RURAL ENGLAND

NETWORKING / RESEARCH / LEARNING

Helping to inform and engender better rural policy making by:
- o **Providing independent research and evidence**
- o **Supporting rural information exchange**
- o **Building a network of rural stakeholders**

Contact us: info@ruralengland.org

State of Rural Services 2018
What is it? Why produce it?

- A <u>resource</u> presenting facts and statistics about rural service provision
- Pulling out some over-arching service <u>trends</u>
- <u>Collating</u> existing, recent rural evidence
- <u>Adding</u> some secondary (rural) analysis of data
- Noting important <u>gaps</u> in the evidence base

- The way services are delivered and used is quickly evolving
- What does this mean for rural people and business?
- Having this understood and debated should inform policy making
- As well as assisting better policy delivery
- Encourage others to help fill rural evidence gaps

STATE OF RURAL SERVICES 2018

A rural exploration of the state of:

1. **Local buses and community transport**
2. **Broadband and mobile connectivity**
3. **Public library services**
4. **Hospitals**
5. **Public health services**
6. **Young people's services**
7. **Shops and online shopping**
8. **Personal advice services**

Download the full report at:
https://ruralengland.org

Many services contracting in rural areas
Most notably those delivered by local government which are discretionary

Subsidised bus services:

- Four rural shires no longer subsidise any bus routes

- 202 shire bus routes were withdrawn and 191 scaled back in 2016/17

- Bus passenger numbers fell (-7%) from 2014 to 2016 in predominantly rural areas

Youth clubs or centres:

- Shire local government spend on young people's services down 38% in three years

- Many local authorities no longer fund youth clubs

- Some youth clubs adapted and survive, whilst others have closed

Public funding for services
Nearly always lower in rural than in urban areas

"This poses a question about the equity of service provision to rural communities. Indeed, the extent of the funding variation sometimes raises a linked question, whether it can actually be justified by levels of service need."

Based on spend per resident in 2017/18. Predominantly rural areas compared with predominantly urban areas.	
Bus subsidy	39% less
Discretionary concessionary fares	78% less
Public health	36% less
Library services	25% less

Digital connectivity
Rural coverage is improving, but it still lags behind

Broadband (fixed line):

2018 figures	Rural areas	Urban areas
Average download speed	34 Mbps	52 Mbps
Have access to 10 Mbps (USO level)	89% of premises	99% of premises
Have access to 30 Mbps (superfast)	76% of premises	97% of premises

Mobile networks:

2018 figures	Rural areas	Urban areas
Phone call possible on all networks	67% of premises	97% of premises
4G possible on all networks	42% of premises	83% of premises
Phone call geographic coverage	90% of area	99% of area

Changing healthcare provision
How rural proofed are the NHS Sustainability & Transformation Plans?

Common STPs aims:
o **Reduce hospital capacity**
o **Reconfigure acute services**
o **Review specialised services**
o **Redesign community and primary care services**
o **Improve mental health services**

The four shire STPs reviewed indicate that:

➢ **Rurality was rarely an explicit consideration**

➢ **But scope for locally-based services frequently was**

➢ **Hospital services are being centralised for medical safety and cost reasons**

➢ **Only one STP weighed this against geographic access**

Public health outcomes
Do services meet the needs of rural young people?

Young people in rural areas score <u>better than</u> average on:

+ School exclusions

+ Emotional and mental health needs

Young people in rural areas score <u>worse than</u> average on:

- Risky behaviours

- Alcohol consumption

- Smoking

- Being bullied

Community-run rural services
High expectations of communities and volunteers

Community-run Shops

   - about 300/nearly all rural

Community-managed Libraries

   - 10% libraries/most rural

Community Transport Schemes

   - 52% mainly serve rural

Volunteer-run Youth Clubs

   - 12% rural based

Can deliver benefits:
- **Broader service offer**
- **Better opening times**

But there can be risks:
- **Volunteer capacity limits**
- **Places lacking volunteers with skills and time**
- **Sustainability, where grant-dependent**

Widening the service offer, co-location and service hubs

Rural convenience stores:

53% give cash back

44% host an ATM

32% have a PO counter

Community-run shops:

43% include a cafe

Community-run libraries:

25% offer IT access

19% have a room for hire

17% host cultural events

Benefits likely to include:

o **Cost savings for the service providers**

o **Increased footfall at the service facility**

o **Added convenience for the service users**

Rural services evidence base: Four key gaps have been identified

1) **Accessibility statistics** – the existing access data measures too narrow a range of services

2) **Big trends** – to think through rural implications of more online services, struggling high streets, an ageing population, etc

3) **Policy reforms** – to evaluate rural impacts e.g. NHS Sustainability & Transformation Plans

4) **User impacts** – to find out what rural users do if bus routes disappear, bank branches close, etc

Read the report or its summary at:
https://ruralengland.org