

# Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

Rural Services Network

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# National Centre for Rural Health and Care

<https://www.ncrhc.org>

In 2017, interested parties looking into the challenges of rural health and care provision identified some key underlying themes:

- Data – scoping and measuring the challenge and response
- Research – identifying and testing what works
- Technology – shrinking distances and adding to human capacity
- Workforce and Learning – rural as a location of choice

To take this work further, the NCRHC was established in 2018 with a mission to reduce health inequalities in rural areas.

## Why rural health and care is challenging

- Rural communities have an older age profile
- There is a higher prevalence of co-morbidities
- There is a very strong connection between other major social, environmental and economic issues and health needs
- Rural health care providers struggle to recruit
- Health organisations have high dependency on temporary staff
- Health teams can be smaller with more limited opportunities for skill development
- Rural health delivery is more expensive



## Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit



How to address the needs of a rural population

Published December 2020



In 2020, the NCRHC published its Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit, with six themes:

- Main hospital services
- Primary and community health services
- Mental health services
- Public health and preventative services
- Social care services
- Workforce

## Rural-proofing can help to:

- Optimise the outcomes achieved by strategies and plans
- Demonstrate a commitment to act equitably and benefit all communities
- Support locality-based approaches to working and service
- Design out any unintended gaps in service provision
- Identify opportunities to innovate or make better use of available resources
- Embed good practice within strategy and plan making

# National guidance on rural-proofing

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-proofing>

- Rural White Paper 2000
- DEFRA guidance

When developing policy, Government departments and agencies must consider rural differences in...

...demographics

...service  
infrastructure

...access to  
services

To which we would add

Cost

# NHS Long Term Workforce Plan

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-long-term-workforce-plan/>

Focus is on *Train, Retain* and *Reform*.

By 2037:

- The NHS could have a workforce gap of up to 360,000 staff.
- The number of people in England aged over 85 will grow by 55%.
- A third of people aged over 85 will be living in rural communities.

But there is little reference to place in the plan, and virtually nothing on the specific challenges facing rural communities. Rural-proofing is not working as well as it could and should be.





## Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit



How to address the needs of a rural population

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Our new Toolkit will focus on the Workforce theme in the 2020 Toolkit:

- Main hospital services
- Primary and community health services
- Mental health services
- Public health and preventative services
- Social care services
- **Workforce**



# Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

## Call for Evidence

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RMZLRN8>

- A timely response to the workforce crisis, with a focus on *Plan, Recruit and Retain*.
- Centred in England but applicable further afield – this is a global issue and there is innovative regional practice emerging.
- We are looking for interesting case studies from anywhere in the world, demonstrating best practice in rural recruitment, training and retention, and how it might be resourced.
- All contributions welcome – there is no need to answer all the questions.

# Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

## Call for Evidence

### **The current situation in your area**

1. Does workforce planning in your area align with available evidence about local health needs and trends? How well does this work for rural parts of your area?
2. How realistic and sustainable are future workforce plans for rural parts of your area?
3. Do you cover any rural or coastal locations which have a modest resident population, but which experience a seasonal influx of visitors or tourists? If so, how much variation in demand for services do you experience? Are any additional resources available at peak times?

# Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

## Call for Evidence

### **The current situation in your area**

4. What policies are in place in your area to ensure the wellbeing of professionals who work in rural and more isolated settings?
5. If your role (or that of your staff) involves home visits or regular travel to outlying locations, to what extent is the extra time and cost taken into account and/or compensated? Is it realistic?
6. To prepare professionals, including General Practitioners, for a career in more remote areas, can they access training or development opportunities to give them the breadth of knowledge and confidence they need to work alone with less access to professional back-up?

# Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

## Call for Evidence

### The current situation in your area

7. Following the formation of Integrated Care Systems, Primary Care Networks and community multidisciplinary teams, what opportunities have arisen to address workforce issues that are prevalent in rural areas?
8. What measures are in place to ensure that professionals moving into agricultural areas have sufficient knowledge of diseases most likely to be found among farming communities?
9. There are many organisations in the voluntary and community sector that support or complement statutory health and social care services. What opportunities exist to extend training and networking opportunities to those working or volunteering in this sector?

# Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

## Call for Evidence

### What more could we usefully do?

10. What options could be explored to ensure that professional staff have career development or progression opportunities, without them necessarily needing to move away from the area?
11. How could rural based professionals be helped to access opportunities to maintain and update their knowledge, not least for Continuing Professional Development and mandatory training?
12. How could valuable networking and peer learning opportunities be facilitated for rural based professionals, without them having to make long or time-consuming journeys?

# Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

## Call for Evidence

### What more could we usefully do?

13. What resources are needed for the planning, recruitment, training and retention of the rural health and care workforce, and how might these resources be funded?

14. What form would you like the Rural Health Workforce Toolkit to take, and what outputs would you find most useful?

Documentation

Interactive website

Videos

Data/research/resource repository

Training materials

Training provision

## Rural Health Workforce Toolkit

Thank you for  
contributing

Anna Whelan

