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Rural Communities  
Tackling rural disadvantage

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# Should I Stay or Should I Go?

## Rural youth transitions

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- Rural advocate: the voice for rural people, businesses and communities.
- Expert adviser: giving evidence-based, objective advice to government and others.
- Independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

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# Abbreviations and definitions

AA	Activity Agreement and Allowance
Apprenticeship	here refers to Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships
C1	lower middle classes
C2DE	from skilled working class to those at the lowest levels of subsistence
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfT	Department for Transport
DOH	Department of Health
E2E	Entry to Employment
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
EMA(T)	Education Maintenance Allowance (Transport)
FE	further education
FTE	full-time education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GST	government-supported training (for example, Apprenticeships)
IAG	information, advice and guidance
LA	Learning Agreement
Level 1 qualification	equivalent to five GCSEs grade D-G
Level 2 qualification	equivalent to five GCSEs grade A*-C
Level 3 qualification	equivalent to two A Level passes
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NEET	not in employment, education or training
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
RDA	Regional Development Agency
W2W	Wheels to Work
WBL	work-based learning (for example E2E, NVQs)

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# Executive summary

## Context

Young people today face complex decisions about their future lives, particularly at the point where they leave compulsory education and embark on the transition into adulthood. This report explores the experiences of 16- to 19-year-olds in rural areas at the time of leaving compulsory education, and the immediate aftermath of those transitions. It focuses on the options available to young people and their experiences as they become young adults, with particular emphasis on their movements into and out of employment, education and training.

Securing the social and economic inclusion of young people as they make the transition to adulthood has become a central focus of public policy, with the aim of enhancing their life chances and their contribution to wider society (for example, Social Exclusion Unit 2005; DfES 2005b). Significant attention and resources have been devoted to engaging greater numbers of young people in post-16 education and training, and raising their attainment (see Delorenzi and Robinson 2005; DfES 2005a, 2005b, 2005c).

The engagement and involvement of young people in rural communities is crucial for the social and economic sustainability, and success of those communities going forward into the future. However, large numbers of young people in rural areas feel that they have to 'get out' to 'get on': a natural response to the often limited education opportunities and poorly paid, low-skilled and insecure employment options available. Meanwhile, it is often young people without resources (whether personal networks, educational and/or financial) who stay behind.

Yet young people have rarely ranked high on the list of rural policy priorities. This report offers a nuanced analysis of what the effects are of current policies on young people in rural areas, and of the problems that have to be overcome if young people and rural communities are to have successful futures.

## Methodology

The report starts from the premise that, often, the most valuable and powerful insights into the current and future impacts of public policy on young people's transitions are offered by young people themselves. During our research, young people from different parts of rural England participated in focus groups and relayed to us their experiences and aspirations. This direct work was complemented by interviews with organisations that have contact with young people, focusing particularly on the concerns that these organisations had about the current public policy framework, and its effect on rural young people and rural communities in the short and long term. Additional background information is also provided about the areas in which focus groups were held, obtained through quantitative analysis of young people's post-16 destinations' data.

## Main findings

Young people in rural areas do not have adequate access to the education and training opportunities they need and want, and to which they are entitled.

### The current situation

Young people are leaving rural areas in order to obtain improved education and employment opportunities. As a result, rural areas are losing valuable skills. This can have serious consequences for the economic viability of rural communities.

Government policy has focused on young people not in education, employment or training, known as 'NEETs'. However, far less attention is paid to those in insecure and low-skilled work who want advice on training and education opportunities. Support organisations appear geared towards getting NEETs into jobs with training at the earliest opportunity, but not always towards enabling individuals to make further career progress through skills acquisition.

Other young people whose needs are not being adequately addressed by current policy priorities include those who are unable to get the right kinds of education and training in their localities because courses are

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not available within a reasonable distance; those who drop out of education because the local course options and providers do not meet their needs; and those who encounter problems in travelling to appropriate educational institutions, even when they exist within a reasonable distance.

## Future risks

Action is needed now to improve the opportunities provided to young people in rural areas so that they can enjoy opportunities equal to those found in non-rural areas. The Government's commitment to social justice implies that young people in rural areas, as elsewhere, should be entitled to the support needed for successful transitions to adulthood. This, in turn, implies a commitment to equality of access to post-16 education and training opportunities as the foundation for a satisfying career. Our report raises concerns as to whether this equality of opportunity is delivered in rural areas. Moreover, action needs to be taken now to ensure that these inequalities do not widen as future reforms to education policy and broader youth policy are enacted.

## Recommendations

If government policy is to offer equality of opportunity to those in rural communities, it is essential that it understands the barriers and opportunities that young people face in taking advantage of education and training. This study identifies a number of areas for policy reform to that effect. In summary, these are:

### Continued improvements to education and training opportunities:

1. Increased opportunity to study out of the local area with appropriate support where courses are not provided locally. Increased residential support, including residential courses at further education (FE) colleges, may be required for specialist vocational options and/or capital intensive courses. It is unlikely that general FE colleges in rural areas will be able to offer all the new 14-19 vocational diplomas in every area, despite the fact that young people will have statutory entitlements to study these diplomas.
2. Implementation of the Government's 14-19 agenda will require increased efforts to support collaboration between local colleges and sixth forms to allow equality of access to opportunities. Collaboration will need to be brokered by Local Education Authorities, working with Local Learning and Skills Councils, and will require some planning across sub-regions for particularly specialised provision. Dedicated managers or teams have also been important to the success of collaboration in the 14-19 Pathfinder Areas.
3. Access to support to enter and achieve Level 1 and 2 training needs to be improved and extended. The step up and out of low-wage and low-skilled jobs is important for young people who stay in rural communities. The Government's target for 72 per cent of young people to reach Level 2 qualifications by age 19 by 2008 must be drilled down into achievement in rural as well as urban areas.

### Continued transport initiatives to link young people to post-16 opportunities:

4. Increased provision of adequate transport options are needed to enable young people to access post-16 opportunities. There are too many gaps in transport provision for young people to attend schools and colleges after age 16. These gaps need to be closed, informed by joint working between central government departments.

### Immediate action is needed to increase information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided to all young people:

5. IAG commissioners should include provision for young people who are in employment. This could help young people move on from low-wage and low-skilled employment by their re-engaging with education and training. Young people in jobs without training are entitled to time off for study, but this right is rarely exercised. At a minimum, it needs to be better advertised and communicated to young people in jobs without training.
6. Forthcoming changes to IAG should be closely monitored in rural areas. Efforts will be needed if

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greater local delivery and merging of IAG and support with other services occurs to ensure that all young people receive access to the range of advice and support they require.

#### Increased integration between rural economic development and education and skills:

7. Rural policy should pay specific attention to the needs of young people who want to develop careers in areas that have the potential for growth in rural communities. Rural areas are changing. Sunrise industries and services are emerging. Young people should be able to undertake training to follow career paths in these new employment areas, including those that anticipate the shift to a low-carbon, environmentally sustainable economy.
8. Diversification measures should also be developed further to support skills training and a range of career opportunities targeted at local labour markets. Strategies to provide skilled labour markets for tourism could be complemented by a focus on skills in health and social care, which the demographic profile suggests will also be of increasing significance to rural economies.



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# 1. Introduction

Young people today face complex decisions about their futures, especially at the point where they leave compulsory education and embark on the transition into adulthood. This report explores experiences of 16- to 19-year-olds in rural areas<sup>1</sup> at the time of leaving compulsory education, and the immediate aftermath of those transitions. It focuses on the options available to young people, and their experiences as they become young adults, with particular emphasis on their movements into and out of employment, education and training.

The report highlights how the interplay between current education and skills policy and living in a rural area affects young people. After examining this evidence, we look to the future and consider how forthcoming policy developments may impact on the life chances of rural young people, and what actions may need to be taken to ensure that the necessary support is provided.

The remainder of this chapter considers the public policy context within which young people's transition to adulthood is played out, and introduces the research in more detail.

## The current context of young people's participation in education and training and transitions to employment

The transition from education to work is, today, rarely a single step; it has become an increasingly complex combination of movements between education, training and work (Meadows 2001). Securing the social and economic inclusion of young people as they make the transition to adulthood has been a central tenet of recent public policy (for example, Social Exclusion Unit 2005, Department for Education and Skills 2005a).

### Different policy emphases

It is useful to identify two distinct forms of policy focus on young people's transitions. On the one hand, significant attention and resources have been directed at engaging greater numbers of young people in post-compulsory education and training, and raising their attainment (see Delorenzi and Robinson 2005). Policy initiatives concentrating on promoting the successful progression of all young people into education and training, and employment include the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES) '14-19 agenda' and increased training opportunities (Department for Education and Skills 2005b, 2005c).

On the other hand, there is a specific interest in young people who find themselves not in education, employment or training, known as 'NEETs', particularly if this occurs for a long period of time. These two areas of emphasis recognise that young people's transitions will occur at differing speeds and be far from straightforward.

### NEETs

The NEET or 'fast-track' transition causes most policy concern. Individuals leave compulsory education at age 16 and risk unemployment or poorly paid work and early parenthood. This is often linked to class-based expectations of self-support, which become problematic if the individuals are unable to support themselves and become NEET (Social Exclusion Unit 2005). In turn, NEETs are more likely to experience higher unemployment, lower earnings, ill health, drug use, homelessness and teenage pregnancy, both during their young adult life and throughout the life course.

It was estimated that the total 'resource' costs (for example, benefit payments) of all recognised NEETs over their lifetimes would be £7 billion, and the additional 'public' cost (including funding for remedial education courses and the voluntary sector to address needs) would be just over £8 billion, equating to per capita NEET lifetime costs of £45,000 and £52,000 respectively (Godfrey *et al* 2002).

Attention has centred on NEETs, as the Government has identified a specific target of reducing the

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1. Throughout the report, 'rural' refers to settlements of 10,000 residents or below, and 'urban' to settlements of over 10,000 residents.

proportion of young people outside education, employment and training by 2010, aiming to cut it from around 10 to eight per cent (Department for Education and Skills 2005c). Yet provisional estimates show that this will be a difficult target to achieve: by the end of 2005, 11 per cent of 16- to 18-year-olds in England were estimated to be NEET, equivalent to approximately 220,000 individuals (Department for Education and Skills 2006).

NEETs are a diverse group, comprising three main sub-groups. The first is young people who are periodically NEET, reflecting the fact that it is common for many young people to be NEET for short periods of time – due to a combination of course start and end dates, drop-outs from post-16 courses and the volatility of the youth labour market. A second group is ‘long-term’ NEET (NEET continuously from 16 to 18 years after leaving compulsory full-time education). This sub-group is anticipated to be a relatively small proportion of NEETs: around one per cent of young people estimated to be NEET in 2003. A third sub-group of NEETs is not seen as a cause for concern, being those on gap years who are expected to take up their higher education place, and progress through education and labour markets (Department for Education and Skills 2005b).

Table 1.1 shows that the proportions of young people who are NEET have been relatively stable in recent years. This is complemented by a recent small increase in the proportion of young people in education and training (full- or part-time), from 74.8 per cent in 2003 to 76.2 per cent estimated at end 2005. Table 1.2 reveals how participation in education and training varies by age; a general decline in education and training participation is seen between the ages of 16 and 18, particularly for full-time education (FTE). More young women are choosing to remain in FTE, whereas slightly more young men choose work-based learning (WBL) routes.

Participation	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (provisional) (%)
Full-time education	56.1	57.3	59.2
Work-based learning	8.1	7.9	7.5
Employer-funded training	5.5	5.2	4.8
Other education and training	5.3	5.0	4.8
Total education and training	74.8	75.2	76.2
Not in education or training (NEET)	25.2	24.8	23.8
Population	1,936,400	1,969,000	1,989,000

Source: Department for Education and Skills 2006a, extract from table 5

Participation	16 years male (%)	18 years male (%)	16 years female (%)	18 years female (%)
Full-time education	71.5	35.5	81.8	41.4
Work-based learning	7.8	9.6	5.0	5.7
Employer-funded training	3.3	8.4	2.0	6.5
Other education and training	4.2	6.0	3.3	5.6
Total education and training	86.5	59.3	91.9	59.2
Not in education or training	13.5	40.7	8.1	40.8
Population	336,100	341,800	317,300	322,500

Source: Department for Education and Skills 2006a, extract from table 1

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## Changing expectations

Table 1.1 shows that three-quarters of all 16- to 18-year-olds have recently been actively participating in education and training. This may be due to the greater variety of courses and support available for post-16 education and training, reflecting the increasing expectation that young people will remain in learning to at least 18 years (first expressed, Social Exclusion Unit 1999; incorporated into 14-19 Education White Paper Department for Education and Skills 2005b).

One component of this expectation is that, through a range of academic and vocational routes, young people will leave education with at least a Level 2 qualification (five GCSEs grades A\*-C or equivalent). Level 2 is commonly seen as the 'knowledge economy's "skills poverty line"', as many employers take this level as a proxy for other generic skills, and a Level 2 qualification is therefore essential to future labour market progression (Green and Owen 2006: 9). The Government has set a target that, by 2008, at least 72 per cent of young people will achieve Level 2 by age 19 (Department for Education and Skills 2005c). This is accompanied by a continued emphasis on post-16 participation, so at least 90 per cent of 17-year-olds will be participating in education and training by 2015, compared to 75 per cent in 2005 (Department for Education and Skills 2005b).

Within England, post-16 participation in FTE has been consistently lower in the northern regions (North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber) than elsewhere; the highest rates are found in the London, South East and South West regions (Payne 2001).

## 14-19 reform

The Government has embarked upon a wide-ranging reform of 14-19 education, although less radical than earlier proposals outlined in the Tomlinson Review (Working Group on 14-19 Reform 2004). GCSEs and A-levels remain the cornerstone of the education system, but these qualifications and traditional pathways are complemented by greater options of what can be studied, where and how (particularly with regards to combining academic and vocational learning).

The 14-19 Pathfinders evaluation suggests that the additional breadth offered by an area-wide prospectus ('area-wide' here interpreted as LEA/LSC areas, which approximate in most rural areas to county level) encouraged more young people to participate post-16 than would otherwise be the case. The Pathfinders evaluation also identified a discernible commitment among staff and institutions to ensure a continued progression into post-16 participation as part of a coherent phase of 14-19 education and training (Department for Education and Skills 2005c; Higham and Yeomans 2006).

One forthcoming key development is the introduction of 14 specialised diplomas (providing qualifications at Levels 1-3), based on specific occupational sectors of the economy. This is planned to become a national entitlement by 2013. The first five diplomas – creative and media, construction and the built environment, engineering, health and social care, and information technology – will be available from 2008, with the remainder to be gradually phased in (Department for Education and Skills 2005b, 2005c).

## Government-supported training

An important component of post-16 participation is government-supported training (GST), in the form of Apprenticeships. Apprenticeships enable young people to gain skills and qualifications as full preparation for a particular occupation, while working and earning a small wage. More than 180 Apprenticeships are offered in 80 industrial sectors. The Government's target is for 35 per cent of 16- to 21-year-olds to start an Apprenticeship by 2010, so that the UK reaches the North West European average (Department for Education and Skills 2005c).

There is also a target of a 75 per cent increase in the number of Apprenticeship completions in 2007/08 from 2002/03 levels (equivalent to 30,000 more Apprenticeships) – as many young people leave before completing the full qualification to take up better-paid employment after achieving an NVQ (Department for Education and Skills 2005c). Notably, participation in GST has been consistently higher in northern England than in the rest of the country (Department for Education and Skills 2006b).

## Financial incentives

Financial support to young people participating in post-16 education and training has been introduced.

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Most importantly, 2004 saw the national rollout of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) to young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, so the affordability of continued participation for the young person and their household becomes less of an issue. During trials, EMA increased post-16 participation in year 12 (the first year after compulsory education ends) by 5.9 per cent, as well as raising the participation of young men and 17-year-olds, and reduced the NEET group by 2.7 per cent (Middleton *et al* 2005).

The importance of financial support is reflected by a range of recently introduced reforms, recommended by the Treasury's review of financial support for 16- to 19-year-olds (HM Treasury 2004, 2006). For example, from April 2006, increased support has been offered to unwaged trainees on approved training courses, through extending EMA payments as well as child benefit and Child Tax Credits to include this group, as well as the creation of two pilot schemes – Activity Agreement and Allowance (AA) and Learning Agreement (LA). The AA pilots are focused on longer-term NEETs (those who have been NEET for 20 out of the previous 23 weeks) and aim to re-engage and reintegrate this group into formal learning by paying a weekly allowance. The LA pilots aim to increase accredited training options available to 16- to 17-year-olds without Level 2 qualifications, and will test the statutory right to training for this group by encouraging employers and employees to take up time off for study.

### Sources of information, advice and guidance

Local communities, along with parental advice and behaviour, play an important part in young people's expectations and decision-making (Social Exclusion Unit 2005; Payne 2003). Another potentially important influence on young people's decisions regarding their post-16 opportunities is the quality and extent of information, advice and guidance (IAG) that young people receive when making decisions about their future. Since 2003, IAG to young people has been provided by 47 local Connexions Partnerships, which aim to remove barriers to learning and progression, and to ensure young people make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life.

Improvements to IAG feature heavily within the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper, as well as the Youth Matters Green Paper, which proposes that funding for IAG should go directly to local authorities and Children's Trusts to commission IAG services, rather than to the Connexions Partnerships; and already Connexions Partnerships are no longer the IAG provider in all areas (Department for Education and Skills 2005a, 2005c).

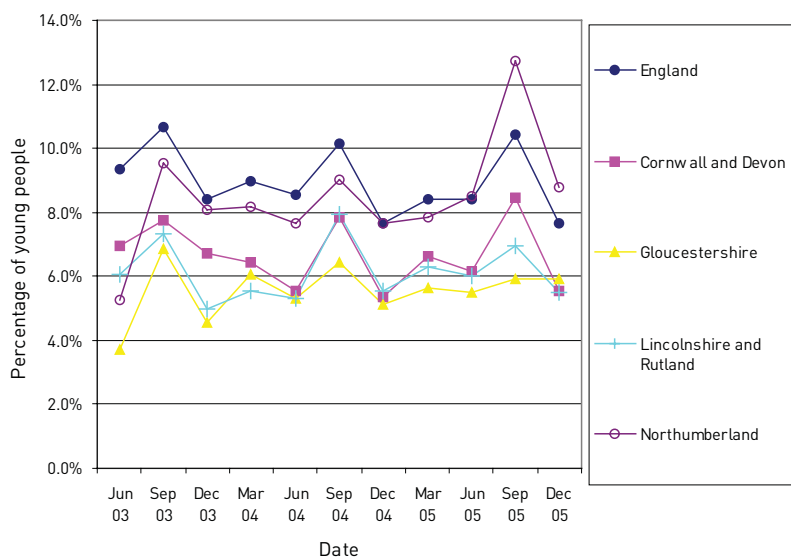
### Rural young people's participation

In the foregoing overview of post-16 public policy, rurality does not receive special mention; the same issues, challenges and aspirations are assumed to be shared by young people, regardless of where they live. This is a useful generic starting point. The issue of how appropriate rural policy for rural policy's sake is, and the need for greater mainstreaming of rural issues into wider public policy, has been specifically raised in recent research by ippr north (Midgley and Adams 2006).

Yet a recent review of the evidence on rural disadvantage (Commission for Rural Communities 2006 forthcoming) highlighted some of the difficulties accessing employment, education and training opportunities that exist for young people in rural areas. Rural labour markets are characterised by low-skilled and insecure employment. Opportunities for young people to undergo training or upgrade their skills are limited, since much rural employment is concentrated in small firms, which are less likely to be able to provide, or release staff for, training. For example, The National Employers Skills Survey, undertaken in 2004, found that 49 per cent of establishments with fewer than five staff had arranged any training over the last 12 months, compared to just over 95 per cent of establishments with 100 or more staff (National Employer Skills Survey 2004).

The policy issues surrounding post-16 participation and NEET certainly have a rural face. For example, the limited career aspirations held by young people in rural Norfolk impacted on their (low) post-16 engagement (O'Hanlon *et al* 2001). Previous research from Suffolk has shown that 19 per cent of young people who left compulsory education in 2003 were NEET at different periods of time that totalled nearly one year each between September 2003 and June 2005 (Suffolk NEET Research Working Group 2005). A recent estimate based on 16- to 18-year-olds' destinations in June 2005 suggested that the NEET rate for the most rural areas of England was 6.8 per cent, just one per cent less than the national rate of 7.8 per cent (data provided by DfES). Consequently, NEETs in rural areas are a concern for public policy.

Figure 1.1: Percentage of young people 16-18 years registered as NEET by Connexions Partnerships June 2003 to December 2005



Source: data provided by Department for Education and Skills

Table 1.3: Participation in education and Local Skills Council-funded WBL by 16 and 17-year-olds by region and LSC area and LEAs in England, end 2004 (percentages)

Area	All 16-year-olds (%)				All 17-year-olds (%)			
	FTE	WBL	Part-time education	Total	FTE education	WBL	Part-time	Total
England	73	7	4	84	60	9	5	74
North East	69	13	4	86	53	15	6	74
North'land	69	11	4	84	55	14	6	75
North West	70	10	4	83	57	12	5	74
Cumbria	70	13	5	88	54	19	8	81
Yorkshire and Humber	67	11	5	84	54	11	7	72
North Yorks	68	21	4	93	59	11	6	75
E Midlands	70	7	5	82	57	10	6	72
Lincolnshire	71	7	4	82	56	9	6	71
W Midlands	71	8	5	84	57	10	6	73
Shropshire	71	9	3	84	57	13	6	76
E of England	75	6	4	85	61	8	5	73
Norfolk	70	7	4	81	55	10	5	70
London	79	3	3	86	68	5	5	77
South East	77	4	4	86	64	7	5	76
Kent and Medway	76	4	3	83	62	7	4	72
South West	75	6	4	85	61	10	5	76
Devon and Cornwall	76	7	3	86	59	11	5	74

Source: Department for Education and Skills 2006b, extract from table 2

The importance of reducing the percentage of young people who are NEET in rural areas is reflected in Figure 1.1, which shows a selection of Connexions Partnership areas covering some of the most rural parts of England. Figure 1.1 reveals that in some Partnership areas (for example, Gloucestershire and Northumberland), proportions are actually increasing over time and that, in a number of areas (for example, Northumberland), NEET rates exceed the national average.

Table 1.3 reveals the variation in post-16 participation within England, explored by regional and selected sub-regional area (county level, which contains some of the most rural areas in England). Generally, based on the figures, rural rates of participation in FTE are the same as corresponding regional rates or higher, particularly for 16-year-olds. However, this pattern changes for 17-year-olds – gaps in participation narrow within the region and rural sub-region or rural sub-regions fall below the regional norm, exemplified by the South West and Devon and Cornwall, and the North West and Cumbria. Little difference can be seen in young people’s participation in part-time education at sub-regional and regional level except that this generally increased by age and was higher in northern and central England. However, notable high rates of participation in WBL, over the national average, were seen for 17-year-olds generally and for northern and central England at regional and sub-regional level.

Young people NEET in rural areas are included in national targets and have extra policy attention focused on them. Rural young people NEET are one indicator group used to measure whether service delivery in rural areas is as good as it is in urban areas, as part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs’ (Defra’s) Public Service Agreement target to improve access to services in rural areas (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2004). However, services to rural young people NEET are not directly delivered by Defra but through DfES, which highlights the need for mainstream policy to ensure that needs are met equally across the country.

In particular, there is one aspect of service delivery that often introduces greater challenges to rural young people’s post-16 participation – physical access. Young people in rural areas may have to travel up to 40 per cent further than their urban counterparts to access similar services and facilities, including college and employment. This disparity between rural and urban young people is compounded by both a lack of private transport and the high cost and limited availability of public transport in rural areas (Social Exclusion Unit 2004, 2005).

From a rural perspective, young people are of particular interest, as they fall at the lower end of an age group (16-29 years) that is in danger of becoming a lost generation in rural areas. Table 1.4 shows the disparities between rural and urban populations in England in 2001, revealing rural areas to have lower proportions of young people and young adults than urban areas. This disparity is most marked for young adults aged 20-29 years. This is a feature of both general demographic change and the out-migration of young people from rural areas to urban centres.

This social and demographic change reflects the mantra commonly referenced for this age group that, in order to ‘get on’, young people have to ‘get out’ (Jamieson 2000; Gabriel 2006). For example, research in

**Table 1.4 Age structure of rural England (2001)**

Age (years)	Rural population	Percentage of rural total	Urban population	Percentage of urban total	All England population	Percentage of England total
0-15	1,810,966	19.1	8,090,075	20.4	9,901,041	20.2
16	119,405	1.3	510,144	1.3	629,549	1.3
17	116,402	1.2	484,971	1.2	601,373	1.2
18	106,653	1.1	484,470	1.2	591,123	1.2
19	88,356	0.9	498,835	1.3	587,191	1.2
16-19	430,816	4.5	1,978,420	5.0	2,409,236	4.9
20-29	837,344	8.8	5,384,018	13.6	6,221,362	12.7
all ages	9,505,412		39,631,090		49,136,502	

Source: Census 2001, ippr north/CRC analysis

rural Norfolk noted that many young people felt that, to have real career options, they had to leave the area (O'Hanlon *et al* 2001). The decision to migrate is one that has traditionally faced young people in rural areas, as they come to terms with a combination of limited local opportunities for further and higher education, predominantly low-skilled, casual and seasonal labour markets, traditional (gendered) employment opportunities, and weak service and transport infrastructures (Canny 2004; Pavis *et al* 2000; Dey and Jentsch 2000/01; Shucksmith 2004).

Consequently, to a large extent, it is only those young people without the resources to leave (whether personal networks, education and/or financial) who end up staying 'behind'. At the same time, the ability to migrate has to be weighed against the willingness to leave, which may influence young people's decisions. By leaving, they may risk distancing themselves from friends and family, and the strength of community attachments (O'Hanlon *et al* 2001).

Yet young people have rarely featured high up on the rural policy agenda. It is only recently that there have been efforts to promote good practice in the delivery of services for young people in rural areas. But, to date, little policy attention has been paid to, and few responses developed that specifically address, why young people are moving out of rural communities. It is this policy oversight that this report concentrates on correcting, by looking particularly at the connections between local education and employment opportunities, and the impact this has on the life chances of young people.

## Methodology

Our research scrutinises whether there are specific factors stemming from current and future policy actions that may impact on the ability of rural young people to make successful transitions within their local communities, including the role of post-16 participation as part of this transition. The research draws together evidence from a range of sources: statistical analysis of national and local surveys, the experiences of young people aged 16-19 revealed through focus groups, and insights offered through interviews with organisations that are regularly in contact with this age group.

An understanding of the current reality for young people was provided by 12 focus groups that we conducted with young people in rural England during March 2006. Four focus groups were held in each of the following three areas, with young people drawn from the town and surrounding area: Berwick-upon-Tweed (Northumberland), Cockermouth (Cumbria) and Todmorden (West Yorkshire). Greater detail on the local areas can be found in Appendix 1. The context provided in Appendix 1 draws on statistical analysis of data from the Census 2001, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2005, Labour Force Survey 2006 and data provided by Connexions Partnerships from quarterly returns to DfES, including sub-partnership level data provided directly by the respective Connexions Partnerships. Obvious issues present themselves in terms of how accurate data taken from 2001 is five years on, and how representative data for local and unitary authority areas is for smaller areas.

In each area, focus groups were held with the following young people:

- Not in employment, education and training (female)
- Not in employment, education and training (male)
- In employment (mixed)
- In education and training (mixed).

Each focus group had between three and six participants. All participants were aged between 16 and 19 years of age, with the majority having lived in the area in question all their lives, and were drawn from C1/C2DE backgrounds. NEET focus groups were run with a gender split, as this status has traditionally had gendered impacts and influences – teenage pregnancy and care issues for young women, and, for young men, difficulties in finding employment following the decline of traditional industries such as manufacturing and agriculture, and the shift to a predominantly service-based economy (Social Exclusion Unit 2004, 2005; Canny 2004; Cartmel and Furlong 2000).

Participants in Berwick and Cockermouth were recruited through local Connexions offices, so acknowledgement is made that these participants had contact with a support organisation in their local area. In Todmorden, participants were recruited through an accredited market research company (this preferred style of recruitment was not possible in the other two areas). For both forms of recruitment, a

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small incentive was paid to all participants. Each focus group was moderated by at least two ippr researchers, with at least one other member of ippr staff present. All quotes in this report are taken directly from the focus group recordings.

The experiences of young people were complemented by 24 semi-structured interviews conducted with key organisations (public and third sector) in contact with this group. Some of the interviewees were drawn from the same localities as the focus groups, while others were from organisations elsewhere in rural England, or from organisations that had a national remit (within England). The interviews provided an understanding of the challenges facing organisations that work with young people, particularly those in rural areas, as well as providing an overview of the organisations' support for, and/or concerns over, future policy direction and implementation. All interviews were conducted on an informal basis in order to gain honest responses; consequently no direct quotes are reported. A list of the organisations interviewed is provided in Appendix 2; in some instances, more than one individual within an organisation was interviewed.

## Structure of the report

The range of themes identified by our analysis of young people's and interviewees' experiences are reported in the two following chapters. Chapter 2 explores the post-16 transitions of young people NEET in rural areas to provide a greater understanding of what life is like for this group, alongside the current concerns of organisations who are involved with this group. Chapter 3 focuses on the experiences of young people in education and training or work, who are generally viewed as unproblematic by policymakers, with further information provided by various organisations involved with this group. Chapter 4 brings together the different and, frequently, overarching issues identified as current challenges and barriers to young people's successful transitions, and suggests policy levers that could help young people secure the successful future they are entitled to.



## 2. What does NEET really mean?

This chapter offers an insight into the current challenges and aspirations of young people who were categorised as 'NEET': not in employment, education or training. The NEET group has captured the Government's attention. Based on the experiences of young people identified as NEET and the organisations working with them, this chapter asks: is current policy working for NEETs and what barriers still need to be overcome?

### NEETs' expectations and expectations of NEETs

There was an evident contrast between what the young people in the focus groups and the interviewees from organisations thought being NEET meant. Many interviewees reiterated and adhered to the stereotype of NEETs as being in a permanent (not temporary or periodic) state of disengagement from either the labour market or education and training. It was suggested that young people's disengagement was compounded by their rural location; they might be the only NEET in the local community and risked becoming increasingly isolated, desolate and desperate, resulting in little ambition or motivation to improve their situation. However, young people themselves provided a more compelling picture and a more nuanced understanding of the NEET experience in rural areas. The following sub-headings are offered as a guide to the main themes or discourses that emerged from the focus groups, rather than providing a categorisation of 'NEET-hood'.

#### Looking in from the outside

There were instances of the 'traditional' NEET group, characterised by disengagement from education during early teenage years particularly in the case of young men, compounded by other issues such as difficult home lives (sometimes resulting in a period of homelessness). For these young people, their future aspirations were often modified through personal reflection of where they were now, compared to where they thought they could have been (in a 'good job' or at university) if they had 'stuck in' at school.

#### First work and a wage

For some young people, sporadic periods of employment on short-term contracts (factory) or seasonal work (both agricultural and tourism) punctuated the NEET experience. Interviewees highlighted seasonal employment as a factor contributing to greater NEET rates for 17-year-olds, as those who have taken temporary jobs straight from school come to the end of their contract.

There are more summer jobs and then they disappear in the winter. (Berwick, female NEET)

This comment typified the churn that is often talked about – moving in and out of employment and courses. However, for those relying on periods of employment, this was a tenuous situation, as work was often found through family members, but, in some instances, family members were themselves being made redundant. For these individuals, there was no consideration of returning to education or training in the immediate future. If a young adult had made the decision to find work, the possibility of returning to education or training was ruled out as the need for money was paramount.

The possibility of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) impacting on future changes to this decision was negligible. Other studies have shown that the wages earned for short periods of time (which may or may not be national minimum wage rates) may be more attractive than EMA (Suffolk NEET Research Working Group 2005), and that young people from lower socio-economic groups were up to three times more likely to say that earning a wage was more important than continuing in education than young people as a whole (Rennison *et al* 2005).

I am trying to get some work to save money before going back to study. (Cockermouth, male NEET)

I've been thinking about going back to college but I would rather work and make some money. (Todmorden, female NEET)

I can get £45 on the dole, so it's more than the education [maintenance] allowance. (Berwick, male NEET)

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## Pushed to the edge

Some of the young people were a long way from the traditional NEET group, for example individuals who had taken a 'gap year' before starting higher education in order to fund this opportunity but had been unable to find employment. However, it was more common for individuals to be between further education and training courses. This group had often dropped out of the first year of a post-16 education course because it wasn't what they expected or wanted to do, but were planning to return to study at the earliest opportunity. This experience was a further example provided by some interviewees of how NEET rates increase with age, so that by age 17 more have dropped out, often through dissatisfaction with locally available options failing to meet their needs. Within the focus groups, there seemed to be a greater proportion of young women than young men thinking of returning to education.

It was quite boring... I was expecting more lesson hours... I may go to college in Newcastle... I'd expect more work than there was at the sixth form, I'll understand it better and the classes will be bigger. Here there were only five of us. (Berwick, female NEET)

It wasn't my choice to leave sixth form. I was having problems at home and stuff and so I wasn't going into school as much and they basically said I had to leave... They didn't give me any warning, they just called me into the office one day and said you haven't done enough lessons so you have to leave. Oh great, I've wasted a year! I have to wait until September to do anything. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

Whether these individuals will actually return to further education is unknown, so, as with the more traditional NEETs, the lack of employment opportunities, in this instance prior to course start dates, placed these individuals in the NEET category.

## Trapped by lack of options, not aspirations

Young people's NEET status was often impacted on by the lack of alternatives between post-16 participation in education and training and finding direct employment. Many of the young people wanted to become Apprentices but could not find any available places. Despite the recognised greater participation on government-supported training (GST) by young people in the north than in the rest of the country, as the focus groups and interviews revealed, the availability of Apprenticeships in rural areas is constrained by the large numbers of small businesses that may not be able to accommodate an Apprentice, even if they were willing to take on a 16-year-old.

You go into a job centre and it's really hard. Especially being only 16 with no qualifications. If you don't need qualifications, like working in a shop, then they want experience, which you don't have if you are 16. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

It's not fair – they should start us off and we'll get better, and we could go to college a day a week to get better. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

An Apprenticeship idea is good; work in a place and have a day release in a college. That's helpful. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

I am now planning to do plumbing [after changing mind about joining army]. You need an Apprenticeship but it's hard to find an Apprenticeship around here. (Cockermouth, male NEET)

The problem of finding local placements was commented on by a participant who had been on pre-16 work-based learning (WBL):

I wasn't on lessons, spent time in work placement or the study centre. It was only two days out of three, not like a normal week, working with a plumber. But it's hard to get them because there are not that many plumbers out there who will take people from school. (Berwick, in education and training, formerly NEET)

The situation was made more complex by age. Both interviewees and focus groups highlighted the difficulties of younger individuals – 16- and 17-year-olds – in the job market, as they have little experience but may well be competing for jobs with 18- and 19-year-olds, who would often also have further funding attached to their recruitment.

[For lots of jobs] you need experience. Like in retail they don't want 16-year-olds 'cause they have to

train them. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

[For] most jobs you need lots of training; if there is training, you get less wages. (Todmorden, female NEET)

Similarly, experience was seen as the main difficulty encountered in finding their first jobs by those young people who were currently employed.

Experience all the time, lack of experience. (Todmorden, employed)

However, one way round this was through social networks, particularly family contacts. The importance of social networks in finding work has been emphasised in other research, and is particularly important in satisfying demand for unqualified young people, with many employers preferring this form of recruitment as it is seen as 'safe', as prior knowledge and social controls are inbuilt (Cartmel and Furlong 2000; Pavis *et al* 2000; Canny 2004).

Some get work really easily. If your face fits... (Berwick, employed)

My Mum knew people working in the hairdresser. (Cockermouth, employed)

I'm at Sainsbury's. My Mum knew someone at Sainsbury's. I think she put a good word in for me. (Cockermouth, employed)

However, some young people may not use these networks, even preferring to be NEET, if they do not wish to follow friends and family into low-skilled and poorly paid work or risk harming social relationships by taking them into the workplace (McQuaid *et al* 2003).

It was evident that, in all the study areas, there was a common perception among young people, especially 16- and 17-year-olds, that there were few jobs available in the locality, although, in some instances, this was complicated by the jobs available not being what the young person wanted to do, such as cleaning.

[There are] no jobs around, unless you are very qualified, I've been looking for a job for over a year. (Berwick, female NEET)

I've been looking for a couple of years. (Berwick, male NEET)

It gets harder because you have tried everywhere and don't know where else to go. (Cockermouth, male NEET)

The jobs are the same ones so you feel as though you are going round in circles. (Todmorden, female NEET)

## Access

Young people face a particular challenge in physically accessing labour market or education and training opportunities in the form of transport, which interviewees felt was particularly difficult to overcome for rural NEETs. This is not surprising, given that the research focused on a group either too young to drive or on too low an income to afford to maintain private transport. It was felt that the limited availability, and cost, of public transport exacerbated the difficulties of young people who may already be lacking motivation, and so would be more easily deterred from continuing a training course if they had to undertake a long and difficult journey in order to attend. Transport was a problem cited by many participants, and this affected their ability to take up any employment or education opportunity that arose:

It's a nightmare because I have to rely on other people to drive me. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

You have to work out lifts. Sometimes I don't have any bus money so I don't go in. (Berwick, female NEET, recently started adult education)

I'm not sure if I can get on buses for free when I go back to college. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

When you go to (local college) you get £45 and they pay your ticket for the week. But, say you finish at two o'clock, you will have to wait until quarter to five to go home. (Cockermouth, female NEETs)

## Cultures of support

Parents and older siblings were vital sources of advice when young people were making decisions about

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their future, although it was far from clear how much of a long-term perspective the advice had. The importance of parental support cannot be underestimated as an influence on young people's aspirations. There were instances where the young person had been actively discouraged from remaining in education and encouraged to find work, which they had been unable to do, or where the employment found on leaving school had ended and they were currently unemployed. This can be explained in part through class-based parental expectations that further and higher education was not an appropriate route for their child, and/or the need for the young person to contribute to the household income.

I planned on going to college and I went. I talk to my Mum sometimes; she encourages us to get a job. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

I wish I had stayed on at school. I was told I was too thick. My family told me that and look where I am now... I could be somewhere doing college. (Berwick, male NEET, disengaged before 16, whose teachers had encouraged him to stay on)

One further difference between the NEET sub-groups was that young people intending to return to education had parental support to fall back on in the first instance. For example, some parents provided food and accommodation as well as time and encouragement for the young person to make decisions about their future. As a result, some young people NEET still held aspirations to go to university.

An equally valuable source of advice appeared to be provided by Connexions (with the obvious caveat that focus groups in two of the areas were recruited through such local partnerships). Indeed, in the focus group areas, Connexions seemed to be the main provider of 'on the ground' support to NEETs. Many participants spoke well of Connexions – the frequent contact, job information, help with CV preparation and getting college places.

My course just finished. [X] from Connexions is helping me get into [local college], which is another college to do my level up from the Level 1 done [already]. But she is wanting me to start before 1 April, so she is trying to push them to give me an interview, which is good. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

I'd listen more to Connexions because that is what they are there for. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

But, at the end of the day:

They tell you where jobs are, but can't help you get the job. (Cockermouth, male NEET)

However, interviewees from Connexions and other organisations felt that, while they put in a considerable amount of effort advertising the services they provide to young people, 'word of mouth' was vital for this age group (for example, friends saying how useful the service had been to them). Reliance on word of mouth means that, in rural areas, NEETs may be less likely to find out about available services due to their physical distance from the service and also potentially due to their lack of contact with others in a similar situation.

Such comments are not surprising, as organisations that offer advice are dealing with hard-to-reach groups who may be distrustful of any institution. Indeed, the strength of peer advice was seen in the focus groups themselves: on some occasions, advice on benefit claims was passed on by focus group members when they learned about other participants' situations. Interviewees felt that it often took young people time to appreciate the value of advice.

While many young people apparently valued the support received from Connexions, they also had concerns about the advice they received, which highlighted their vulnerability.

The adviser tried to push me into a decision that I didn't want to make. It can be a bit intimidating, advice. If you are offered a job with training then you should accept it. But I want to go to college. (Tadmorden, female NEET)

I didn't have a choice. I wanted to do business admin straight away, but they thought I didn't know what I wanted to do. They made me do E2E [Entry to Employment]. She made me do that after my interview. (Cockermouth, education and training)

Many NEETs felt they were being pushed in certain directions because of targets that organisations had to hit, rather than what they perceived was best for them. These sentiments are reflected in other research, which argues that, in some cases, young people have been pushed into education and training that they

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were not ready for, allegedly as a result of the Connexions service's focus on reducing NEET rates quickly, rather than being able to take time to support a wider range of outcomes for young people (Yates and Payne 2006).

Some young people commented that their situation was a repetition of their experiences at school, where they argued teachers had placed an undue focus on the achievement of exam grades, at the expense of other more wide-ranging advice that they had hoped to receive. This problem was compounded if the young person felt that they were unable to achieve the exam grades that the teachers expected.

## Moving on

Many individuals in the NEET group had limited contact with, or knowledge of, different careers. At the same time, many had aspirations to go to university, knowing which subjects they wanted to study (geography, psychology and textiles were mentioned) but needed further advice on how to go about getting there. There was a widespread feeling among a proportion of the NEET group that to 'get on' they had to 'get out'. But others felt that they just needed to know what broader education, training and employment opportunities were available to them to enable them to get on in their local area. The following quotes show that many NEETs clearly do have aspirations to get on, but that, in some cases, they lack the advice and support, they need to access better training and qualifications.

I'd like [to go to] uni, as you get better training and skills and stuff, and get a better life for myself. I wouldn't go dead far away ... I wouldn't have a clue who to talk to about stuff like that. I looked on the internet, but that was no good. I spoke to people at school. I don't have a clue. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

Go to university and get a job somewhere else, there is nothing to do, no jobs around here. (Cockermouth, male NEET)

I don't want to end up on the dole, I want to do something with my life. I don't want to waste it. (Cockermouth, female NEET)

One future move that some young men were intending to make was to join the Army. This may be a more realisable way of moving forward with their career development, as they had, in most instances, given up on finding work in their local areas. Joining the armed forces is seen as an 'escape route' from local conditions, particularly where local labour markets have collapsed (Coles 1995).

Some had attended taster sessions or been involved as Cadets. The determination to pass selection was evident in focus groups – dietary decisions on a low income, and fitness training were among some of the issues discussed. All were waiting for a time when they knew they would have the best chance of selection, with or without parental consent depending on their age (parental consent is needed up to the age of 18). However, none of them made direct mention of the amount of education and training that they would receive or what would be involved in their basic training and more advanced training – classroom-based instruction forms a large component, and Level 1 qualifications are needed. Yet many of the young people expressed strong motivations to have an army career and leave the local area.

If you don't have school and can't get a job, then you may as well join the Army. (Todmorden, male NEET)

I never studied at school, I was a professional clown and that so I never got GCSEs. I left at 16 and joined the Army and did my training, but I thought I could do better than that. When you are away for a long period, you think there'll be stuff when you come back, but there is nothing. I knew I would probably be on the dole for a while, but I didn't think it would be for as long as I was. They [the Army] told us I can come back, where I left off. If things get really bad, that's my last resort. (Berwick, education and training, just moved out of NEET)

## More vulnerable cases

The groups of young people at greatest risk in England generally are likely to be even more disadvantaged in a rural location – a case of double disadvantage. For example, care leavers may have moved around a lot due to a lack of suitable accommodation in rural areas, and may experience other barriers, such as poor social networks, transport and financial difficulties caused by frequent moves, in turn due to a lack of suitable accommodation in rural areas (Allen 2003).

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Other groups may be less evident or visible. Supporting organisations had concerns about central government's focus on Level 2 qualification attainments, which they argued was overlooking young people who needed further support to attain Level 1.

Another example of vulnerable group cited was young offenders. This group may experience difficulty in picking up their education where they had previously left off, or problems associated with the length of time they had been in an institution. For example, very limited accredited training or qualifications could be achieved by those only in an institution for a short time, or on remand. There is also evidence that ex-offenders are unlikely to return to any studies or training they had started in their 'home' community upon release. Studies of young offenders from rural areas have found that many felt unable to return to the small communities they had grown up in after their release as everyone would know they had been in prison and it would be impossible to shake off their reputation (Howard League undated; Meek 2006).

## Summary

The young people in our focus groups revealed a range of NEET experiences and aspirations for their future. From the evidence provided, even though young people have been identified as NEET and are receiving support, from both rural communities and government policy, in many cases their ambitions are still limited and/or frustrated by the status quo. It is noticeable that, while some young people wished to improve themselves and their future prospects in the local area, many others perceived that this could only be achieved by leaving the rural community.

### 3. Not a problem?

Young people who are in employment, education and training are rarely seen as a specific problem for public policy. They may be beneficiaries of policy to improve their future life chances by widening the range of post-16 options available, such as E2E, A-Levels, NVQs and Apprenticeships, but little wider concern beyond the quality of this provision is discussed in policy documents. But is this group really making the transition into adulthood without any difficulty? Is public policy being too complacent?

#### Expected transitions

In our study only one major inconsistency among the young people in employment, education and training became evident: this was between those studying A-Levels and the rest of their peers. Young people following A-Level courses had clear social and economic mobility in mind: their aim was typically to go to university and get a 'good' job (often already identified, such as barrister), which, in most cases, implied moving away from the local community, on a permanent basis. This group had been personally working towards this aim for a long time, to the extent that they recognised that they had probably not explored other post-16 options. But overall, there was a certainty and confidence about their actions.

Going to uni sounds like a get-out-of-jail-free card. (Todmorden, in education and training)

I've been brought up, taught, even though I know it's wrong, that uni is probably your only way to have a better life. If that's what they say, I thought I'd better do it, 'cause I want to get out of here too! (Todmorden, in education and training)

I didn't have any GCSEs so had to do another year in college, so I thought about whether I wanted a job to be with my friends, but then I realised I would tie myself to Todmorden ... my Mum, my Dad and my girlfriend put it to me you can get out of Todmorden with the equivalent of three A-Levels. (Todmorden, in education and training)

In turn, this group reported the support of their parents and the expectation of their progression to university, often following in their parents' footsteps, recognising that they had been encouraged to have a longer-term perspective on their educational decisions. These sentiments support other research that has found that children of middle-class parents in rural areas have, from a young age, taken it for granted that they would not only find a good job, but that this would involve out-migration, whereas children from working-class backgrounds who do well at school often only come to this decision later (Jamieson 2000).

They just say, 'Whatever you decide to do it's your decision, but we'll support you.' (Cockermouth, in education and training)

I don't feel pressured. The influence is from a good home, stable family, good money, food on the table. [So I've seen what can come from] good jobs and good qualifications. (Todmorden, in education and training)

These kinds of opinions were in direct contrast to those of individuals in employment, whose parents had placed on them the expectation of finding work on leaving school:

My parents ... said I would be better off. (Cockermouth, employed)

My Mum forced me into work. (Cockermouth, employed)

There was a sense that, for those with good GCSE grades, progression to A-Level was automatic and not necessarily suiting the individual. Forthcoming changes to broader area-based opportunities and personalised learning for this age group may benefit such students in future.

They expect ... so much more, and some people have to work slower. (Todmorden, in education and training)

You've got to keep up with everyone else. Sometimes you want to go back and repeat a section to make sure you've got the info, but you have to move on. (Todmorden, in education and training)

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## No option but education

Remaining in education was also undertaken for two other main reasons: delaying the decision of what to do with one's life for another two years, or having no alternative other than unemployment, given few available job opportunities. For example, Cumbrian post-16 participation in education is above the national and regional average. However, young people may be 'drifting through education', without longer-term education goals in mind, but simply in response to a lack of local labour market alternatives (Canny 2004).

It was just me to make the decision to go to college or get a job; there were no jobs. (Berwick, employed)

The lack of alternative options was a worry expressed by many of the interviewees from organisations. They felt that many young people were remaining in education and training on courses that were unsuited to their needs, and that could lead to their disaffection from education and training and, ultimately, becoming NEET due to lack of available work.

However, there is a positive message to be taken from this behaviour; it runs counter to the more established belief that where labour market opportunities are poor, young people become more disinclined to engage in further education or training as they cannot see the value of this investment in enabling them to find work in future, whether this is more qualified, or different, work opportunities in the local area or elsewhere (Payne 2003). Yet the 'forced' nature of participation in education and training was evident in that some young people were more than willing to give up college and not complete their training/qualification to take a job.

If I find a decent enough job, I'll take the job; otherwise, I'll get on at college and that. (Berwick, in education and training)

Only Apprenticeships, again noted as difficult to obtain, seemed to offer a happy medium, combining the ability to earn a wage while receiving practical education and training, with a clear career in mind:

I was maybe going to college full time, but you learn more in the Apprenticeship and you earn money. (Cockermouth, employed)

## Rural location constraining options

Many young people felt that their rural location and the local labour market impacted strongly on their employment chances or decision to continue in education; either through a lack of jobs, or the need for higher qualifications to find full-time, secure work.

Locally, the jobs aren't good. There's not many. (Todmorden, employed)

If I wanted another job, I'd try Manchester. (Todmorden, employed)

There are no job prospects. There is quite a lot of stuff if you went to college. You have to move away because the options aren't around, you can only get supermarket, restaurants, hairdressers. (Cockermouth, employed)

There [aren't] the jobs. A lot of jobs are for 18 plus; you need college. (Cockermouth, employed)

Two forms of work were commonly mentioned as being the main available options: part-time work, which was often the best obtainable given the perceived state of the labour market; and full-time, but insecure, seasonal/contractual work. Seasonal employment is a common occurrence in many rural areas, involving activities such as food harvesting and processing, or tourism.

I don't like that there's no full-time jobs. Everyone is getting paid off, so there is no work... (Berwick, employed)

If you do get factory work, it's just till Christmas at [X]'s over there; they lay you off at Christmas. You just work in the summer, then they lay you off. (Berwick, in education and training)

Although not mentioned in the focus groups or by interviewees, elsewhere, for example in the East of England, skilled migrant workers, including young people earning money to complete university degrees, are being employed in traditional seasonal occupations (Schneider *et al* 2005; Commission for Rural



Communities 2006b).

Dissatisfaction with the range of courses that were offered locally was also voiced as a constraint. This was particularly the case in Berwick where, if the local sixth form did not offer a course that the young person wanted to follow, instead they had to travel to Newcastle (around one hour by train), or attend the nearest FE college, 53 miles away (which involved a bus journey of around two hours). Elsewhere, the Cumbrian focus group participants expressed concerns about the different reputations of local colleges.

A lot of people left the school because there are not enough courses; they go down to Newcastle because there are more opportunities. (Berwick, in education and training)

They don't offer a lot of courses ... not a lot of opportunities. But if you go further down the country, like Leeds, they'll have more offered to them. (Berwick, in education and training)

The local high school isn't that good, so people don't have many opportunities. People go into a lot of trades where they don't really leave Todmorden, like building and that. (Todmorden, in education and training)

## Barriers to young people's future progress

### Transport

Transport was a large consideration for many young people in their decision to continue participation in education and training or to find work – could they get there at all, and, even if they could, how much would it cost? Prices for a day's travel ranged from £2 to £15.

I wanted to go to college, but I had to back out because I couldn't get there by transport. Now [I can drive] I'm thinking of going to college. (Cockermouth, employed)

I was thinking of Newcastle College, but I thought it was too expensive 'cause of the train and stuff. It's far easier being near Berwick school. (Berwick, in education and training)

I have to get up at 6:30. First bus to Newcastle is at 6:50. It takes about an hour to do 30 miles, then another bus, which is another hour. By the time I've got there and back ... it's five pound a day. (Berwick, in education and training)

These quotes support other evidence that has found the availability of transport had a strong influence on young people's decisions. In one study, 40 per cent of 15- to 16-year-olds from rural areas said that the availability of transport played a part in their decision over whether or not to enter post-16 education (Storey and Brannen 2000). Elsewhere, the availability of transport has been identified as a significant influence on work and career aspirations (O'Hanlon *et al* 2001). Interviewees readily extolled the need for young people to have access to transport, and particularly the support offered to young people in rural areas in the form of Wheels to Work (W2W).

The area-based W2W schemes have been operating for a number of years, and provide a means of access to employment or education and training opportunities for rural residents, generally those aged under 25 years and resident in areas where public transport is inadequate. W2W schemes generally offer individuals their own transport for a short period until a longer-term solution can be found. This usually involves the loan of a moped for six months (although some schemes offer a loan for a longer 12-month period), but can include a bicycle loan or a minor grant towards vehicle repairs or subsidised driving lessons. All schemes require the young adult to have a firm offer of employment, training or further education in order to qualify for assistance. Another main criterion is that there is no suitable alternative transport available; for example, if someone works shift patterns that are outside the times of public transport provision. There is also usually a requirement that clients are in financial need.

The Countryside Agency supported the majority of rural W2W schemes through its Rural Transport Partnership funding, but, following a reorganisation of rural delivery, responsibility transferred to the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). Existing scheme coverage is patchy, and often the result of local funding availability, rather than reflecting local needs, leaving some young people in potential need excluded from schemes.

A recent evaluation of W2W (Commission for Rural Communities 2005) found that the schemes were

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providing clear benefits to young adults, agencies such as Connexions, LSCs and RDAs, and other groups, such as local employers and colleges. For example, in one scheme, six out of the 21 participants had been NEET before being accepted onto the scheme. Some of the interviewees indicated that regional or sub-regional strategies were being developed for funding new schemes on a more systematic basis. For example, the North West RDA is working to roll out W2W throughout the region; and, in Yorkshire and the Humber, support for W2W is focused on making provision consistent across sub-regions.

## Cultures of support

As soon as a young adult enters employment, support organisations reduce or stop their contact. However, young people in employment may be in need of IAG, for example if they become aware that the job is not for them and need guidance on available options. Although some young people valued work and wages above training, there were others who, after entering the world of work, had become disenchanted and felt that further education and training would improve their chances of getting a better job and overall career prospects. Recognition of the risk of being locked into poorly paid, semi-skilled jobs has been noted in connection with the lack of internal training young people employed in rural firms receive, and the resultant impacts on career development; and, conversely, where training is provided, how this is recognised outside the organisation (Rugg and Jones 1999; Cartmel and Furlong 2000; Canny 2004).

They said I could go to sixth form but I didn't want to 'cause I thought I just wanted to start work, so I did that for five months but didn't like it and it was too late to go back to sixth form so I did other jobs ... I didn't like the jobs. Cleaner at [a holiday park] in Penrith. Bus journey there and back everyday, I didn't know anyone, it was really hard. Someone in my family worked there and brought the application form, so I filled it in and got an interview. Connexions stayed in touch with us a little bit but didn't tell us much about what I could do. Then once I had a job they said 'Oh, alright then'. Looking back now there is a lot of options you can do when you leave school, but I don't think I was told about them properly. I didn't know what [local college] is, I didn't know much about different colleges or sixth forms. [Local college] is not for thick people, but people who didn't do as well as they could but want to do some training to better themselves and get a future job. (Cockermouth, in education and training)

Many young people felt they had received little, or poor, careers advice, or were not made fully aware of available opportunities. Many recognised Connexions' role in getting people onto training courses, but all felt that the careers advice they were offered prior to leaving compulsory education was poor. Advice had focused on the subjects that people were good at, rather than what they wanted to do, and some young people were actively dissuaded from following a particular path (one example being a young woman who was told by two different advisers that she could not become an electrician).

I had two meetings with them and it wasn't very informative. I said I wanted to do music, then they couldn't say anything. They had me for the obligatory fifteen minutes then packed me off and had the next one in. (Todmorden, in education and training)

The lack of career role models and inability to see a range of other real jobs has been noted as hindering rural young people's career aspirations (O'Hanlon *et al* 2001). It may also be the case that parents and others, such as Connexions advisers, need to be aware of, and promote, different (non-traditional) career opportunities.

## Money

Obviously, for those who had entered employment, earning a wage was a significant feature of that decision. Even those young people who anticipated going to university felt that any debt accrued through tuition fees and loans would be well spent with regard to the better job opportunities they expected to find on graduating. This is in direct contrast to other research conducted with young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, where the risk of debt (through loans and forthcoming tuition fees) actively put off young people from higher education opportunities or led to their dropping out (Forsyth and Furlong 2003).

Money only featured in focus group conversations in relation to the cost of transport to work/training (see above) and the impact of EMAs. Previous research has suggested that there is evidence of lower awareness and take up of EMAs in rural areas (Perron *et al* 2003). EMAs were mentioned, although not to any great extent, and the reflection on household income may have held back comments in focus groups. EMAs

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seemed to make it more likely that young people who had been inclined to, or who had considered, education and training, would continue participation in education and training post-16, rather than altering initial decisions.

I don't do it for the money, I do it for the course. (Todmorden, returnee to education)

I can't even get a part-time job in Berwick, I have to rely on my EMA. (Berwick, education and training)

However, there were occasional adverse impacts of the household income-based means test for those young people where the parental income was over the EMA threshold, but whose parents would not offer financial support to remain in education and training. This was perhaps a reflection of step-family negotiations and/or the expectation that, once you reached a certain age (typically 16 years, but 14 years was noted), you had to support yourself.

## Career progression

Many of the young people in employment, education and training had distinct careers in mind, with a selected or favoured route to achieving this accompanied by the desire to be successful. Emphasis was placed on a career, rather than simply finding work. Intended career paths and occupations included nursing, barrister, bar manager, hairdressing, music producer, interior design and the armed forces (Navy, Wrens, Army and Royal Air Force).

I'm doing an NVQ in food so then I can do my bar supervisor course, then go into bar management and one day, hopefully, it could lead to something bigger. (Todmorden, employed)

Only one young adult considered how his future career could also help other young people to progress, possibly reflecting his Apprenticeship experience.

Ten years' time – owning my own business as a painter and decorator and giving young people opportunities aged sixteen, bring them on, let them be good at the job. (Berwick, employed)

Only two people in employment did not regret doing better at school or doing something different. It was more common for young people in employment without accredited training to have regrets about the path that they had taken, however willingly.

If you've got the brains for it, stay on and do A-Levels, go to university or go to college. (Berwick, employed)

This typifies the contrasting impacts of those who remain in their local community, dealing with the disappointments of failed or constrained ambition, and those who value continued family and friendship networks to balance their labour market situation (Jamieson 2000).

## Rural pull or rural push?

For some young people, the strength of the local community and the fears of city life were considerations when deciding whether they would leave the area, particularly those going to university and living away from home.

I've got quite a close support network. In Todmorden, everyone knows everyone's business... In the city it's colder. No one smiles at you, they look at the floor. Here you walk down the street and are stopped five times. (Todmorden, education and training)

I don't think I could cope with living in the city. It would come down to money, not having enough money to buy stuff, here it's a lot cheaper. Not having my mates there either, it's hard to go somewhere and start making mates whereas here I've already got all my mates. (Berwick, employment)

One stark contrast presented itself between those young people in education and those in employment. Young people in work saw their future in the local area (although some planned to leave but return at a later date), yet none of the young people in education saw any future for themselves in their local area, many going to university and as a result leaving the area. The decision to go on to higher education has

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been portrayed as reflecting 'an unthinking progression through education rather than a conscious rejection of rural life' (Rugg and Jones 1999: 27), yet the focus groups and other research (see Shucksmith 2004) clearly show that this is far from the case.

I'd come back to visit my family but nothing else. (Berwick, in education and training)

[I wouldn't come back] unless things change radically, wages are better in London. (Berwick, in education and training)

Hopefully [I'll have] finished university and started getting a job. I'd want to go away. (Cockermouth, in education and training)

I want to go down south to uni and stuff ...

I want to go to uni away from here and live away from here... (Cockermouth, in education and training)

Maybe move somewhere for a year, couple of years in Newcastle or Edinburgh, but end up coming back, all my mates are here. If I could find a full-time job here, I'd stay. (Berwick, employed)

I'd like to move away and start a new life but I've got friends and family here ... I'd probably come back when I was much older, when I was retired. (Berwick, employed)

With respect to young people's preferences and expectations of staying in the area for the immediate and medium term, the research findings reflect previous research. Ford *et al* (1997) identified four groupings of young people: 'committed leavers', who are looking to move away from the area and expect to do so; 'reluctant stayers', who are looking to move away from the area but think it will be hard to do; 'reluctant leavers', who prefer to stay in the area but think they will be unable to; and 'committed stayers', who prefer to stay and expect to do so.

Ford *et al* identified most young people as 'committed leavers' who planned to go to further or higher education elsewhere. However, many felt they would like to return to the rural areas in 10 or 15 years' time. 'Reluctant stayers' usually felt they lacked the skills or experience to allow them to leave, reflecting the limited labour market opportunities in many rural areas. Around half of those who preferred to stay thought they would not be able to, mainly because of the lack of job opportunities and the cost of housing locally. These 'reluctant leavers' all had a love of the area and a sense of remaining within a supportive network of family and local friends. 'Committed stayers' shared this sense of belonging but were lucky enough to have found skilled and secure employment locally, allowing them to remain in the area.

## Summary

Young people have revealed that their transitions are far from problem-free. In coming to terms with what may be unsatisfactory or unsatisfying jobs, and wanting to make the most of what is available to them to improve their future prospects, young people, particularly in employment, require some form of IAG support. From young people's accounts, it is clear that rural communities will continue to lose a significant proportion of their younger population unless employment prospects improve.

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## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

Central government is seriously concerned about the current and future prospects of 16- to 19-year-olds. There is a commitment to social justice and an entitlement to a successful transition to adulthood. This implies a commitment to equality of access to post-16 education and training opportunities. This report has focused on these overarching concerns within the current rural context, and has provided greater understanding of the barriers and opportunities facing young people in making a successful transition to adulthood.

Commonalities and differences between young people's transitions were found, which were compounded by local circumstances, particularly local labour markets and access to education and training opportunities available locally. *This creates concerns from a social justice perspective as to whether rural young people have the support they require to make a successful transition to adulthood.*

Achieving a successful future is vital for both young people and rural communities. Below we identify four key conclusions. In summary these are:

- Government focus on identifying and targeting support to NEETs is inadvertently failing to support other rural young people.
- Poor local labour markets are impacting on young people's economic futures.
- Improvements to post-16 participation will not succeed unless broader economic development is also undertaken.
- Strategies for re-engaging young people in education and training currently fail to take into account rural needs.

Building on these conclusions, and recognising forthcoming policy initiatives, we look forward and note four key issues that will need to be addressed if the life chances of young people in rural areas are to be improved. In summary these are:

- Post-16 participation and delivery of 14-19 reforms
- Future provision of subsidised transport
- National entitlement to education and training to age 19
- Cultures of support.

Recommendations to overcome the identified barriers are provided later in this chapter.

### Concluding comments

#### 1. Government is overly attentive to NEETs

Public policy has focused on the group of young people referred to as NEETs. The research suggests that young people who are NEET are usually identified by the system in rural areas. This may well be because the system (primarily Connexions) appears actively geared towards them. But a range of young people's experiences and needs are incorporated under the 'NEET' label, and it is far from certain whether young people are getting the support they need to fully realise their aspirations. As such, the value of the NEET label and targeting is called into question.

The attention and support focused on NEETs, while valuable and worthy of continuation, particularly for young people with complex needs, means that other young people are inadvertently missed. These young people are often in the middle of educational attainment and in relatively poor labour market situations (in work, but in far from secure employment, which may be part-time, or in a cycle of seasonal employment and unemployment). As such, even though this group is currently 'getting by', their longer-term prospects and economic inclusion are being overlooked.

Our research has highlighted young people's limited awareness of ways in which they could escape the cycle of low skills and progress in the local labour market. Young people in employment, including part-

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time employment, receive little further advice from support organisations once they start work; contact is significantly reduced at a time when they may need further IAG and broader information on their rights, such as contracts and minimum wage entitlements.

Many young people wish to stay in their local community, but realise that in doing so, their future career options may be constrained. This has particular consequences in rural areas where few alternative jobs, let alone careers or training options, are available, leaving these young people not only behind but also stuck. These young people risk being trapped in a low-wage and low-skilled future, which is the case too for the rural communities in which they live, unless purposeful action is taken.

## 2. Taking into account local labour market conditions

Local labour market conditions affect the opportunities presented to young people when leaving compulsory education and deciding whether to invest themselves in the local area by staying to live and work there. Many young people, on leaving school, are pushed into finding work, or expected to find work in the locality, only to discover that such work simply is not there. Such experiences beg questions as to what information young people have about the prevailing local labour market conditions before making the decision to seek work.

A need for greater information, advice and guidance (IAG) on the current labour market situation exists, rather than simply attempting to provide IAG in response to larger considerations such as industrial restructuring, which has often been the focus of actions in rural areas dealing with the decline of traditional manufacturing and mining industries. Improvements to the quality of IAG provision are intended to provide young people with information and guidance about the local and national labour market (Department for Education and Skills 2005c). However, such information should also be targeted at parents through area-based prospectuses, and potentially through greater parental involvement with the school during the final year of compulsory schooling. It is important to ensure that parents and guardians know the current local labour market situation so that they can promote and discuss all options equally to young people. The impartial right to IAG about different career choices has been noted as an 'essential' element of young people's welfare (Coles 1995: 56).

Placing emphasis on parents could be vital given that social networks have an important role in helping young people, who may lack previous work experience, find Apprenticeships and employment (even low-skilled work). However, reliance on social networks, mainly relatives, often means that young people follow traditional, often gendered, occupations.

Rather than just looking to traditional occupations, there is a need for a greater range of role models and a greater awareness of new opportunities and job types, and for education and training to be tailored towards these broader opportunities over all levels. For example, from autumn 2006, Northumberland County Council will be working with local high schools and sixth forms to increase 14- to 18-year-olds' awareness of public sector employment, this sector being the largest employer in the county.

Part-time work is not a stepping stone to full-time employment or secure labour market progression for young people. Cartmel and Furlong (2000) note that little is actually known as to whether part-time employment acts as a process of labour market integration or marginalisation (for example, it may provide up-to-date experience to put on a CV, and access to job information and networks, and enable employers to screen for future employees, which could have positive or negative outcomes for the young person). However, in areas with poor local economies, whether rural or not, part-time work may represent the best (year-round) employment option available. One reason for this in rural areas is that there are few large employers; the vast majority of rural businesses are small to medium sized enterprises, which are also susceptible to economic/sectoral downturns (McQuaid *et al* 2003).

By engaging in seasonal work, young people can often earn relatively good wages on short-term or casual contracts. Seasonality is often taken into account, even taken for granted, in young people's employment strategies and by their parents in terms of contributions to the household income, with many young people continuing in this, often lucrative, employment until their early twenties. However, despite this being an initially positive school-leaving destination, a reliance on seasonal employment enhances the likelihood of young people becoming trapped in dead-end jobs, or a cycle of on-season employment and off-season unemployment, with failed attempts to return to learning (see Suffolk NEET Research Working Group 2005). This can, in turn, modify both the working patterns and opportunities that young people expect locally.

### 3. Separation of economic development from education and skills policy

If rural areas are to become more viable as places for young people to remain and have a successful future, and communities are to be sustainable, from a social as well as a broader economic and environmental perspective, then greater attention has to be given by government and others to developing a range of employment prospects in these areas. For example, in today's knowledge economy, if businesses are to relocate, expand or start up in rural areas, measures need to be introduced so that a skilled workforce is available to recruit. Otherwise many rural areas will continue to experience a low-wage and low-skilled economy with poor career opportunities, meaning that the old adage will stay true, that to 'get on' young people have to 'get out'.

Greater encouragement from public policy (though not necessarily financial support) could be offered to promote more diversified local economies; for example, encouraging more skilled employment within the tourism industry. There is also a need for improved awareness of the range of professional roles required to meet future energy needs and the health and social care requirements of the significant proportions of older people in rural communities.

If young people are to be encouraged to take up post-16 education and training, then they (along with parents and others) need to be able to see the value of obtaining further qualifications. Take-up of post-16 education and training is unlikely in areas with poor commuting connections to large towns and cities, or among people with poor aspirations to move out of the area to find improved careers. But more importantly, there need to be better career prospects in the rural areas themselves to enable young people to stay or encourage young adults to return.

Currently, what might be argued as being best for the rural community may not necessarily be the best option for young people. For example, retaining young people in rural communities may well maintain social support networks but can confine them to low-skilled and insecure employment. This is a position that many young people are aware of, and have to come to terms with, particularly with respect to their future life chances, when deciding whether to remain in the local area or leave.

### 4. Re-engagement with education, training and employment - how rural doesn't fit

Consideration needs to be given to the length of time for which young people must be registered as unemployed before programmes to re-engage them in the labour market or education are offered. The Activity Agreement and Allowance (AA) pilots require a young person to be NEET for 20 weeks out of the previous 23 before they are eligible. Attention here and more generally is focused on longer-term NEETs, but interventions and support programmes should be offered earlier. In rural areas, the 20-week limit may well mean that problems stemming from seasonal employment are missed.

Similarly, for young people of 18 years and over, the New Deal is generally only available to those registered as unemployed for a minimum of six months, again risking trapping young adults in a cycle of seasonal employment and unemployment, and failing to provide the opportunity to gain new skills and opportunities for better-paid, more permanent employment (Commission for Rural Communities 2006c). This emphasises the need for a move into some form of labour market security to provide the basis for a career and working life, rather than simply a move into work.

The different forms of employment that young people commonly undertake are well known, but are not taken into account by education and training providers/institutional provision. For example, post-16 education and training course start dates often clash with the end of tourist and land-based seasons, and this sets young people on a constant cycle between NEET to seasonal employment to NEET.

Schools and colleges do not take new entries or have a second course start in January, let alone a third in April, for higher-level qualifications, when this may actually fit the education, training, employment and financial needs of young people and their wider households. For example, in Northumberland, research exploring widening participation in learning highlighted start dates as a barrier to those working in land-based industries, and found that 50 per cent of those surveyed would have preferred enrolments during January and April, as well as September (Tulett 2001).

Similarly, readily accessible part-time courses, to assist those in part-time work, may be needed. It is those young people who, at first glance, appear engaged in the local labour market – through part-time or seasonal work – that may experience difficulties moving on to a secure career pathway.

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Young people in work rarely received accredited training, or support for further training, unless they were on Apprenticeships. Despite GST being more common in the northern regions compared to the rest of England, it was evident from the research that few Apprenticeships were available outside the main urban centres (with implications for WBL places). Within rural areas, this was primarily due to the prevalence of small businesses, that were unable to provide such opportunities, alongside a noted unwillingness to take on school leavers. It could be said that demand for Apprenticeships outstrips supply in rural areas. In turn, this limits the opportunities for young people who are work-ready, but who may lack vocational skills, to gain work experience and skills in a specific sector with recognised accreditation, and to access new employment opportunities.

The difficulty in finding local training placements for broader curriculum activity, particularly in sectors that mainly comprised small to medium sized businesses, was also noted by the 14-19 Pathfinder initiatives (Higham and Yeomans 2006). This highlights one of many potential issues for the success of 14-19 provision in rural areas, discussed below.

Few young people aged 16 to 17 years take up their legal right to training. This may be due to a range of contributing factors – young people’s lack of awareness of this right; difficulty in accessing training courses; or employers’ lack of awareness, or ability to provide training or release a member of staff for a day a week. Research has shown that, among Cumbrian employers, only larger employers expect their employees to progress in the company (in smaller firms, the better jobs go to family members) and few expect young people to be with the firm in five years’ time. Consequently, investment in training may not be a prime concern of businesses employing young people (Canny 2004).

There may be other hidden considerations. For example, the link between training and securing ‘quality’ jobs, or the demarcation between those jobs that can be obtained with and those without training, is argued to be less visible in rural areas than in urban areas (Cartmel and Furlong 2000). Based on the young people’s experiences informing this research, this is true to an extent. But young people in areas with greater connections to urban centres, and/or with middle class backgrounds, were aware of the link between post-16 participation and improved job prospects, including the wage premium obtained from further (higher level) qualifications.

Attempts to increase training through Learning Agreement (LA) pilots may boost understanding of what incentives need to be offered to employers (as well as employees) to encourage the greater take-up of training by those in work. This could be particularly relevant for small to medium sized employers in rural areas, and could go some way to meeting the unsatisfied demand for training. Some of the eight LA pilots are in rural districts. However, the pilots only began in April 2006, and it is too early to report on lessons that could be learned.

## Barriers to participation

### 1. Delivering reforms around post-16 participation

Many young people look to education and training options as a last resort, to be taken up only when employment prospects were poor, rather than considering both education and training, and employment as equivalent options. In some cases, local course availability and travel to institutions impact on the decision-making process, and, ultimately, on engagement.

In reality, many young people are pushed into post-16 participation through poor local economic circumstances, rather than preference. In turn, they are often ‘expected to “fit in” to a system’ (Shucksmith 2004: 52). The risk of drop-out that this creates must be recognised; many young people would give up their course and leave without qualifications if a ‘good job’ came along.

This is compounded further by young people appearing to be pushed into certain courses in order for local organisations and institutions to meet targets. This may reflect a need for a greater embracing of education and training by young people, employers and IAG providers, and emphasises that post-16 participation ‘must be participation with a purpose’ (Department for Education and Skills 2005c: 73).

A problem for public policy and post-16 participation is that there are young people who want to work but cannot, and so enrol in post-16 courses without enthusiasm or recognition of how further training may assist their future labour market position, yet there are young people who want to take up post-16



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opportunities but cannot because of lack of local availability.

One option that immediately presents itself is greater promotion, and possible extension from pilot status, of the Further Education Residential Support Programme. This support, which is means tested, enables young people to attend a LSC Level 2 or 3 recognised course at a number of FE colleges, if the college is beyond reasonable daily travel<sup>2</sup> (LSC 2006). In earlier trials, the main beneficiaries of residential support were 16- to 18-year-olds, who had little awareness before enrolment of the support (Institute for Employment Studies 2003). This support programme is part of a wider DfES Further Education Learner Support Fund, managed by the LSC, which, in 2004-05, totalled around £64 million, with 38 per cent of this used to assist 16- to 19-year-old students with transport and residential costs (Cuddy and Leney 2005).

One challenge is presented for the forthcoming expansion of vocational training opportunities (diplomas) on an area-wide basis. In theory, this should meet some of the excess demand for education and training, and improve the social and economic mobility of young people. But, given the current infrastructure and provision in rural areas, it is doubtful that such opportunities can be offered equally across areas.

Some innovative ways forward have been seen in 14-19 Pathfinder trials. E-learning is one method of expanding vocational teaching through non-classroom-based teaching support, trialled in Cumbria and Hampshire, and more generally the success of Learn Direct is widely noted. Local skills centres have also been trialled – a central location is chosen, to minimise distances that need to be travelled to take part in training and to cut the costs of provision by providing courses in one location, although done primarily to enhance 14-16 provision (see Hampshire, undated).

Can the first five diploma options (creative and media, construction and the built environment, engineering, health and social care, and information technology) as discussed in Chapter 1 be realistically delivered by 2008? The general feeling among interviewees was that the 14-19 curriculum will be harder to provide in rural areas, as small schools will be unable to offer the range of options, and lack the vocational learning opportunities. The new 14-19 prospectus, including diploma options, is to be provided on an area-wide basis, so that each young person will have access to each of the lines within a reasonable distance of home (Department for Education and Skills 2005b: 57); what a 'reasonable' distance is, in this instance, will need qualification. There are concerns about the ability of young people to travel between institutions to complete the forthcoming diploma courses and about the varying availability of subsidised transport and available routes in rural areas (Kingston 2006).

Local decision-makers can take into account cross-boundary demand patterns when providing diploma courses (Department for Education and Skills 2005c). This may help some young people, but an evident risk emerges that, without careful attention, this may inadvertently reduce course opportunities for some young people in rural areas. Consequently, innovative responses may have to be found.

An example of one such innovative response is the Berwick Youth Project (see Commission for Rural Communities 2006d). This offers supported and affordable accommodation to young people aged 16-25. Some may have had to leave home because of difficulties and are supported in making the transition to independent living, but, for others, accommodation is provided so that young people can live in the town and access training or jobs, which they would have been unable to do if they had stayed in the parental home. Consequently, government may need to consider creating residential places at colleges to deliver equal access to post-16 entitlements. Examples of this currently exist in the form of residential agricultural colleges and Army residential training colleges for 16- to 19-year-olds, where a range of academic and vocational courses are taught in a supported environment.

A further issue for successfully implementing the 14-19 agenda is that of institutional independence in rural areas. Despite professed greater willingness for cross-institutional working at post-16 in 14-19 Pathfinder pilots (Higham and Yeomans 2006), many interviewees commented that, where schools had attached sixth forms, this led to increased competition between institutions to attract younger students (11-16 years), and added motivation to maintain independence, rather than partnership working, in post-16 provision. Consequently, far greater efforts will have to be made to ensure that institutions work together to provide the range of envisaged opportunities.

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2. Reasonable daily travel, in this instance, is defined as: less than two hours by public transport, or under 15 miles from the student's home, or requiring only one change on public transport.

There was suspicion among interviewees that the contribution of the school to the local community and local course access would be used as arguments to hold back cross-institutional provision in rural areas. Employing a dedicated manager for cross-institutional delivery of the 14-19 agenda may be vital to resolve these issues. A dedicated manager was seen as one element of successful 14-19 Pathfinders (Higham and Yeomans 2006), and may well be of significant value to enable 14-19 delivery in a rural context: to co-ordinate timetabling, transport, provide a neutral decision as to where different courses are to be located across institutions, and, where appropriate, to negotiate cross-boundary delivery.

The costs of collaborative working for the 14-19 agenda also have to be borne in mind. For the 14-19 Pathfinders (15 in total throughout England), costs for collaborative working ranged from £61,832 to £832,300 per year (York Consulting Limited 2005). Costs were most affected by the size of the Partnership. So a small Partnership, perhaps more likely to be found in a rural area (involving one college, eight schools and 1,400 young people aged 14-19), had an estimated annual cost of £198,000, whereas costs for a large Partnership (involving seven colleges, 27 schools and 7,100 young people aged 14-19) were £476,000 per year (York Consulting Limited 2005). However, costs were likely to decline over time, and greater cost savings were more readily achieved for 16-19 provision, for example South Gloucestershire saved £80,000 per year through sharing Level 3 courses (Higham and Yeomans 2006).

## 2. Subsidised transport

The impacts of subsidised transport must not be underestimated with respect to the success or failings of broad post-16 participation, now and in the future. Currently, LEAs have discretionary powers to provide free transport to the nearest suitable school/college for post-16 students. During 2003-04, funding for post-16 transport paid to LEAs and local LSCs by the Government amounted to £14 million (Steer Davies Gleave 2003).

However, a recent trend has emerged towards charging for post-16 education transport. For example, Northumberland County Council provides subsidised travel at a cost of £360 per year to all full-time students at sixth forms, further education and specialist colleges, living over three miles away from their nearest college. Travel to other schools/colleges is only provided if their chosen course is not available at their nearest institution and is 'essential to their further/higher education or career progression' (Northumberland County Council 2006). A similar policy operates within Cumbria (Cumbria County Council 2006): Calderdale provides free transport as long as a young person's travelcard is purchased (current cost £2), to be used alongside the transport pass. Travel is not restricted to the nearest institution, and cross-boundary travel is permitted if the nearest institution is outside the boundary. This policy also applies to those in WBL (Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council 2006).

LEAs have a statutory duty to ensure that students are not prevented from going to college because fares are too high or there are no services to take them there (Department for Education and Skills 2006c). It is evident that this requirement has varied interpretations. This is despite the Government placing a duty on LEAs to ensure that no student aged 16-19 years is prevented from accessing or taking part in further education due to a lack of transport, and that all students have reasonable opportunities for choice between institutions.

Government guidance also encourages LEAs to extend subsidised transport provision to part-time students, and states that there should be no blanket ban on cross-boundary travel and support without taking individual circumstances into account, and that sufficient transport provision must be made for students in rural areas. It also states that it is not acceptable for EMAs to be relied upon to cover all transport costs, as this erodes the incentive effect of EMAs – one-third of EMA used to pay for transport costs is deemed the accepted maximum (Department for Education and Skills 2006c). It is clear that the impacts of transport costs and availability need further attention.

Earlier transport initiatives included the piloting of an EMA specifically for transport (EMA(T)). This aimed to encourage young people from low-income households to continue in post-16 education and training by helping with travel costs to and from sixth form or college. The EMA(T) piloted different models (some free transport regardless of distance; others free transport if over three miles, or at a discounted rate). Evaluation of the pilots found no consistent impact on education decisions, but that eligible students in rural pilot areas were more likely to be in FTE but had the lowest awareness of EMA(T)s and were least likely to apply for it, suggesting that, as public transport availability is lower in rural areas, the value of the subsidy was effectively reduced (Perren *et al* 2003).

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Another recent transport initiative aiming to maximise the participation and retention of young people in post-16 education was the Transport Development Pathfinder, with 70 local authorities involved and support amounting to £5 million during 2002-03. Evaluation of the Pathfinder revealed that there was a notable difference between the responses of rural and urban authorities. Rural authorities were concerned with meeting identified gaps in service provision by connecting remote areas to colleges, either through linking with main bus services or providing mopeds where conventional responses would not be effective. In contrast, urban authorities concentrated on supporting students who encountered financial hardship in using transport (Steer Davies Gleave 2003). The evaluation stated that there was need for 'close working' between the DfES and Department for Transport (DfT) 'to achieve wider transport and education objectives' (ibid: paragraph 30).

Current policy suggests that Further Education Learner Support Funds (through which government makes funding available to LEAs and colleges to assist students in financial hardship) should be used to enhance transport services and support. And that, during 2006/07, Transport Partnership Funding (paid directly to Local Authorities by LSCs) should be used to support students in attending different institutions and assist those facing high costs such as those living in rural areas, in order to level the playing field. While some funding seems to be available, there is still a clear need for consistent support to ensure transport options do not impinge on young people's opportunities for post-16 participation.

### 3. National entitlement to education and training up to 19 years of age

The introduction, and resultant recognition, of a national entitlement to education and training until 19 years of age may assist young people in taking up post-16 opportunities. However, given the traditional contexts in which many young people find themselves, it may take some time before 19 years, instead of 16, is recognised as the accepted cut-off point for education and training, for social, economic and structural reasons.

Social and economic pressures for young people to find work, and contribute to the household income, can only be exacerbated by an extended right to education and training. The belief that young people need to be self-supporting after compulsory school age may place increased pressure on young people to support their continued participation in education and training, particularly in households where the EMA may not be payable. In any case, it is doubtful that the EMA could fully cover all the costs involved in a young person remaining in education.

The entitlement may have little impact on the rates of rural young people who go on to higher education. Those who may be academically suited to higher education may often face the same pressures as those experienced by other young people trying to remain in education and training at 16; cultural expectations (notably parental support), awareness of potential careers and immediate financial constraints, and transport will, in the short term, have greater influence, with movement out of the local area a further factor – incentive or deterrent – to be taken into account by young people.

### 4. Support stopping at the age of 19

Our research has stressed the importance of support organisations. There was widespread concern over cut-off for support at age 19, reiterating concerns set out in other research focused on young people (Social Exclusion Unit 2005). Most Connexions interviewees did not know what happened to their client group once they reached the age of 19 and were no longer eligible for support. Many organisations felt that some young people may need further support, for example those with complex histories, who may be playing 'catch-up', and may just be making progress when support is removed, making the young adult feel that they have failed again, and meaning they require further support and more resources at a later date. One Connexions partnership was experimenting with having a Personal Advisor in JobCentre Plus offices, so that the consistency of support could be maintained. However, JobCentre Plus is being rationalised. Some partnerships are now responsible for All-Age Guidance, so that the provision is seamless from a user's perspective.

Forms of IAG provision for young people will change between 2006 and 2008, depending on how local areas choose to commission this service, with the potential for it to become integrated within a wider range of local services (Department for Education and Skills 2005a). This may help those young people for whom continued support post-19 is vital for their personal progression, and those with complex needs. However, attention will have to be given to ensure that support to young people in rural areas does not decline, or

resort purely to dealing with those experiencing the greatest problems, given that, potentially, resources may be more stretched and services harder to provide for the relatively low numbers of young people in rural populations.

## Recommendations

Understanding the barriers and opportunities that young people face in taking advantage of education and training is important if government policy is to offer equality of opportunities to those in rural communities. This study identified a number of areas that we recommend should be considered. These are:

### 1. Continued improvements to education and training opportunities:

- *Increase opportunities for studying out of the local area, with appropriate support where courses are not provided locally.* This should include the immediate promotion of the Residential Support Programme to rural young people, and consideration of the value of broadening residential support for rural young people to participate and complete higher-level qualifications away from home, if local provision is not suitable. Looking further ahead, support for residential courses at Further Education colleges may be needed to respond to incoming 14-19 reforms and envisaged cross-institutional provision.
- *Implementation of the 14-19 agenda will require increased efforts to support collaboration between local colleges and sixth forms, to allow equality of access to opportunities.* Collaboration will need to be brokered locally by Local Education Authorities, working with Local Skills Councils, and will require some planning across sub-regions for particularly specialised provision. Dedicated managers or teams have also been important to the success of collaboration in the 14-19 Pathfinders.
- *Access to support to enter and achieve Level 1 and 2 training needs to be improved and extended.* Developing basic and wider skills is vital, as they enhance young people's opportunity and ability to sustain employment and progress towards Level 2 and Level 3 accreditation, and, ultimately, help combat young people remaining on low pay. The Government's target for 72 per cent of young people to reach Level 2 qualifications by age 19 by 2008 must be drilled down into achievement in rural as well as urban areas.

Institutions to be involved: DfES, LSCs, LEAs.

### 2. Continued transport initiatives to link young people to post-16 opportunities:

- *Increased provision of adequate transport options is needed to enable young people to access post-16 opportunities.* The current statutory responsibility for discretionary 16-19 transport subsidy is not consistently interpreted across rural areas. There are too many gaps in transport provision for young people to attend schools and colleges after age 16. These gaps need to be closed, informed by joint working between central government departments.

Institutions to be involved: DfES, DfT, Defra, DWP, LEAs, LSCs.

### 3. Immediate action to increase information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided to all young people:

- *IAG commissioners should include provision for young people who are in employment.* Concerted efforts should be made to provide support to young people in work to ensure they are able to obtain IAG on training and other education and work opportunities. This could help rural young people move on from low-wage and low-skilled employment by their re-engaging with education and training. Young people in jobs are entitled to time off for study, but this right is rarely exercised. At a minimum, it needs to be better advertised and communicated to young people in jobs without training.
- *Forthcoming changes to IAG should be closely monitored in rural areas.* Efforts will be needed, if greater local delivery and merging of IAG and support with other services occurs, to ensure young people receive access to the range of advice and support they require.

Institutions to be involved: DfES, Connexions Partnerships, LEAs, Children's Trusts.

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#### 4. Increased integration between rural economic development and education and skills:

- *Rural policy should pay specific attention to the needs of young people who want to develop careers in areas that have the potential for growth in rural communities.* Rural areas are changing. Sunrise industries and services are emerging. Young people should be able to undertake training to follow career paths in these new employment areas, including those that anticipate the shift to a low-carbon, environmentally sustainable economy.
- *Diversification measures should also be developed further to support skills training and a range of career opportunities targeted at local labour markets.* Strategies to provide skilled labour markets for tourism could be complemented by a focus on skills in health and social care, which will also be of increasing significance to rural economies, given the demographic profile.

Institutions to be involved: Defra, RDAs, regional Government Offices, Regional Rural Affairs Forums, Sector Skills Development Agency, DoH, private and third sector.

# Appendix 1: Background to the study areas

## Introduction

The report findings are informed by research conducted in three rural areas in the north of England, introduced in Chapter 1: Berwick-upon-Tweed (Berwick district in north Northumberland), Cockermouth (Allerdale district in western Cumbria) and Todmorden (Calderdale district in west West Yorkshire).

Berwick is a small town located on the North Sea coast near the Scottish border and has a long-standing military history. Cockermouth is a small and relatively affluent town in western Cumbria with the town of Workington to its west (where the traditional manufacturing industry has been in decline) and the Lake District National Park to its east. These two areas are categorised as being within economically lagging areas, and among the most rural districts of England (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2005). However, the most economically lagging rural areas (amounting to 44 local authority areas) are found throughout England, so some of the issues identified in the areas studied may be applicable elsewhere. Similarly, the close proximity of relative affluence and disadvantage is found in many rural areas.

Todmorden is a former mill town, which is categorised as rural, even though it is located in a metropolitan borough near to main urban centres, such as Manchester, and has a range of transport links to these centres and other nearby towns such as Rochdale and Halifax. Todmorden also has a more ethnically mixed resident population (British Asian) than the other study areas.

## Population

At the time of the last Census, in April 2001, Berwick district had a population of 1,133 16- to 19-year-olds, Allerdale district had 4,191 and Calderdale had the highest number with 9,057 young people in this age group resident. Despite the variation in population size, the actual proportion of 16- to 19-year-olds within the areas'

**Table A1.1: Participation in education and Local Skills Council-funded WBL by 16- and 17-year-olds by region and LSC area and LEAs in England, end 2004 (percentages)**

Area	All 16-year-olds (%)				All 17-year-olds (%)			
	FTE	WBL	Part-time education	Total	FTE	WBL	Part-time education	Total
North East	69	13	4	86	53	15	6	74
Northumberland	69	11	4	84	55	14	6	75
North West	70	10	4	83	57	12	5	74
Cumbria	70	13	5	88	54	19	8	81
Yorkshire and the Humber	67	11	5	84	54	11	7	72
Calderdale	71	10	7	88	56	12	7	74
East Midlands	70	7	5	82	57	10	6	72
West Midlands	71	8	5	84	57	10	6	73
East of England	75	6	4	85	61	8	5	73
London	79	3	3	86	68	5	5	77
South East	77	4	4	86	64	7	5	76
South West	75	6	4	85	61	10	5	76
England	73	7	4	84	60	9	5	74

Source: DfES 2006b, extract from table 2

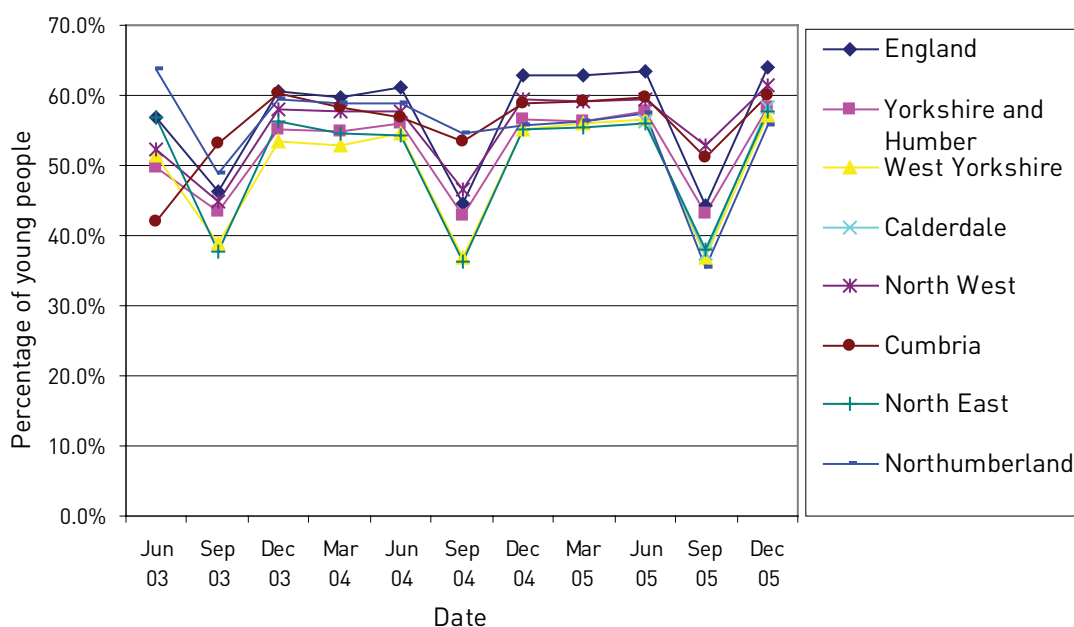
total populations was around 4.5 per cent (Allerdale 4.5 per cent, Berwick 4.3 per cent and Calderdale 4.7 per cent).

## Post-16 participation in education

As discussed in Chapter 1, post-16 participation in FTE in northern England has been consistently lower than other regions, yet participation in WBL has been consistently higher in the north of England. These regional and local trends are illustrated table A1.1.

A study of recent destinations of young people reveals that participation in FTE saw a slight increase between 2003 and 2005, with the expected participation dip between June (the end of the academic year) and September (when courses began to enrol) (Figure A1.1). Worryingly, figures for all the focus group districts, including their regional rates, are all below the national average. Post-16 participation in FTE in Cumbria has stayed stable over time based on December figures, which are deemed most reliable, with around 60 per cent of young people in FTE, but despite starting at the same December 2003 rate, participation in Northumberland has fallen by five per cent by the end of 2005.

Figure A1.1: Percentages of 16- to 18-year-olds in FTE 2003-05



Source: data provided by DfES

Note: data for Calderdale not available before June 2005

Data provided by Cumbria Connexions Partnership reveals that, in November 2003, 2004 and 2005, the proportions of school leavers for each respective year who were participating in education for the Workington office area (which covers Cockermouth) increased slightly in consecutive years from 68 per cent to 69.8 per cent and to 70.9 per cent respectively; figures for Cumbria were slightly higher, by around two per cent.

Information provided by Northumberland Connexions Partnership for the Berwick area reveals that it falls some way below the Northumberland participation rate for 16- to 18-year-olds at the nearest corresponding dates (December 2004 and 2005), by around 15 per cent (Table A1.2). Within the Berwick area, the figures clearly show how participation in FTE declines sharply with age, which, to a certain extent, is anticipated.

Table A1.2: Percentages of young people in FTE in Berwick, November 2004 and 2005

	16 years (%)	17 years (%)	18 years (%)	19 years (%)	16-18 years (%)
November 2004	60.0	41.1	24.2	27.2	40.6
November 2005	56.1	45.7	26.5	24.4	41.4

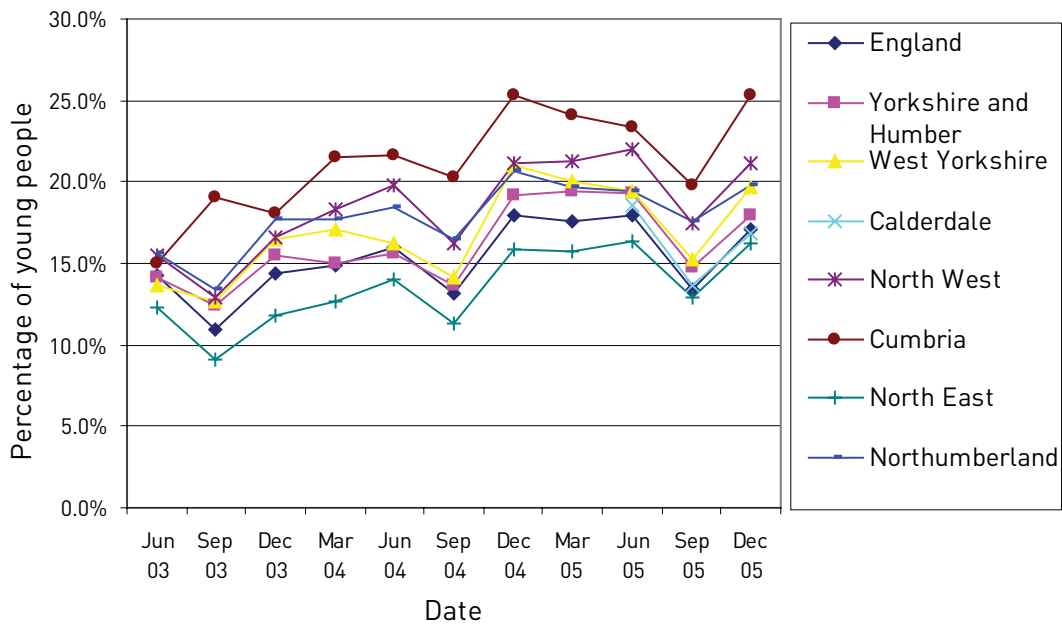
Data provided by Northumberland Connexions Partnership, ippr north analysis

## Employment and earnings

Figure A1.2 reveals a trend of rising proportions of young people in employment. Employment rates for young people in Northumberland exceeded the English average, and were considerably above the North East rate (generally five per cent higher). Cumbria had the highest proportions in employment, exceeding the regional rate for the North West, which was itself higher than the English norm. In Calderdale, proportions adhered close to the national average, both of which were lower than Yorkshire and the Humber and West Yorkshire employment rates.

It is clear that, in the northern regions and the areas studied, the proportion of young people in GST is, in all cases, well above the national rate, although a slight downward trend is discernible (Figure A1.3). Rates

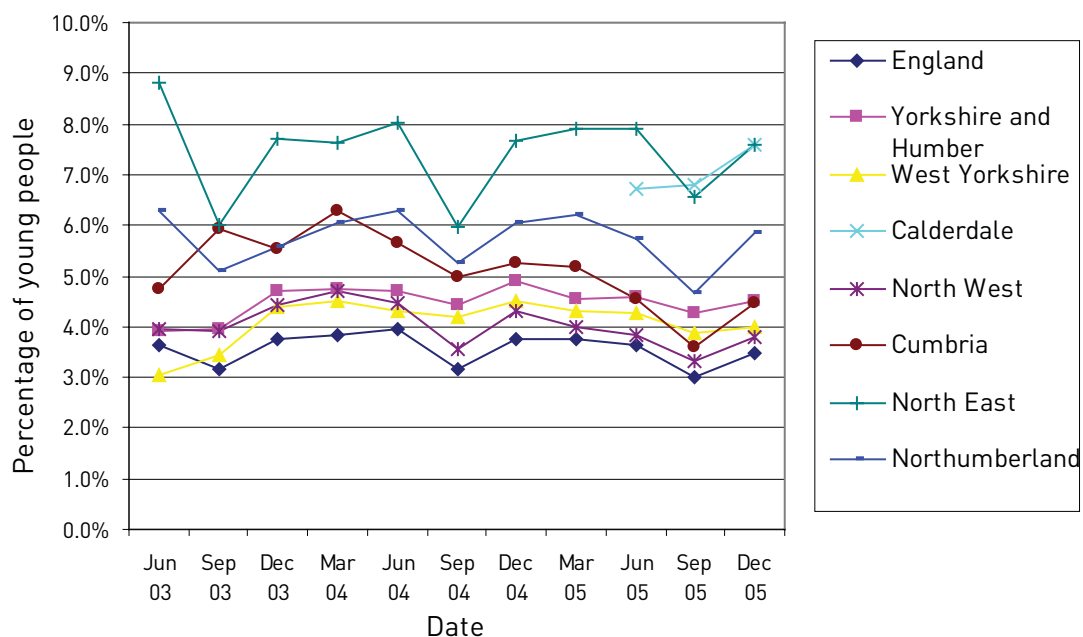
Figure A1.2: Percentages of 16- to 18-year-olds in employment 2003-05



Source: data provided by DfES

Note: data for Calderdale not available before June 2005

Figure A1.3: Percentages of 16- to 18-year-olds in GST 2003-05



Source: data provided by DfES

Note: data for Calderdale not available before June 2005



were particularly high in Calderdale (closer to the North East region and far exceeding rates seen in West Yorkshire or Yorkshire and the Humber). Despite rates in Northumberland being consistently a few percentage points lower than the North East regional average, they were still relatively high.

In more detail, for the Workington area, 7.2 per cent of school leavers in November 2005 entered employment without training and 3.1 per cent went into employment with training, with a further 11.3 per cent securing Apprenticeships. Table A1.3, below, shows a roughly similar pattern for the Berwick area at the same date; it was more common for young people who found employment for this to be without training to Level 2, and a relatively large proportion found employment that was supported through GST (Apprenticeships). However, the figures reveal that lower proportions of 16-year-olds had found employment with training, and higher proportions were employed in part-time work.

**Table A1.3: Percentages of young people in employment and type of employment in Berwick, Nov 2005**

	16 years (%)	17 years (%)	18 years (%)	19 years (%)
<i>full-time, of which:</i>	23.9	31.0	50.2	47.0
GST	13.5	7.3	11.0	12.5
with training to Level 2	1.9	5.2	7.8	8.9
without training	5.2	15.1	28.8	23.2
temporary	2.6	3.4	2.7	2.4
<i>part-time</i>	5.2	3.9	3.2	3.0

Data provided by Northumberland Connexions Partnership, ippr north analysis

For those young people in employment, a mixed picture presents itself. Table A1.4 shows that, nationally, there is a significant difference between the rates of pay that young men and women receive based on their gender, whether for full-time or part-time employment. However, an exception is seen for full-time employees aged 16-17 years, where little difference is evident. Earnings for 22- to 29-year-olds are included for comparison, indicating both the relatively low wages of 16- to 17-year-olds, and the potential rewards of further and higher education, and training in the labour market.

**Table A1.4: Young people's gross weekly earnings (£) by age and employment type 2005 (UK)**

	Male full-time median	Male full-time mean	Male part-time median	Male part-time mean	Female full-time median	Female full-time mean	Female part-time median	Female part-time mean
16-17 years	170.0	187.6	60.0	71.0	171.3	185.4	53.5	61.0
18-21 years	253.1	278.9	91.5	103.3	232.6	250.4	84.9	93.6
22-29 years	380.0	438.0	126.2	152.7	352.5	386.3	126.0	144.0

Source: ASHE 2005, extract table 6.1a

Earnings data was then explored by employee's area of residence, and by gender (Table A1.5). This takes into account the entire working population, so employees other than 16- to 19-year-olds are included. It is evident that, in the study areas, the regional norm for both male and female workers, whether full- or part-time, was below English average earnings. Average earnings then decreased when each county level or equivalent was explored, except in Northumberland, which showed a slight rise and reflects the range in affluence found elsewhere in the county. Earnings declined further when each rural local authority involved in the research was examined. In all cases, female wage levels were well below male rates.

Together Tables A1.4 and A1.5 show that young people in the study areas are disadvantaged by their age with respect to the rate of return they receive for their labour, and by the functioning of the local labour

market and local economy, which results in wages being paid below the regional or national norms. The situation appears even more problematic for young women.

**Table A1.5: Gross weekly wage (£) for regions and local authority areas by place of residence in 2005**

	Male full-time median	Male full-time mean	Male part-time median	Male part-time mean	Female full-time median	Female full-time mean	Female part-time median	Female part-time mean
England	479.1	581.8	121.4	179.1	375.2	441.5	134.4	162.4
North East	423.5	488.5	134.8	175.4	328.4	391.0	126.4	143.5
North'land	454.5	522.5	145.3	168.0	320.3	414.2	138.4	151.1
Berwick	310.2	341.7	x	x	244.8	261.1	x	121.7
North West	450.0	532.3	124.5	164.2	351.6	409.6	133.6	159.5
Cumbria	463.7	512.2	100.0	157.9	335.4	400.3	119.7	147.5
Allerdale	497.1	499.8	x	x	308.0	374.6	100.0	115.2
Yorkshire and Humber	438.7	513.0	117.6	182.3	335.5	395.5	130.9	154.4
West Yorks	426.8	507.5	110.5	169.0	346.4	413.2	133.6	157.7
Calderdale	418.4	493.6	x	125.3	361.3	424.6	146.8	167.6

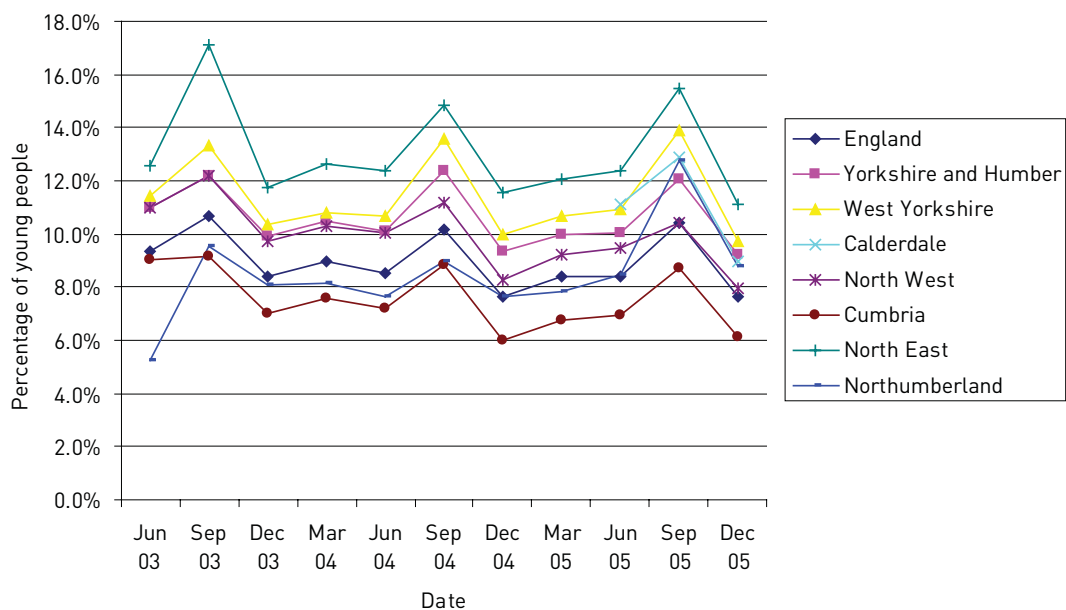
Source: ASHE 2005, extract from table 8.1a

Note: x implies no reliable data

## NEETs and unemployment

In general, between 2003 and 2005, the districts informing this research had lower proportions of young people NEET than elsewhere in their respective region (Figure A1.4). Rates in Cumbria have recently been consistently below the North West and English average rates. Rates in Northumberland have tended to fluctuate around the English average, and are well below the North East regional rates. Rates in Calderdale

**Figure A1.4: Percentages of 16- to 18-year-olds recorded as NEET 2003-05**



Source: data provided by DfES

Note: data for Calderdale not available before June 2005

for 2005 aligned closely with the West Yorkshire average, higher than both the Yorkshire and the Humber and English rates.

If the study areas are investigated in more detail, data for Cockermouth and the wider Workington Connexions office area (activity rates of school leavers for November 2003, 2004 and 2005) revealed that the proportion of school leavers (16- to 17-year-olds) NEET fell from 6.1 to 5.3 per cent, then increased slightly to 5.8 per cent (data provided by Cumbria Connexions). These proportions were approximately one per cent higher than figures for Cumbria at the same date.

These figures are lower than the rates presented in Figure A1.4, as they refer to school leavers only, and NEET rates tend to increase in the following year (17-year-olds). Indeed, even these figures hide local disparities: for example, in March 2006, when the focus groups were conducted, Cockermouth had the highest number of young people recently recorded as NEET – a total of 15 individuals.

Exploring data provided by Berwick Connexions office for 16- to 19-year-olds in November 2004 and 2005 reveals that NEET is a more common experience for those aged 17 and 18 (Table A1.6). Movements in and out of the NEET group for young people at two dates showed that greater numbers (single figures) joined from FTE and employment without training to Level 2. For those individuals who left their NEET status, virtually all went into full-time employment, a combination of GST, employment with and without training to Level 2, and temporary positions. Relatively high numbers also found part-time employment.

	16 years (%)	17 years (%)	18 years (%)	19 years (%)	16-19 years (%)
November 2004	4.1	7.1	6.3	2.8	5.1
November 2005	4.5	7.8	7.8	0.6	5.6

Data provided by Northumberland Connexions Partnership, ippr north analysis

Area	JSA claimant count – Male					
	No. of 16- and 17-year claimants	No. of 18-year claimants	No. of 19-year claimants	Total no. 16-19 claimants	Total male population 16-19 years (2001)	Percentage male 16-19 JSA claimants
Allerdale	10	55	75	140	2,174	6.4
Berwick	0	15	15	30	591	5.1
Calderdale	20	95	110	225	4,600	4.9
Area	JSA claimant count – Female					
	No. of 16- and 17-year claimants	No. of 18-year claimants	No. of 19-year claimants	Total no. 16-19 claimants	Total female population 16-19 years (2001)	Percentage female 16-19 JSA claimants
Allerdale	5	25	25	55	2,017	2.7
Berwick	0	10	15	25	542	4.6
Calderdale	25	75	55	155	4,457	3.5

Source: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and ippr north analysis

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Table A1.7 shows the numbers and proportions of young people in the areas studied who were registered as claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). To claim JSA, the individual must be capable of work, available for work and actively seeking work. JSA normally applies to individuals of working age aged 18 years and over, and is paid to 16- and 17-year-olds in instances where they are forced to live away from the parents, would otherwise experience severe hardship, or are part of a couple with responsibility for a child.

Current rates are £34.60 per week for 16- to 17-year-olds, and £45.50 for 18- to 24-year-olds. Higher claimant rates were observed for young men, and higher rates were seen overall in Berwick for both young men and women. The data stresses the volatility and limited employment opportunities for young people, as the proportion of JSA claimants among all residents of working age were 2.1 per cent in Allerdale, 1.9 per cent in Berwick and 2.7 per cent in Calderdale (data from Nomis, based on claimant count rates, June 2006).

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## Appendix 2: Organisations interviewed

14-19 Pathfinder Hampshire

A National Voice

Aim Higher (Cumbria and South West)

British Army

Citizens Advice Bureau (National, Hampshire and Kent)

Connexions (National, Cumbria, Northumberland and Suffolk)

Forum for Rural Children and Young People

Government Office for the North East

Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber

LANTRA – Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector

Learning and Skills Council (National and North Yorkshire)

Northumberland Removing Barriers to Work initiative

ONE NorthEast

Princes Trust

Rural Youth Network

Yorkshire Forward

Young Farmers (National, with input from Norfolk, Oxfordshire and Somerset organisations)

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