources
- Unfair funding
- Lack of access to GPs, dentists and hospitals
- Limited 5G and wifi connectivity
- Lack of transport
- Workforce recruitment and retention issues
- Brain drain to cities and lack of local training and education
- Affordability and quality of housing stock
- Limitations of using aggregated data to understand rural poverty
- Complexity of rural and coastal areas home to affluent and deprived
- Neglect of rural and coastal areas by central government
- Importance of informing new MPs about rural issues
- Encouraging use of Rural Proofing
- Benefits of sharing best practice

Next steps

1. Further meeting to consider:
 - Developing a one-page articulation of unique rural health challenges
 - Pooling existing data analyses and needs assessments from the group
 - Sharing current work on solutions
 - Developing webinars to share innovations and best practice

Useful links

[All-Party Parliamentary Group for Rural Health and Care Inquiry Report](#)

[National Centre for Rural Health & Care response to NHS Workforce Plan](#)

[Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit](#)

[Tools to identify transport related social exclusion](#)

[Rural Services Network Winning the Rural Vote Campaign](#)

[Rural Services Network Rural Health and Care Asks](#)

[Rural Services Network Health and Care news articles](#)