Exclusive countryside?

Social inclusion and regeneration in rural areas

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● Preface

In 1997 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation announced a new research programme, Action in Rural Areas, intended to investigate the processes underlying key social problems within rural areas and to identify changes which might improve matters. The programme was structured to cross-cut existing JRF research programmes which explore issues related to income and wealth, work and opportunity, and housing and area regeneration. A unifying theme has been that of social exclusion.

Among the issues which this programme sought to investigate were the following:

- Individual strategies to cope with or escape from poverty
- Effective agency responses to helping individuals out of poverty
- What factors lead to social exclusion and inclusion in rural areas
- Obstacles to, and opportunities for, labour market integration and progression in rural areas
- The distribution of work and the factors underlying changes in this
- Young people's access to affordable housing in rural areas
- The contribution of social housing to broader rural development and social inclusion
- Policies and practices that can assist in rural regeneration
- Community development and empowerment approaches as a means of rural regeneration
- Partnership working in rural areas, and the implications for governance

Much has changed since the programme was launched, including the election of a Labour Government. Unexpectedly, rural policy has become highly topical during the last three years, with a Government Consultation Paper *Rural England*, a study of *Rural economies* prepared by the Performance and Innovation Unit at the Cabinet Office, and a further report from the Cabinet Office entitled *Sharing in the nation's prosperity*. This is to culminate in the summer of 2000 with a rural White Paper.

In Scotland, the Scottish Parliament has been established with a Rural Affairs Committee, and the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department has replaced the former Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department. Similar changes have occurred in Wales with the election of the Welsh Assembly, and in Northern Ireland. In May 2000, the Scottish Executive published *Rural Scotland: A new approach*.

Alongside these have been many other policy developments, notably to address social exclusion and poverty, which have had a profound impact on the issues we have been researching. It is hoped that the research summarised in this report will have made some contribution to all this, as the emerging results have been passed on.

This report seeks to present an overview of the programme's findings, drawing together the conclusions of the individual project reports. The quotes in the margins are all from participants in the studies.

Forces for change

Most people in Britain know little about rural areas beyond a purely visual appreciation. Seen through a car window, or a TV screen, it is easy to see rural areas as idyllic and changeless. Many of us carry a picture of an imagined countryside where farming families till the same land as their forebears, where everyone knows and supports one another in 'communities', where life is slower and somehow better. Yet the economies and societies of rural areas of Britain are changing rapidly in the face of globalisation, economic restructuring, migration, and other social and policy changes. These forces have different implications for different areas and social groups.

A share dealer working in the City of London may choose an expensive house deep in the Home Counties while working in a 'virtual' world of global financial markets, from office or from home, with easy access to airports for frequent overseas travel. For such people as this, globalisation - facilitated by deregulation and technological advances - brings opportunities, freedom and a rewarding rural lifestyle. For a textile worker in the Scottish Borders, however, whose employer's closure is announced as a result of lower-cost competition from textile mills in the Far East or Eastern Europe, globalisation is less liberating and beneficial. As Bauman (1998) puts it, one person (in this example the share dealer) moves through the world, while the world moves by another (the textile worker). In each case there are profound effects on the local economy and society.

Market and economic forces

Many rural areas are now growing faster than urban districts, while others experience decline: the economic and social processes underlying these diverse trends are not always well understood. One key element is the increasingly global penetration of local markets. International capital may seek to exploit those rural areas characterised by low wages, a compliant, non-unionised workforce, and lower levels of regulation, leading to increased dependency and peripherality. On the other hand, many rural areas and firms seek to protect themselves from global competition by creating local products which depend upon a local identity for their market niche, known as 'selling the local to the global'.

Agriculture still employs half a million people in rural Britain, but this constitutes only 4 per cent of total rural employment (compared with 6 per cent in 1981) and an increasing proportion of these jobs are part-time or casual. Employment has declined even more steeply in other key sectors, such as coal mining. In terms of output, agriculture accounts for only 1 per cent of national income, compared with 3 per cent in 1973, and this long-term decline is reflected in people leaving the industry and, during the late 1990s, in falling farm incomes. The structural force underlying this decline is continuing technological change which increases farmers' ability to supply while demand remains static. To some extent farmers have been protected from such global forces by subsidies, which currently amount to some £5bn. per annum in the UK, and through trade protectionism.

The declining importance of agriculture and other land-based industries has been more than offset in rural areas by the growth of the service sector. Around 73 per cent of jobs in rural Britain are now in services, compared with 60 per

cent in 1981, notably in public administration, education, health, distribution, tourism, and the financial services. Rural areas have shared in a general shift to a service-based economy in which the information and knowledge-based industries play an increasing role, bringing both opportunities and threats.

Most rural areas, according to the Cabinet Office, have coped well with the need for structural economic change:

> *Employment in rural areas has increased more rapidly than in other areas…[and] unemployment in rural areas is generally lower than in the rest of the country (4.2 per cent for rural districts compared to 6.1 per cent in England in 1998).* (Cabinet Office PIU 1999).

This may be misleading, however, in so far as research by Beatty and Fothergill (1997) for the Rural Development Commission shows that unemployment is systematically under-reported in rural Britain. In addition, both part-time employment and self-employment are more common in rural areas. Moreover, some areas have found it harder to adjust to rapid restructuring, notably those which are remote and have a high dependence on agriculture or other traditional industries. Even where new jobs have appeared, some people have found it hard to adjust.

A particular feature of rural employment is the prevalence of small firms. Over 90 per cent of all rural firms are micro-businesses, employing fewer than ten people, and 99 per cent employ fewer than fifty. The rate of small-firm formation in accessible rural areas is well above the national average, and most of these are set up by people who have

earlier moved into these areas for a better quality of life, in contrast to urban start-ups (Cabinet Office PIU 1999). However, in the remoter rural areas the rate of small-firm formation is below the national average, partly because fewer people move there.

Demographic and social changes

Fundamental demographic, social and cultural changes also characterise rural areas. Migration flows are critical in determining rural population levels and, while some rural areas in Britain continue to lose population, in most parts people are moving into rural areas because of the new values placed on rural space (e.g. clean environment, healthy lifestyles, community life). The consequences of the imposition of such values on rural societies may be far-reaching. Between 1971 and 1996 the population of rural England grew by 24 per cent, compared with 6 per cent across England as a whole. Since 1981, roughly 80,000 people have migrated to rural England each year. Similar trends apply in Scotland, where between 1981 and 1991 the rural population increased by 3.5 per cent (compared with a 1.4 per cent fall in the total Scottish population), and employment grew by 6.5 per cent (compared with 1.1 per cent in Scotland as a whole).

This migration tends to be highly socially selective. 'Gentrification' has been evident in many areas of rural Britain, in so far as affluent people have migrated into the countryside and displaced less affluent groups (Phillips 1993), primarily through competition for scarce housing. Much has been written about the rise of a rural professional and managerial 'service class', and certain regions, notably the

"He worked on the farm for 31 years, then he got made redundant. Well, he got suicidal, he was only off work for four months…He started work at 14, well every hour of the day and holidays and that when he wasn't at school, he was at work on that farm, the only thing is he's never ever had a day off for anything, and they just made him redundant and in four months he was suicidal…"
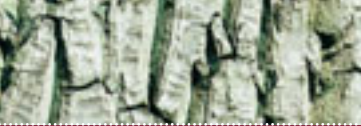
south-east, have been identified as being 'colonised' by home-workers able to operate at a distance from production activities. Even in some attractive remoter areas, retirement migration and distance-working may produce similar effects; however, in less attractive (or ex-industrial) rural areas, with low wages and low rents, low-grade jobs may be all that is attracted.

Many rural areas of Britain may therefore increasingly become the exclusive preserve of those who can afford to buy a house there, leading to a geographical segregation between rich (in attractive rural areas) and poor (in the cities). From this perspective, evidence of high and rising average incomes in rural areas may require careful interpretation.

Social relations are also changing in other ways. There has been a rise in 'individualist' values (for example, personal fulfilment as opposed to commitment to social obligations) and a decline of established institutions such as the church and the family. Higher divorce rates, an older average age at which people get married and have children, and increasing life expectancy have all led to a decline in the average size of households and to an increased demand for houses. Moreover, changes in the age structure of the rural population, together with the economic restructuring described above, are tending towards increased dependency ratios (an increase in the proportion of non-earners), and casual and part-time working, and less job security. The interactions between these changes, in the family and in employment, are not well understood in rural contexts.

Housing markets play a crucial role in the social changes taking place in rural Britain. Social housing accounts for only 14 per cent of the housing stock in rural areas, compared with 23 per cent in urban areas of England. For most people, their housing opportunities depend upon being able to afford one of the owner-occupied houses which constitute three-quarters of the stock. And yet, as has been mentioned, there is often a strong demand from relatively affluent households for a limited number of rural houses, while at the same time the supply of houses is tightly constrained by the planning process and the opposition of middle-class home-owners to new building.

Changing policy contexts

Rural policies are changing in response to these forces, and many wider policies (especially macroeconomic policies and social policies) also have pervasive impacts upon rural areas. For example, much has recently been written about the impact of the fuel tax escalator[1] on those living in more isolated locations. The National Minimum Wage might be expected to have made a positive impact on the typically low-wage labour markets of rural Britain. Planning and housing policies have already been mentioned above.

Social policy and welfare reforms are particularly important in addressing inequalities and in offering support and opportunities to the most disadvantaged. The Labour Government's welfare reforms have sought to provide both incentives for and routes towards labour market integration, facilitated by the

1   This is the Government's policy of raising fuel prices each year by 5 per cent above the rate of inflation in order to meet obligations under the Rio Agreement to reduce global environmental change.

expansion of the macroeconomy and an associated increase in the aggregate demand for labour.

The New Deal has sought to address, in the first instance, the integration of young people into work; this has faced particular obstacles and challenges in rural areas, notably due to the small size of rural firms, geographic isolation, and the low levels of skills required. There are also challenges in arranging meetings with Personal Advisers in some rural areas.

The New Deal is now being extended to several other groups, including lone parents and people over 50 years of age. A number of other measures have sought to address child poverty, and to offer improvements in early education and childcare. Unfortunately, there is strong evidence that awareness of welfare entitlements, and take-up rates, are lower in rural areas.

European policies are particularly important in relation to agriculture and rural development. Farmers receive very large subsidies from the European Union (EU), as noted above, and indeed agricultural spending dominates the EU's expenditure. A reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has recently been agreed and this will reduce price support, tariffs on imports and export subsidies while partially compensating farmers for these through enhanced direct payments. Increasingly these will become linked to environmentally sensitive farming and to areas facing particular hardship (e.g. mountainous areas). Further reforms appear inevitable, in the context of EU enlargement and World Trade

Organization negotiations, with declining support to farmers unless linked with rural development or environmental objectives. Agreement has already been reached on reforms to the EU structural funds, which will now be focused on fewer areas of Britain. The most generously funded areas (Objective 1), with 69 per cent of the funds, will include West Wales and Northern Ireland, with special status for the Highlands and Islands. The former '5b' areas of rural decline, however, have been reduced both in area and in budget under the new Objective 2 (11.5 per cent of the budget). In both types of designated area, the funds are disseminated typically through a partnership structure and an integrated programming document.[1]

A new departure is the Rural Development Regulation, which will apply to all rural areas and is intended to become 'a second pillar of the CAP' promoting rural diversification and capacity-building, as well as more competitive, and environmentally-friendly agriculture. This will be implemented in different ways in different parts of the UK.

Since 1995 there has also been an emphasis on capacity-building and community involvement in the UK, and especially in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and this approach has been carried forward in the Labour Government's *Towards a development strategy for rural Scotland* (Scottish Office 1998) with an additional emphasis on improving the life chances "of the many, not the few". To an extent, this similarity of approach to rural development may reflect a

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1 **A statement of aims, objectives, actions and budget-lines programmed over the relevant period and agreed by the EU.**
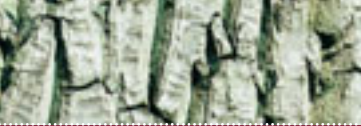
Europeanisation of member states' rural policies (Shortall and Shucksmith 1998).

A Rural White Paper for England is to be published in the summer of 2000, and it is expected that this will seek to extend the Labour Government's 'modernisation' project to rural policy. A Cabinet Office report in December 1999 argued that rural policy in England is still attuned to the post-war circumstances of 1947 (food shortages, rationing, agriculture as the mainstay of the rural economy) and called for a radical updating to encourage diversification of rural economies, social inclusion and the building of social capital (Cabinet Office PIU 1999). The early findings of this research programme have been passed to those preparing the White Paper.

Social exclusion in rural Britain

In recent years, policy debates about inequality have tended to focus on social exclusion rather than on poverty. Indeed, tackling social exclusion was an immediate priority of this Government and its newly established Social Exclusion Unit. This chapter discusses how processes of social exclusion operate in rural areas of Britain.

What is social exclusion?

The concept of social exclusion is contested, and there is no single agreed definition. The term has been used in three competing ways in current policy debates (Levitas 1998):

- an **integrationist** approach in which employment is seen as the key integrating force, both through earned income, identity and sense of self-worth, and networks

- a **poverty** approach in which the causes of exclusion are related to low income and a lack of material resources

- an **underclass** approach in which the excluded are viewed as deviants from the moral and cultural norms of society, exhibit a 'culture of poverty' or a 'dependency culture' and are blamed for their own poverty and its intergenerational transmission

These have been summarised as 'no work', 'no money' and 'no morals', respectively. This report takes an amended integrationist approach in the belief that this offers most potential for developing an understanding of processes of social exclusion, but that these processes extend far beyond the labour market and indeed are multi-dimensional.

Poverty is an outcome, denoting an inability to share in the everyday lifestyles of the majority because of a lack of resources (often taken to be disposable income). In contrast, social exclusion is a multi-dimensional, dynamic process which refers to the breakdown or malfunctioning of the major systems in society that should guarantee the social integration of the individual or household. It implies a focus less on 'victims' and more upon system failure, especially on the processes which cause exclusion. It also acknowledges the importance of the local context in such processes. Thus, while the notion of poverty is primarily *distributional*, the concept of social exclusion focuses primarily on relational issues (low participation, lack of social integration, powerlessness).

A particularly fruitful way of viewing processes of social exclusion and inclusion is as overlapping spheres of integration (Philip and Shucksmith 1999). The different spheres relate to the different ways in which resources are allocated in society - through market processes (e.g. payment for work); through transfer payments and services provided by the state; through collective action organised via voluntary bodies; and through reciprocal, cultural and other non-market processes associated with networks of family and friends. One's sense of belonging in society depends on most or all of these systems.

Processes of social exclusion and inclusion (in both urban and rural areas) should therefore be analysed in relation to the means by which resources and status are allocated in society, and especially in relation to the exercise of power.

"I don't know where decisions are made about this area. Inverness, Edinburgh, London, Brussels – it doesn't matter. They're all away…"

Early research funded by JRF into disadvantage in rural Scotland (Shucksmith et al. 1994, 1996), together with the rural lifestyles study (Cloke et al. 1994) in England and Wales, showed that exclusion occurred in different ways in many rural areas of Britain. Labour markets and housing markets had an impact on inequality and exclusion, with many respondents perceiving very restricted opportunities for well-paid, secure employment or for affordable housing, while at the same time these markets enabled affluent households to move into rural areas. Young people and women tended to have the fewest options.

Factors that restricted social inclusion were closely bound up with failings of private and public services, most notably transport, social housing and childcare. Moreover, the welfare state was patently failing to reach potential recipients and the take-up of benefit entitlements was low. Access to advice and information in distant towns and cities was problematic, and respondents were often confused about the benefits available and their entitlement.

To mitigate these failings, there was a greater reliance on the voluntary sector (which was itself under pressure as volunteers – mainly women – declined in number) and on friends and family. However, migration and the loss of young people, also related to housing and labour market processes, ruptured informal support networks and left older people socially isolated.

The very processes, then, which have supported the economic restructuring and gentrification of many rural areas, allowing rural areas to 'share in the nation's prosperity', have also created social exclusion and inequality. The programme Action in Rural Areas was able to explore these processes and their different effects on people in more detail, and the next two sections of this chapter look in particular at poverty and employment.

Incomes: poverty among affluence

Most previous research into rural poverty has emphasised counting the numbers of poor or disadvantaged people at a point in time. Yet it is not enough to count the numbers and describe the characteristics of the socially excluded; it is also necessary to understand and monitor the *processes* of social exclusion and to identify the factors that can trigger entry to or exit from situations of exclusion. The focus of this section is therefore on dynamic processes, and the identification of 'bridges' and 'barriers' to exclusion and integration.

Prior to the Action in Rural Areas programme there had been very little, if any, research of this type in rural areas. For example, we had no knowledge of whether those individuals found to be experiencing poverty in rural England in 1980 were the same people identified in a survey in 1990. Were we dealing with short spells of poverty experienced by many people in rural society, or long spells of poverty experienced only by a small minority? This is of fundamental importance not only in terms of individual strategies but also in terms of the degree of solidarity within society.

As part of the research programme, an analysis of rural households in the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (Chapman et al. 1998), followed the same randomly selected 7,164 individuals each

"We don't go out anywhere now. We can't afford to go out…I said to my husband the other day, I don't think I've ever felt like this in my life, I feel frustrated through being hard up and not being able to do anything."

"You know, to make it worth my while, to have anything in the bank left at the end, and to pay out childcare, pay all the rent on the house, I've got to earn good money. I mean, I can't do it around here."

year between 1991 and 1996, to help answer these questions. Overall, the results suggest that not only are proportionately fewer individuals affected by low income in rural areas (37 per cent below three-quarters mean income in rural areas at any one time, compared with 45 per cent elsewhere), but that spells of low income tend to be shorter, with the proportion of those who are 'persistently poor' significantly less.

Despite this favourable comparison, prosperity is far from universal in rural Britain - a third of individuals in rural areas experienced at least one spell where their income fell below half mean income, and 54 per cent experienced a spell with income below three-quarters of mean income during these five years. Moreover, gross income inequalities intensified in both rural and non-rural areas over the period. The low income 'problem' is more acute for those in the over 60 age group with, not unexpectedly, the degree of persistently low income significantly higher for this group in both rural and non-rural areas. Analysis of the changes in rural people's income confirms that there is a significant amount of change, but that most people only experience small increases and decreases.

The analysis also confirms that the relative prosperity of rural households is not so much the result of strong rural economies but rather reflects the movement of wealthy people into rural areas. Migration between urban and rural areas is causing a progressive gentrification of the countryside, increasing the proportion in rural areas in the higher income classes and decreasing those in the lower income classes. Far from showing that rural

people are part of an increasingly prosperous 'one nation', rising rural prosperity is an indication of an increasing geographical divide within Britain, described even in 1973 by Professor Peter Hall as "this very civilised British version of apartheid" (Hall et al. 1973).

While there is no evidence that the probabilities of moving out of low income are different between the rural and non-rural BHPS sub-samples, it seems that those in rural areas are less at risk of falling back into low income once they have left it than those living in non-rural areas. The results also suggest that migration from rural areas does not increase the probability of escaping from low income, and in fact may increase the chances that an individual moves back onto a low income. Overall, migration is associated with an increase in both upward and downward income mobility.

Another interesting, and more surprising, finding is that there are significant differences between rural and non-rural areas in the demographic and economic events associated with escape from and entry into low income. A far smaller proportion of households leaving rural poverty do so by an increase in the number of earners in the household, or by a change in household composition. This distinctive pattern is repeated when entry into poverty is considered, being associated far less in rural areas with a fall in the number of earners (e.g. following job loss or pregnancy), a change in family economic status (e.g. retirement), or a change in household composition (e.g. marital breakdown). Finally, movements between town and country can both increase and decrease incomes, depending on individual circumstances.

"£3 – that's a lot, especially [to] local people, because they can't afford to pay them big wages."

The research found only a weak relationship between low income and low pay, and far more association between low income and detachment from labour markets, despite the low levels of registered unemployment. Few of those on low incomes in rural areas are low paid, because few are in work. The greatest number are older people. Of those of working age on low income in rural Britain, only 22 per cent are in employment; 23 per cent are self-employed (far more than in non-rural areas); 13 per cent are unemployed; and 41 per cent are detached from the labour market in other ways (e.g. long-term sick [men] or family carers [women]). The composition of low-income households differed significantly between rural and non-rural areas; for example, the self-employed made up a much more significant component of rural low-income households than is found in non-rural areas.

The most challenging finding of the research on disadvantage in rural Scotland (Shucksmith et al. 1994 and 1996) was that rural people's own assessment was at odds with official definitions of poverty. Most looked back on the improvements since their own childhood, when they lacked running water, electricity and TVs, and could not conceive of themselves as poor. This is reinforced by the image of the rural idyll:

> *The rural idyll conceals poverty…the poor unwittingly conspire with the more affluent to hide their poverty by denying its existence. Those values which are at the heart of the rural idyll result in the poor tolerating their material deprivation because of the priority given to those symbols of the rural idyll: the family, the work ethic and good health. And when that material deprivation becomes so chronic by the standard of the area that it has to be recognised by the poor themselves, shame forces secrecy and the management of that poverty within the smallest possible framework…[At the same time] newcomers do not want to see poverty because it is anathema to the rural idyll which they are seeking to preserve.*
> (Fabes, Worsley and Howard 1993)

The principal groups experiencing poverty in rural Britain are:

- **older people living alone** (predominantly older widows) and older couples, often relying solely on the state pension – these two groups are by far the largest

- **low-paid manual workers' households**: rural areas contain a disproportionate number of people in low-wage sectors, notably agriculture and tourism, and in small workplaces

- **those detached from labour markets**, either formally unemployed, or registered as long-term sick or disabled; half of all men in this category are aged 55 to 64

- **self-employed people** - a major source of rural poverty among those of working age

As elsewhere, inequality is divided along lines of social class, age and gender.

"I suppose I'm limited by what I can do really, because I've had previous experience on the land, and in the garden and that, you know. I suppose without the relevant qualifications you're restricted as to what you can go for…"

> "I mean I have no doubts that I can do the job, but the only problem nowadays is you now have to have certificates and licences and things like that."

> "I went for interviews for a few of the chicken factories – when they find out you are a plumber they don't want to know because they know as soon as you can you are going to be gone…Them sort of places are looking for people that aren't skilled who haven't got much qualifications."

This has implications in considering ways in which such disadvantage can be corrected, both in terms of attempts at empowerment and in how to encourage people to take up their benefit entitlements without stigma or loss of self-esteem. Overcoming resistance to these entitlements is a fundamental task for those seeking to tackle social exclusion.

Employment: barriers and bridges

According to Berghman (1995), the three major 'bridges' toward inclusion are gaining employment, changes in family or household composition, and receiving welfare benefits, but are these the same in rural areas? And what particular constraints or 'barriers' are imposed by a rural context? Most poor people seek a full-time job as a route out of poverty, although this mode of escape is denied to many on account of their age, lack of skills, or childcare commitments. Are there additional obstacles facing those in rural areas, due perhaps to their small community, or the distances involved?

Low pay is a particular problem. The BHPS analysis of low pay and unemployment revealed further significant differences between rural and non-rural areas. Persistent unemployment is less common in rural areas but persistent low pay is more widespread in rural than in non-rural areas. Analysis of the key characteristics associated with low pay in general revealed only a few significant differences. The relatively low number of people employed in small rural workplaces who escape from low pay, combined with the dominance of small-scale businesses in rural employment, suggest that a lack of large-scale

employers in rural areas may be an important explanatory factor and this was confirmed in the qualitative studies (see below).

In terms of the aggregate dynamics over the period 1991-1996, a number of features in the BHPS cohort were observed. The difference in levels of unemployment between rural and non-rural men is reducing. There has been a significant growth in hours worked by rural women. And finally, there has been strong aggregate wage growth for rural women and weak growth for men, the result of which is that the difference in wages between men and women is now greater in non-rural areas than in rural areas.

The gender aspects are particularly interesting. The analysis of the BHPS revealed not only significant rural/non-rural differences but also important differences between the sexes, especially for those on low pay and unemployed. Thus, there is less upward and downward employment and wage mobility for both rural men and rural women experiencing low pay than is the case in non-rural areas. However, for unemployed people the pattern is very different: while unemployed rural men seem more able to move into higher pay employment than unemployed non-rural men, unemployed rural women seem significantly less able to do so than their non-rural counterparts.

The bridges and barriers to employment were investigated in greater detail in a number of the projects in the programme, and especially by Monk et al. (1999) who looked at two labour markets in Lincolnshire and Suffolk with varying degrees of rurality.

Barriers to finding employment

Mismatches between jobs and skills

A lack of qualifications or skills relevant to jobs available in the locality was found to be an important barrier to gaining employment in rural areas. Often people's skills and experience related to agriculture or other manual work, and when they lost their jobs they had no formal qualifications. Some were overqualified and well trained but still unable to find jobs which required their skills. The range of employment opportunities within a small labour market will always be limited, and the skills required will change with economic restructuring and more flexible labour markets, necessitating the acquisition of transferable skills.

Employers' behaviour and attitudes

Frequently, jobs were found through word of mouth and employers in all the study areas rarely advertised vacancies formally. Employers felt that, in being 'recommended' for a job, employees have a reputation to live up to which ensures good behaviour and reliability. This is an advantage to those from the locality who are perceived to be good workers and who are well connected to local networks, but presents barriers to those moving from another area, or those who have transgressed socially acceptable behaviour within their community in some way (or who are associated with others labelled in this way). In small rural communities, individuals are 'known' without any interview, and may not be allowed even one mistake. Formal job search through Job Centres was regarded as a last resort by both employers and job seekers. Some employers would not hire people without a car, and were reluctant to hire people with long journeys to make or potentially unreliable transport arrangements.

Accessibility between home and workplace

Transport was found to be a major barrier to getting a job in all rural areas. Most people felt that public transport, if it existed at all, was inappropriate and unreliable for work journeys. Some employers rejected applicants living 12 miles away and on a bus route as 'too far away'. The need for private transport made life very difficult for those without daily access to a car. Indeed there was something of a vicious circle of needing a job in order to be able to afford a car. Having no car was also a barrier to training.

The costs of participating in the labour market

Some respondents were unable even to look for work. The low level of wages on offer presented problems for those who faced significant costs when working, notably in relation to childcare and transport. They would have to earn significantly more than was offered by any local job in order to afford formal childcare. These issues of low wages and childcare and transport costs were reflected also in the 'benefits trap', leaving people substantially worse off if they accepted a low-paid local job.

Tied housing, gang labour and seasonality

Tied housing constrained people's ability to change their jobs despite poor working conditions or low pay, because they would lose their home as well as their job. The remote location of some tied housing also militated against both partners working. Gang work and the increasingly casual nature of farm work led to exploitation, low pay and insecurity. Finally, both agricultural and tourist employment tend to be seasonal.

"What do you train as? Do you train as a secretary, do you train as a driver, do you train as a bricklayer? When there's bricklayers out of work? There's no guarantee there's a job at the end of it, that's the thing."

"I phoned one firm up on the off-chance which is, what, twelve miles from here. They said, 'Well, we haven't got anything at the moment - where do you live?' I told him. 'Oh, how far's that ?' I said twelve, maybe fifteen miles. 'Oh, you live too far away', he said."

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Bridges to finding employment

Formal job search strategies or linking into local networks

One obvious route into employment is provided by the Job Centre. However, dissatisfaction with Job Centres was widespread in all the study areas, partly because of the limited range of jobs on offer and the knowledge that the better jobs were filled through informal networks and were never registered with the Job Centre at all. Employment agencies, on the other hand, were seen as useful by some. Most people, though, attributed successful job searches to local contacts and networks.

Self-employment

Some sought to escape unemployment by 'having a go' at self-employment. Other reasons for becoming self-employed included escaping low pay or worries about ill health. This strategy was not always successful, often being associated with low income, and with substantial risk of failure. Others disliked the administration and paperwork involved.

Transport solutions

Some firms provided a works bus, which helped women and young people especially to get to work, but this offered only a limited choice of jobs and usually led to dependence on one employer. Reliance on lifts was another strategy but was often problematic, with some people having to give up their job when their lift was no longer available.

Training

Training was considered by some to be an important way to improve their position in the labour market by updating their skills or re-training. However, training was not always available in the locality, and many

mentioned difficulties with access to transport and childcare or could not afford to travel to the distant venues. There was also a mismatch between the training available and the jobs in the locality.

Childcare solutions

While it was mostly women who found childcare a barrier to finding work, the solutions often involved men. Typically these included finding shift-work or part-time work (usually in the evenings or at night) to fit around a partner's hours, informal arrangements with friends or relatives, and home-working (again, often at night). The BHPS analysis confirmed that people in rural areas are more likely than those elsewhere to fit their work in around school hours and a partner's job, given the lack of formal childcare provision and its expense. Current work by Mauthner et al. (forthcoming) suggests that this may also be influenced by cultural constructions of 'proper parenting', which dictate that the mother should 'be there'.

Support networks and the informal economy

The importance of support networks, family and friends was mentioned by several people. These were people who helped out when times were hard, either with money or help in kind. Others spoke of car-boot sales and mini-markets, not only as a source of cheap goods but as a source of income. But even with such support, living on a low income was difficult and people attempted to supplement their resources in different ways, including benefit fraud, or jobs 'on the side' such as gardening, cleaning and childminding. Others would not cheat the system for fear of being caught and losing their benefit entitlement.

"So I was in a bit of a Catch 22 situation, I couldn't get a job, I couldn't get a car until I got a job, and I couldn't get a job until I got a car."

"I think, I mean it's not a manly thing to sit on your arse all day, you know…I mean my brother, he's always worked, he'll come home and buy his kids bloody brand new trainers around 50 quid. And I can't even afford to spend a few quid on her…"

Individuals in a range of circumstances said they felt judged by society as 'scroungers' or 'layabouts' because they had no job and relied on sickness or unemployment benefits; there was a clear social stigma about receiving unemployment benefits.

Hidden unemployment

Eliminating low pay, for example by raising the National Minimum Wage, is of benefit to those in work, but this will not in itself assist most low-income households. For some, getting a job can resolve their poverty, perhaps with help from the New Deal for People Aged 50+ (ND50+), together with related policy initiatives directed at transport, childcare provision and care services. For others, the only prospect of escaping low income is by an increase in the level and take-up of benefits.

Work by Beatty and Fothergill (1997 and 1999) for the Rural Development Commission found evidence of substantial hidden unemployment in rural areas, especially among men. Much of this took the form of premature early retirement and (in particular) a move from unemployment to long-term sickness. Distinctively rural dimensions to the problem of joblessness included the difficulties of getting to work, the narrow range of jobs available, the low level of wages on offer, and ageism among employers.

More recently other authors (Breeze et al. 2000) have investigated in what ways the New Deal programme needs to be adapted to rural circumstances. Their principal conclusion is that while New Deal addresses the supply side, it is demand-side problems which remain deeply entrenched in rural labour

markets. "Put simply, the main reason why so many men remain out-of-work is that there aren't enough jobs to go to" (Breeze et al. 2000). What is needed most in rural areas is job creation. Moreover, the jobs which are available offer low wages which provide no incentive to come off benefit, even with Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). The other distinctively rural barrier to finding work is transport, experienced by those without regular access to a car and especially by those without a driving licence. The authors suggested that New Deal in rural areas should support access to cars among those looking for work. Encouragingly, while Job Centres attracted "a torrent of criticism", New Deal advisers were regarded much more positively by those who had had personal interviews.

Welfare entitlements

The majority of those of working age facing low incomes in rural Britain experience poverty for relatively short spells, during which the level of benefit and other welfare payments may be crucial in assisting them to cope. There is no evidence of welfare dependency in rural areas; on the contrary people are eager to find work. There is, though, evidence that low levels of wages combine with means-tested benefits and other costs (transport and childcare) to create significant disincentives to accept work.

Breeze et al. (2000) found that jobs at the National Minimum Wage (NMW) may be a realistic option for single men and women, especially if living with their parents, but that they would leave those with families financially worse off. Men with significant family responsibilities "typically receive a package that includes

"I've never, I've actually now, here and now, never drawn the dole. I've never drawn unemployment and I don't intend to. Well, if I haven't had something I'll go out and do anything. I cannot bring myself to walk into an unemployment office."

"My brother-in-law's father, he found out from my mate that I was looking for work and he just phoned me up and offered me a job. So that was great. The fish farm, I found through a friend that they were looking for people, so I phoned up and I got taken on. The fishing boat was also through a friend."

income-based Jobseeker's Allowance for themselves, their partner and children, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and free school meals." All these are means-tested and, even with the WFTC, they would be substantially worse off accepting a job at the NMW. In addressing this benefits trap it is insufficient to focus on the supply side of the labour market: the creation of better quality jobs in rural areas, with higher wage rates, is required.

Access to advice and information

Receipt of welfare benefits is of crucial importance to households of working age during their typically short spells of poverty or unemployment, and to older people who form the largest group experiencing low income in rural areas. However, there is clear evidence that take-up rates are lower in rural areas, and that there is a pressing need for better access to information and advice about benefit entitlements.

The study of disadvantage in rural Scotland (Shucksmith et al. 1994 and 1996) found that the uptake of benefits was much lower than would have been expected, given the low incomes of many respondents. Respondents were often confused about the benefits that were available and their entitlement. Access to advice in towns and cities was problematic, with benefit offices seen as highly intimidating, quite apart from the social stigma of claiming. Other studies have confirmed these findings.

The culture of independence and self-reliance in rural areas would appear to be an important factor mitigating against the collection of state benefits. Individuals were reluctant to claim

benefit, seeking instead a second or third job, or preferring to live a more spartan existence. Apart from culture, there is a lack of anonymity in collecting benefits (usually at the village post office) and a greater distance to, and general paucity of, information and advice about eligibility for benefits. Social housing is lacking in rural areas, whereas in urban areas it offers an effective channel for information on benefits and rights to reach those eligible for state support. There is therefore a considerable challenge in attempting to increase the uptake of benefit entitlement in rural areas. Equally, improved uptake could make a powerful impact on poverty in rural areas.

Following the rural disadvantage study, Henderson and Gibson (1997) reviewed the services offered by the Benefits Agency, local authorities, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and independent advice agencies in rural Scotland, and found a lack of an overall strategy for the provision of advice and access to welfare benefits, with little or no strategy for implementation in rural areas. Policy and practice in rural areas was secondary, departmentalised and ad hoc. Nevertheless, there was strength in the energy and skills of the many people working with voluntary agencies. Henderson and Gibson concluded that the fundamental structures for improving advice and information in rural areas exist. What is needed is a more strategic approach to the current system and a rural focus, rather than major restructuring, or a major shift in policy. The development of a strategy should reflect the needs of local communities, through systematic consultation, and enhance and promote existing facilities and mechanisms. Henderson and Gibson therefore recommended that the

"We went round to the council place and I put my name down on a list and I've been on the list for about three years and I only have one point. Well, you need about 12 or something like that and I asked 'How come my points aren't going up? You know, I've got a baby and that. I need to get somewhere.' And she says, 'Oh well, your points don't really go up unless you've got illnesses or things like that'."

relevant local authorities, in partnership with voluntary advice agencies, the Benefits Agency and local communities, establish a strategy for the provision of information and advice on welfare benefits in each area. This strategy should make explicit reference to implementation in rural areas and take into account the following factors: physical access; reliability of information and advice; confidence in the system and a client-centred approach.

Pensions

One of the most striking findings of the BHPS analysis is how many of those on low incomes in rural areas are beyond working age and reliant solely on the state pension. The level of the pension is therefore of overwhelming importance to their income levels and to their quality of life. Increasing the basic level of pensions is the single measure which would have the greatest impact in addressing poverty and social exclusion in rural areas. In addition, a special effort is required to reach older people relying only on state pensions and unaware or unconvinced of their welfare entitlements, and to inform them of these in a sensitive and appropriate way. Specific policy changes also impact adversely on older people in rural areas, such as increased fuel prices and the diversion of business from sub post offices, and thought should be given to how to mitigate such effects.

Housing

The supply of affordable rural housing has long been identified as essential to the vitality and sustainability of rural communities. It is also crucial to the life chances of many of the less prosperous members of rural societies, and to the

socially inclusive character of the British countryside. Unfortunately, affordable housing is sadly lacking in many rural areas. ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), the Countryside Agency and many others have identified the lack of affordable housing as the most important issue facing rural communities in England, and there is equally compelling evidence from rural areas of Scotland and Wales.

A recent report from the Rural Development Commission begins in this way:

Everyone should have access to a good quality, affordable home, but increasingly this opportunity is denied to people on lower incomes in England's rural areas. Lack of affordable housing not only affects individuals and families, but also undermines the achievement of balanced, sustainable, rural communities. The RDC believes that there is an urgent need to tackle the problems of providing affordable housing in rural areas to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of suitable housing for rural people. Without action now rural England will increasingly be home only to the more affluent, and living, working villages will become a thing of the past. (Rural Development Commission 1999)

This is confirmed by the analysis of the BHPS which, as noted above, reveals progressive gentrification of rural areas as the more affluent dominate the housing market. To understand better the lack of affordable housing in rural Britain, and the related social exclusion and social changes, one needs to consider the nature of, and influences on, the demand, supply

"The only way I'll be able to afford a house in this village is if I win the lottery."

and stock of housing in rural areas. While there are important variations from one area to another in the ways in which these forces operate (documented in a ward-based classification of housing market areas in rural England for the Department of the Environment - [Shucksmith 1996]), nevertheless it is possible to summarise the general position.

In both rural and non-rural areas of Britain, the growing number of single person households and the increase in older people living apart from their families has increased the demand for housing. The demand in rural areas has, in addition, been augmented by the desire of many town dwellers for a house in the country. At the same time, supply restrictions (notably planning controls) have permitted relatively few to realise their desire for rural home-ownership, and the resulting increase of house prices has caused problems for a sizeable proportion of the indigenous rural population and for potential low-income rural residents. The evidence suggests that 40 per cent of new households in rural areas are unable to afford home-ownership.

As Newby elaborated, several years before the term social exclusion was coined:

> *As prices inexorably rise, so the population which actually achieves its goal of a house in the country becomes more socially selective. Planning controls on rural housing have therefore become - in effect if not in intent - instruments of social exclusivity.*
> (Newby 1985)

The planning process has become the arena for a public conflict between countryside protection and 'village homes for village people' which has become more acute in recent years. Paradoxically, it may be that those most avidly protecting (their own) perception of the 'rural idyll' are, by token of the effect on the housing market, inadvertently threatening the social, cultural and economic sustainability of what they are so keen to preserve.

A study for the DETR in 1998 confirmed that the majority of new housing in rural areas is built by the private sector for the upper end of the market. The combination of increasing demand, restricted supply and insufficient stock of rented housing has resulted in a deficit of rural housing both in quantitative terms and also in terms of affordability for lower and middle income groups. The study concluded that these trends were likely to continue.

Although the rural private rental market is slightly larger than in urban areas, research suggests that this stock is unlikely to increase. As a result, the vast majority of those unable to afford house purchase in rural Britain must depend on social housing provision by housing associations and local authorities. However, social housing in rural areas is lacking, accommodating only 15 per cent of households compared with 23 per cent in England as a whole. Partly this is a historic legacy of the dominance of rural areas by Conservative councils who tended not to build council houses to the same extent; partly it is the result of social housing investment being concentrated in urban areas by the Housing Corporation (and by Scottish Homes); and partly it is a result of council house sales running at much higher rates in rural areas.

A number of studies have found that the problems of affordability in rural areas have worsened over the last decade. One clear reason for this has been the substantial shortfall of provision of social housing. Compared with an estimate that 80,000 affordable homes were needed between 1990-95, from 1990-97 only 17,700 new social housing units have been provided, largely through the Housing Corporation's Special Rural Programme (Rural Development Commission 1999). Even this contribution was offset by continuing sales under the 'right to buy'.

The study by Bevan et al. of social housing in rural areas confirms the very limited opportunities for affordable housing in most rural areas:

> *The scarcity of alternatives to owner-occupation in many rural localities combined with high prices, particularly in areas with an intense demand for housing, meant that even households on quite moderate incomes are priced out of the market.* (Bevan et al. forthcoming)

Tenants of social housing, reviewing their previous housing experiences and searches, emphasised not only that they were unable to buy a home anywhere in their area but also that private renting was prohibitively costly and too insecure for families. For many, social housing enabled them to stay within a particular village where they had lived for some time or had kinship ties. There were instances where new housing association developments had had a key role in enabling extended family networks to survive in a particular village. Respondents emphasised the importance of social networks in providing an opportunity to go to work while friends or relatives took on childcare responsibilities. For other respondents, social housing in the village offered them the chance of a fresh start in life, perhaps after a marital breakdown which meant they needed to find alternative accommodation but also to stay near to family and friends for support.

It was also clear that such housing could play an important role for households without any particular local ties, perhaps helping them to overcome an immediate crisis. This raises the issue of how far there is an acceptance of the legitimacy of broader housing needs within rural social housing schemes, and in many ways this mirrors the ongoing debate about the development of mixed communities and the role of allocations systems in addressing this. One local authority refused to re-house someone who owned a garage in the village because he had not had a local connection for five years; as a consequence he moved away, shutting the garage and making two people unemployed. The authors suggest more sensitive allocations policies, looking beyond solely housing need, may be sufficient to achieve a balance between meeting local households' requirements and allowing flexibility to enable people to move into settlements if they so choose, even if they lack local connections. This may also require much more joint working between registered social landlords, local authorities and others.

Conclusion

Social exclusion is not confined to the most visibly poor council estates, nor even to the cities and towns. One in three individuals in rural Britain experienced at least one spell of poverty during 1991-96, albeit typically of shorter

"It's paying for childcare…and then you'd have to pay your rent – and my rent's £270 – and then your council tax and it's a lot of money. Your family credit's only £50 a week and…would cover like £200 of the rent but I would still have to find £70, you know, as well as my council tax and my electric, TV licence, you know, so half the time it's just not worth working. I'm stuck here now really until he's a lot older and until I can find somewhere else to live, somewhere cheaper, or until some poor bloke comes along and marries me."

duration than for people in towns and cities. Low pay is more common and more persistent in rural areas than elsewhere. There is considerable inequality hidden amongst the apparent affluence of rural Britain, and those who are socially excluded in one way or another may face particular difficulties because of their very 'invisibility'.

In relation to market processes, this chapter has highlighted the barriers which face those seeking integration into rural labour markets, and especially the shortage of well-paid, better quality jobs. Lack of transport and childcare also present significant barriers. Moreover, there are real difficulties for many in finding affordable housing, whether through market or state, to the extent that they may be geographically excluded from living in rural areas. The voluntary sector has been placed under increasing pressure as a result. These intersecting spheres of social exclusion in turn have consequences for kinship networks and social support. In these ways different dimensions of social exclusion interact to reinforce inequalities within rural areas. Furthermore, these have combined to generate a well-established tendency towards a geographical division between rural and urban Britain which is far from the 'one nation' ideal.

Young people in rural areas

"It's easy to get a job but difficult to get a good job."

"The actual work in the countryside – what have you got ? You've got your post office, your local bar, and farms. And it's not everyone's cup of tea doing that."

When considering the future of rural areas, young people occupy a central role. While young people are regarded by many as literally the future of rural communities, it is nevertheless the case that many leave rural areas during their late teenage years and early 20s. Jones (1992), for example, found young people obliged to leave rural Scotland for education, for jobs and most of all for housing, "leaving a community impoverished by their absence". The Action in Rural Areas research programme therefore included several studies of young people in rural Britain, and this chapter synthesises the findings of these authors (Rugg and Jones 1999; Pavis, Platt and Hubbard 2000; Furlong and Cartmel 2000; and Storey and Brannen 2000).

In part, this chapter builds on the previous one, in discussing what 'bridges' and 'barriers' are encountered by young people moving from school to work. But, more generally, this chapter seeks to understand how young people in rural areas make the transition from childhood to adulthood, and in what ways this process contributes towards their inclusion in, or exclusion from, society.

Labour markets

Current policy pronouncements emphasise the importance of labour market participation in creating an inclusive society. For many young people, a period of unemployment has become a normal part of the transition from school to work, with youth unemployment rates in most European countries about twice as high as those for adults. Although many of the problems associated with unemployment faced by urban youth also apply to those living in rural areas, Furlong and Cartmel (2000)

indicate that rural youth face an additional set of barriers which are linked to their geographical isolation and to the narrow range of opportunities which are available: "For rural youth, some of the most effective bridges into the labour market (such as education and training) may be limited or inaccessible and opportunities to fulfil aspirations may be restricted." Other issues highlighted in previous research are poor public transport, expensive housing, strong personal networks and poor quality jobs, as noted in Chapter 3.

Two particularly striking findings emerged in relation to labour markets in rural areas. The first is that young people from rural areas become integrated into one of two quite separate labour markets – the national (distant, well-paid, with career opportunities) and the local (poorly paid, insecure, unrewarding and with fewer prospects). Education, and of course social class, are the elements which allow some young people to access national job opportunities, in the same way as those from urban areas. But for those whose educational credentials trap them within local labour markets, further education and training are much less available than for their counterparts in towns, and their life-chances are reduced. This is returned to again later in this chapter, under the heading of education.

The second key point is the interplay between transport, employment and housing. Young people in rural areas, earning low wages, must have a car to get to work, but this – together with the shortage of affordable housing – leaves them unable to afford to live independently. There is also an initial problem of needing a job in order to afford a car, which they need to secure a job, and help might well be given at this

crucial stage in the youth transition.[1] Again, this issue is discussed later in this chapter, under the heading of transport. These issues are both crucial to young people's labour market integration and opportunities.

Youth unemployment in rural areas

Furlong and Cartmel surveyed young people with experience of unemployment in a variety of urban and rural locations in Scotland. They found little evidence that rural youth experience greater difficulties in the labour market than their urban counterparts. The key to success in both labour markets is educational qualifications. The greater difficulties experienced by urban men, and the success of rural women, are largely explained by differences in their qualifications and age of leaving school, rather than by rurality. But there were important qualitative differences between rural and urban experiences.

While education and training are often regarded as important routes out of unemployment (especially long-term unemployment), these routes tend not to be so important or available in rural areas, partly due to the easy alternative of seasonal and casual employment. However, the lack of incentive to embark on education or training routes may leave rural youth in a permanent cycle of intermittent short-term jobs interspersed with spells of unemployment. On the other hand, in neither rural nor urban areas did training schemes tend to lead to full-time jobs.

Young people's experience of unemployment in rural areas involved isolation, boredom and hardship. Many felt so cut-off from employment opportunities that they had little chance of gaining work, although in fact rural youth were more likely than urban youth to secure a full-time permanent job after a period of unemployment.

The bridges and barriers tended to be those highlighted in Chapter 3 – work experience, social networks and 'soft skills' of presentation, reliability and attitude all helped in finding work, whereas typical barriers included lack of transport, difficulties in finding affordable housing, a bad reputation or prejudice, and (for women) a lack of childcare facilities.

Transport was an issue for young people in all the rural areas studied. Some could not afford a car, and few could afford driving lessons without parental help, yet the cost of public transport and restricted timetables severely limited their area of job search and their training opportunities.

Temporary work as a bridge to permanent employment

Analysis of employment data shows that seasonal, part-time and casual work has increased in rural areas, as elsewhere, and that significant numbers of young people are employed on a temporary or part-time basis. There is controversy, however, about whether non-standard labour market participation of this type represents a bridge towards permanent work careers or is a step towards labour force marginalisation.

"I don't like it very much but it's a job…It's a means to an end for me…It's not exactly job satisfaction."

"Oh, it's just, if you can imagine a jumper, it's sewing these bits together. Sewing the arms on, all day, every day…Oh, it's just boredom, total boredom."

"I can't do anything, can't work, there's nothing, the only thing I can do is walk about, sleep, walk about, sleep, walk about…I like to do things but there's nothing round here…it's just four walls, Sky TV, and that's it or walk about."

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1   The transition from childhood to adulthood is often termed the 'youth transition'. It embraces many dimensions (from school to work; from parental home to independent housing; from parental family to having children, perhaps; and from minor to citizen, acquiring rights such as to drive, to vote, etc.). It is rarely linear or straightforward.

> "We're not looking for people who are very well educated because the job is quite repetitive and I think they might come in for a few weeks and this isn't…you know, it doesn't tax their brain." (*Employer*)

> "If the person recommends his son or nephew there's some sort of responsibility for them." (*Employer*)

On the positive side, it is possible that temporary work can help by financing additional job-search activities, by demonstrating a commitment to finding paid work, and through the provision of an up-to-date job reference. Temporary workers may also hear about jobs through informal networks. And employers will have the chance to screen potential candidates for permanent employment.

On the other hand, there is strong evidence that non-standard employment is associated with poverty wages and social exclusion. The Government has recently introduced a 'back to work' bonus in order to encourage unemployed people to accept low-paid and temporary employment, in the belief that these jobs provide a route to more permanent jobs, but is this really helpful?

Furlong and Cartmel found evidence to support both sides of this debate. Employers placed a high value on work experience and the 'soft skills' of presentation, reliability and attitude, as well as on qualifications, and in this respect temporary or part-time work may have helped indirectly. Most jobs were found through social networks and 'word of mouth', again suggesting some indirect benefit, but these were more through family members than through workplaces. "However, while the experience of a full-time job is likely to provide them with advantages in the labour market, all of those who obtained jobs in this manner [through youth training schemes or work experience] were subsequently laid off." There were no internal direct routes to permanent jobs. Many employers relied heavily and continuously on temporary workers, with no intention of converting these to permanent posts.

Two groups of young people who did find temporary, low-paid work useful were recent graduates, living at home and paying off student debts while applying for jobs in national labour markets; and students who had dropped out of their courses and returned home. Each of these groups were unlikely to remain trapped in these poor quality jobs.

Employers' perspectives
Employers in each of the areas studied tended to demand low-skilled labour for low-skilled jobs. They argued that qualifications provide young people with few advantages in labour markets, although they are the key to geographical mobility – the 'ticket out' of rural areas. In some respects this is contradicted by their recruitment practices, since the personal characteristics they valued were strongly associated with education.

Employers broadly fell into three categories according to their demand for labour:

● Those who recruited young people into low-skilled repetitive jobs, which needed no or few educational qualifications (the largest category). Wages were low (sometimes below the NMW), and young people were recruited from the local area.

● Firms who sought young people with good school or college qualifications. These young people were recruited locally into skilled or semi-skilled jobs which required some additional in-house training.

● Employers recruiting graduates for professional or managerial positions (the smallest category). These young

people were recruited from a national labour market and tended not to have local connections.

While the first type of employment remains the staple diet of the youth labour market, young people are likely to continue to move away from rural areas while those who stay remain unfulfilled and frustrated. Expansion of the second segment is viewed by Furlong and Cartmel as the key to enhancing the position of young people in rural areas.

A concomitant of the dominance of rural areas by the first group of employers is a severe lack of training opportunities. Even those young people who secured employment which involved training were unlikely to be trained in their preferred occupation, or in flexible skills. Furlong and Cartmel cite examples of young people who had to abandon long-held aspirations (for example, to be an electrician) due to a lack of training places within reach. Few employers offered more than short on-the-job training (e.g. in waitressing) or training which was legally necessary to meet minimum health and safety requirements.

The New Deal might be expected to have ameliorated these difficulties but very few employers were actively involved and their knowledge was limited. Even among those who had investigated the possibilities under the New Deal, some felt unable to offer the necessary training to potential recruits because of their small size or the essentially low-skilled nature of the work. However, given the importance attached by employers to work experience, the New Deal would have held out considerable benefits to young people.

Childcare

Young women who did not attend higher education tended to form partnerships at an earlier age; this and the birth of children tended to be key triggers to the establishment of independent households, often in insecure financial circumstances. Pavis et al. (2000) found in both their study areas that a lack of affordable childcare, and cultural attitudes about appropriate roles for mothers, led many women either to withdraw from the labour market or to regard their employment as secondary to their family responsibilities. Several of these women had become socially isolated and expressed dissatisfaction with their situation:

> *"I'm stuck in aw day and then my husband comes home from work wi' the car an' like he's tired, he's had a hard day at work, so either my Mum comes from Berwick or, em, I don't get out till weekends [laughter]. Like being stuck in prison, get out on day release."*

In North Yorkshire, similarly, childcare was unaffordable: many young women had found it easy to obtain low-paid, casual employment, but following their pregnancies such work would not cover the cost of childcare and transport to nurseries. Young lone mothers, especially, found that the rural location exacerbated their problems. According to Rugg and Jones:

> *poor access to advice and advocacy services meant these young mothers were not in a position to secure the statutory help to which they were entitled. Furthermore, the limited choices available in local labour and housing markets worked against their*

"I was a single parent and they were kinda wary about taking me on because of the wean [baby] and job and that, taking time off for the weans. They're always telling you we want younger ones with no weans."

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need to find flexible employment options and affordable housing.
(Rugg and Jones 1999)

Their need to stay close to networks of family support meant they were trapped in the countryside. These findings were echoed in all of the rural areas studied in this programme.

Housing markets

All the studies in the Action in Rural Areas programme also found conclusive evidence that young people encounter substantial difficulties in relation to finding independent housing. Young people's early years were characterised either by a long stay in the parental home or by renting, which proved to be unsustainable in the long term.

Both the quality and affordability of the properties on offer were problematic. For example, Rugg and Jones noted one young man for whom the experience of renting a rat-infested farm dwelling with his girlfriend destroyed both his willingness to rent and their relationship. Where local properties were rented they often constituted a first step out of the countryside as couples eventually moved into owner-occupation through buying in a cheaper, urban housing market.

Lack of affordable housing
In recent years housing markets in rural areas have become increasingly segmented, through a combination of the 'right to buy', which has reduced the availability of public sector rented housing, a rise in house prices and a shortage of single-person housing. The tenure structure in rural areas now consists of a limited private rented sector,

diminishing supplies of tied and social rented housing, and a predominance of owner-occupation, as noted in Chapter 1. The result has been a polarisation between those wealthy enough to purchase and those poor enough (and 'needy' enough) to qualify for social housing. This particularly disadvantages young people, who tend to fall between these two extremes.

Pavis et al., echoing researchers in the other study areas, found that the young people they studied:

were neither wealthy enough to buy, nor were they poor enough to qualify for the limited public sector provision. The result was that they were pushed into the private rented sector, which was often found to consist of poor-quality accommodation, located in isolated landward areas (for example on farms or country estates).[1]
(Pavis et al. 2000)

In tourist areas, caravans and winter lets of holiday homes were further options. Moreover, because the move out of the parental home was often triggered by childbirth or marriage, "some young people found themselves living with young children in geographically isolated areas and in substandard accommodation." Most councils and social landlords in rural areas give low priority to the needs of young people and young couples.

Delayed household formation
One result of these difficulties in finding affordable housing, observed consistently in all of the studies, is delayed household formation. In contrast to the way that, in general in the UK, young people

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1 **'Landward areas' are areas outside settlements.**

increasingly live alone or with flatmates prior to cohabitation or marriage, by far the majority of young people in rural areas remain in the parental home. Partly this was the result of interaction between housing, transport and employment issues. In order to obtain work, albeit low-paid, young people had to buy and run a car, and the expense of this left too little to afford independent housing, even with parental help - "I know people in the village who are getting into their 30s and are still living with their parents."

Although many were initially happy living in the parental home, close to friends and family, problems became evident for the single young people later in their lives as they sought to assert their independence or, most commonly, when they found partners.

Some tried and realised the difficulties of securing independent accommodation on a low wage, while also maintaining the car which was essential to keeping their job. Even with a dual income, young people still found it difficult to afford a place of their own. Their only hope was social housing, but their chances of obtaining this were very slim.

At this stage their local housing opportunities were so limited that they had to leave, and Rugg and Jones found that "almost all ended up living in urban areas". At the age of 22, only one or two of the 60 interviewed in North Yorkshire had succeeded in achieving any level of independence while staying in a rural location. For the great majority, here and in the other study areas, the only solution to their housing and employment problems was to leave the countryside.

Transport

For young people, as with others in rural areas, transport emerges as a key issue. Storey and Brannen (2000) have focused on the particular circumstances of young people and transport in rural areas in the south-west of England, and point to the different issues which face those too young to drive.

For those still at school, accessing leisure services and after-school activities (sports, drama, etc.) is the key area in which they feel constrained by the lack of transport. Mothers, if they drive, are the key lift-givers. In households with only one car, priority is given to getting people to and from work, and lifts for young people may be restricted.

Buses are used only to get to town at weekends since there are few evening services. Buses control when and where young people can go on their own. Some young people have never used public transport and are ill-prepared for bus and train travel. Timetables are inaccessible and difficult to interpret. Young people regard community and public buses as 'belonging' to older people and often feel uncomfortable about using them. Having a vehicle of one's own was the expectation of all young people.

For those aged 17 and over it was expected not only that they would take their driving test as soon as possible, usually working part-time and relying on family support to fund lessons, but also that they would obtain a car of their own. This proved to be expensive:

"We all say we want to have cars but it's a helluva lot of money. You have to pay for the insurance, the MOT, the tax, and the petrol on top of

"What am I going to do when I can't get the school bus, if you want to meet friends at different times? What am I going to do when I've left school, if I've got to rely on Mum for lifts or a bike 'cos you won't see your friends so much outside of school?"

"They [*parents*] helped me out financially in a big way, a very big way. Eh, I mean, I need a car to get to my work, I mean there's no doubt about it, I mean…I cannae…I cannae get public transport unless I left here about four in the mornin'."

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"Aye, transport. Like I'm not getting enough off the Brew to like take driving lessons. I've got my provisional, I managed to take one lesson, I'd just started taking driving lessons when I was working full-time but then I got paid off and the company was running at a loss, I've had to cancel my driving lessons and that was that."

"At the moment it's on winter timetables so you can get one to Oban on a Monday, a Wednesday and a Friday. That gets you into Oban for half past ten and it comes back at ten to two, and that's the only bus."

"We've got three post boxes and a telephone box to choose from. That's about it. It's the same in most villages around here. There's not a lot to do. There's pubs and that's it."

that…Everyone goes, 'I'm going to get a car when I'm 17.' When we get a car, it's not going to be a brand new one, it's going to go wrong and cost loads of money."

Among the 17- to 18-year-olds interviewed by Storey and Brannen, 62 per cent of those who had passed their test had sole access to a car; 41 per cent of those still learning to drive expected sole access; and of those who had not yet started lessons only 27 per cent expected sole access when they eventually passed. The housing tenure of these groups reveals the degree to which mobility is structured by social class. Fifty per cent of 17- to 18-year-olds from owner-occupied houses had passed their driving tests, compared with 16 per cent of those from rented housing. Those from social rented housing were furthest behind: only 7 per cent had passed the test. There were also differences by gender, with young women likely to take their tests significantly later than young men.

By the ages of 22 to 24, 86 per cent had passed their driving tests, and three-quarters owned a car. Of those who were in work, two-thirds reported that their usual and only way of reaching work was by driving themselves. Others relied on lifts, walked or cycled. Hardly any used public transport. The respondents who were unemployed believed that the lack of a car was an almost insurmountable barrier to finding work, with the only solution being to move to a town.

Education and higher education – the road out?

The impact of education and higher education on young people's lives and their future prospects was evident in all the studies. This is influenced by social

class, of course, with children from relatively well-off families most likely to do well at school, and most likely to attend higher education.

Pavis et al. (2000) found that variation in educational attainment and professional qualification emerged from their study as "the single most consequential factor in understanding the childhood to adulthood transitional processes" and in determining life chances. Educational experiences were found to influence the types of employment that young people sought, whether they looked for work in the national or local labour market, the timing of first leaving the parental home, and their feelings about their local community and rural life. At the same time, young people who wished to pursue higher education had to leave home in order to do so.

Perhaps the greatest difference between young people in rural and urban areas is that young people from rural areas do not normally have the option of staying at home while studying at university, and thus they face increased financial and emotional burdens. As Pavis et al. point out, "they are forced to set up independent households and to live away from their social networks and support structures". While this may be advantageous for some, facilitating leaving the parental home, it also makes those with the least personal or financial resources more vulnerable to non-completion of their higher education courses.

With respect to employment, all the studies found that young people who had not attended higher education tended to operate in local, rather than national, labour markets, and in this respect they were different from both the

graduates and those who dropped out of higher education. They sought employment in the local area or in nearby towns:

> *The reality was that most of these young people lacked the skills necessary to make them competitive in the type of jobs that were advertised nationally. Moreover, moving to another area (rural or urban) necessarily led to the loss of social networks, which provided much of the young people's employment. The fact that most low-skilled employment was secured through word of mouth and local reputation gave the local young people an important comparative advantage within their community.*
> (Pavis et al. 2000)

North Yorkshire, the area in which Rugg and Jones carried out their study, was unusual in also offering a few better jobs in local labour markets, perhaps with associated apprenticeships, for both men and women.

Graduates were dissatisfied with the available local employment, and only returned to live cheaply with their parents while they paid off student debts and applied for jobs in national labour markets. Indeed, student debt was the main reason why graduates were prepared to take low-quality work prior to embarking on their careers. Most graduates expected eventually to find professional-type employment, and they recognised that this would almost certainly involve moving away.

Rugg and Jones concede this might be interpreted as young people entering higher education as a means of escape

from limited opportunity in the countryside, but their conclusion instead is that:

> *for most students, the decision to take a degree reflected an unthinking progression through education rather than a conscious rejection of rural life.*
> (Rugg and Jones 1999)

The leaving itself tended to be protracted and gradual, with many returning for holiday jobs. Nevertheless, they were unlikely to find employment consonant with their graduate status in their own areas, and so "it would seem that, whether or not they want to stay, higher education forces young people to leave the countryside." As one respondent put it, in Shucksmith et al. (1996), "the only way to stay in the rural area was to fail, and that was too high a price to pay."

Previous research by Jones (1995) has indicated that young people with parents who are migrants into rural areas are themselves more likely to migrate, compared with locals, and Pavis et al. confirmed this. This was not necessarily because positive views of the countryside correlated with being 'born and bred' there, according to Rugg and Jones. They found that many young people, including incomers' children, would have wished to stay in the countryside, and even to restrict their graduate job search to that region and to commute to work, if affordable housing had been available in the place they had grown up. "However, the lack of accommodation generally means that graduates were unable to retain even a foothold in the countryside." Another reflection of this was the wish expressed by many graduates to return to live in a rural area later, especially as a location for their

"To be honest, I'd like to live in a rural area later, when I'm retired [*laughter*] but the thing is there's no jobs in a rural area, especially not for someone like me."

"If I had to live in the city for work, then yes, I would live in the city...but I prefer the countryside though, I really do."

"Coming to university was sort of like my plan for getting away from Richmond…Go to school, do 'A' levels and then move away and go to university."

"All my friends were going to college and things like that. So I thought to myself, 'Yes, I'll just do the same.' And went along with it."

own children to grow up, if there were professional/graduate jobs available. Most accepted that this was highly unlikely.

Young people who pursued higher education were distinctive in other ways too. Postponed family formation was characteristic, with most graduates seeing family formation and parenthood as some way off. Women tended to form partnerships at an earlier age than men, and often faced conflicts between their desire to establish a career and their wish to be near a partner. This was another reason for delaying establishing new families until their careers were established. Consequently, moving house tended to be driven primarily by employment considerations rather than family formation, in contrast to the decisions about housing and family taken by non-graduate women.

Social and cultural distance existed between those who had attended higher education and those who had not, partly because of their experiences of different geographical and social environments. However, Pavis et al. (2000) also found evidence of a psychological distancing and separation taking place prior to moving away.

Rural youth transitions

Rugg and Jones summarise rural youth transitions in terms of a number of typical groups, which tended to emerge also from the other studies:

The well-employed home-stayer
Some young people at the initial stages of their transition to independence were in secure long-term employment and still lived in the parental home. Few displayed any immediate housing or

labour market problems, and they enjoyed reasonable disposable incomes (because their housing costs were low). Although they aspired to owner-occupation, they would not pursue this while single. The need to secure independent accommodation was likely to create problems later (see 'The couple' below).

The newcomer   People moving into the countryside experienced exclusion within tight-knit communities. Even after many years they were still viewed as strangers. The children of these families experienced enhanced difficulties in securing even low-paid local employment, and similarly in finding affordable housing, because they were not connected to local informal networks. They may leave because of this lack of support from local networks, even if they do not pursue higher education as an avenue to a career.

The low-income home-stayer   Most young people working locally, in each of the study areas, had poorly paid jobs with limited prospects. Few had problems in finding work, or in changing jobs, through 'word-of-mouth' recommendations in local social networks. Because of this they had not considered further or higher education. In the short term, most were content. However, in the longer term the work offered little satisfaction and no opportunity to develop skills, leaving people vulnerable to downturns in the economy and to industrial restructuring. Moreover, their prospects for independent housing were poor. Few of this group anticipated buying a house when they were older, as their incomes were likely to remain low. They did plan to seek rented housing, although they saw this as affordable only with a joint

income with a future partner. They discounted social housing as available only to families. These young people – although likely to stay in the countryside – were facing very protracted transitions to independence.

The student Students had a delayed transition to independence. The nature of the rural labour market meant that all would leave the countryside, although many hoped to return eventually once they had raised enough capital to buy a home. Their ideal scenario was to raise a family in a village with good links to a town or city which had plenty of employment opportunities. In this sense, some would ultimately complete their transition to independence in the countryside.

The couple Young people in the interim stages of moving towards independence – moving in with a partner – faced acute difficulties because of the shortage of affordable housing. Almost all ended up leaving the countryside and living in urban areas.

In all the above cases the reliance on parental support is apparent, as well as the difficulty in achieving the youth transition in a rural location. Some groups, especially those on low incomes, were likely to experience a very protracted transition, and most ultimately had to move to urban areas to achieve independence in housing and employment.

Conclusion

Young people in rural areas face an additional set of barriers which are linked to their geographical isolation and to the narrow range of opportunities for employment, training and housing available in their locality. Education and social class enable some to access national job opportunities, in the same way as those from urban areas. But for those whose educational credentials trap them within local labour markets, further education and training are much less available than for their counterparts in towns, and their life-chances are reduced.

Another key point is the interplay between transport, employment and housing, which delays household formation among young people in rural areas, with the result that they live much longer in the parental home and often ultimately leave the area. Young people in rural areas, earning low wages, must have a car to get to work but this, together with a shortage of affordable housing, leaves them unable to afford to live independently. In addition, there is the problem of needing a job in order to afford a car, which they need to secure a job. Help might well be given at this crucial stage in the youth transition (see page 57).

"When I first started there I really did like it [*circuit board assembly-line work*], but they say you learn virtually everything there is to learn in the first two years, and I've reached that stage now and I need something more challenging."

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Governance, partnership and regeneration

People living in rural areas are not merely passive recipients of broader forces affecting their lives. Rural development policy has recently placed greater emphasis on enabling and empowering rural people to take greater control over their own lives through 'bottom-up' development approaches that involve local people in their planning. These owe much to earlier traditions of community development.

At EU level the LEADER programme is a clear instance of this approach, and within the UK the 1995 White Papers and more recent statements from the present government have also (to varying degrees) espoused this approach. In 1998, for example, the Scottish Office's paper *Towards a development strategy for rural Scotland* insisted that rural people should be the subjects and not the objects of development. Yet it is not clear how well current practice works, and to what extent this approach tends to reinforce existing inequalities. Often, neither empowerment nor widespread participation in the development process are achieved.

A related issue is the changing governance of rural areas. Their government is no longer dominated by local authorities, and instead we find a whole host of agencies involved in rural governance, drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors. This decline in local authority power, and the associated fragmentation of responsibility and resources, along with privatisation, deregulation and the growth of non-elected bodies, has necessitated the construction of a range of partnerships which increasingly govern rural Britain. Important questions arise of how well these work, how local ownership of the development process can be achieved

within this model, and how rural people themselves experience this process. Above all, do such partnerships empower and assist active citizenship?

Two further projects in the Action in Rural Areas programme - Bennett, Hudson and Beynon 2000 and Edwards et al. forthcoming - have addressed these issues, the former seeking to draw lessons for rural areas from experiences of coalfield regeneration, and the latter examining partnership working in Mid Wales and the English borderlands. This chapter summarises their findings in relation to regeneration, partnerships and governance.

The need for regeneration and rural development

Rural Britain is extremely diverse, not only in its appearance but also in terms of its social and economic well-being. For example, the recent Cabinet Office report, *Sharing in the nation's prosperity*, identified on the one hand that people in rural areas are on average more prosperous and have a better quality of life than those in towns and cities, while on the other hand it also noted that nine of the ten poorest counties in England and Wales are rural. Many of the aggregate trends in rural areas are positive - more people are owner-occupiers, more residents are middle-class, unemployment rates are lower, people are healthier - though as Chapter 2 has shown there is still widespread poverty and social exclusion.

Regeneration issues arise in two respects in this context. The first relates to areas which are not experiencing economic growth. Not all rural areas are sharing in the nation's prosperity, and some continue to experience both population

and employment decline, notably in the less accessible areas which have been most reliant on agriculture or other primary industries (including mining). Many of these were designated as Objective 1 or 5b areas under the EU's structural policy during the 1990s, or as rural development areas by the Rural Development Commission; examples include Cornwall, West Wales, southern Scotland, and parts of the Highlands and Islands. Coalfield areas have unique problems as initially rural localities which experienced a sudden influx of population related to a single industry.

The scale at which changes are analysed is also relevant. The general pattern of population change is that of population loss from the larger conurbations and population growth in rural areas, but this tends to mask a continuing population loss from the smallest villages and the 'landward' areas. Thus, even within growth areas there is often simultaneously decline which may be experienced as a loss of services and diminishing access to jobs, schools, shops, and other amenities by some of those outside the larger settlements.

This brings us to the second, and in some ways the more difficult, regeneration challenge. It is apparent that most poverty and exclusion in rural areas are not concentrated in deprived areas, where area-based regeneration strategies can address their needs in a straightforward way; instead, poverty and affluence exist side-by-side in rural areas, making it much harder to engage with excluded groups using traditional community development approaches. Yet capacity-building is as much an issue for them as for those in declining areas.

An emphasis on economic development and capacity-building is central to the Government's approach in respect of both issues. For the Government, the key to the regeneration of deprived places and the inclusion of deprived people lies in their integration into the formal economy through economic development policies, training and welfare-to-work schemes. A series of agendas and policies has been unleashed to assist, but according to Bennett et al. (2000) this has created "a complicated context of programmes, targeted at a tangled mosaic of partially overlapping areas, spearheaded by different departments", and requiring co-ordination. With the fragmentation of governance noted above, this necessitates partnership working.

For the Government, the inclusion of all organisations and agencies representing a place is seen as crucial to partnership working. The inclusion of organisations and individuals that represent those who *live* in a place is seen as especially important, because "action must be tailored to local circumstances and take account of local needs" (DETR 1998).

Rarely, however, do partners possess equal amounts of power. Bennett et al. found in the coalfields that those with direct access to funding sources wield the greatest amount of power in and on partnerships, leaving representatives of the community and voluntary sector on the periphery:

Frequently, community representation in partnerships plays little more than a role of strategy implementation rather than helping to formulate regeneration agendas. On occasion,

"The culture of working is very different…our private sector still can't believe how you can make anything work in this way. They can't believe the time everything takes and the piles of paperwork."

"It would be just much more streamlined and straightforward if we didn't have to work in partnership. We could just go ahead and do something without having to consult…Partnership working takes time. Absolutely."

their inclusion seemed clearly to be little more than token representation to ensure that a tick could be placed in the relevant box on an application for funding.
(Bennett et al. 2000)

Moreover, they found that power is still often held at the apex of geographical and political hierarchies (with even RDAs required to respond to Government agendas rather than to regional and local needs). Local involvement and community representation in partnerships may therefore be less to do with empowerment but more with delegating the tasks of implementation.

Partnerships in rural areas

Edwards et al. (forthcoming) studied the recent experience of partnership working in rural areas (Powys, Ceredigion and Shropshire) and found many similar features to those mentioned above. They note that the formulation and implementation of rural policy now involves a more integrated approach to rural development, in which the 'top-down' initiatives of public sector agencies are notionally combined with more 'bottom-up', community led activities. Major policy developments, whether national (Rural Challenge in England; JIGSO in Wales; Scottish Rural Partnership) or supra-national (Agenda 21; EU Objective 1, 5b and LEADER schemes) now incorporate a requirement for partnerships to be formed at the bidding stage, and the rhetoric and practice of partnership working now dominates much of rural policy.

Although the partnership approach was initially established in an urban context, it is felt to be especially important to rural areas, given their sparsity of

population, their lack of adequate resources (material, human and financial) and the small scale of most local organisations. By combining the varying resources and skills of agencies drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors, partnerships may offer a blending of resources which adds up to more than the sum of the parts. They are also viewed as a forum where local communities can make their voices heard, and as agencies which can help foster a shared sense of objectives and direction at a local level. It is through such partnerships that the issues of community development, empowerment and rural regeneration are most obviously brought together.

However, behind the almost uniform acceptance of decentralised partnerships as a positive force, Edwards et al. (forthcoming) identify a number of fundamental issues which need to be addressed in order to formulate effective strategies which involve local people and promote community development. The establishment of a partnership, they note, does not of itself guarantee benefits for the various interests which it represents, nor does it automatically lead to either community involvement or community development. Moreover, partnership working can incur costs – through extra administration; through difficulties in resolving problems between partners; and through a failure to develop sustainable regeneration projects. The impact of such partnerships, especially in terms of empowerment, is critically dependent on the processes which are followed during their establishment and implementation.

During 1998-99, Edwards et al. identified 257 bodies claiming to be operating as regeneration partnerships in Ceredigion,

Powys and Shropshire; many other partnerships existed with an alternative focus, such as the environment, social services, or health and welfare. This is clear evidence of the staggering proliferation of partnership working in rural regeneration. These partnerships were involved in a very wide range of activities, and their engagement with regeneration took a variety of forms, but two main types (facilitative and delivery) could be distinguished according to their overarching purpose.

Facilitative partnerships (40 per cent) were mainly discursive and policy-focused, and sought 'to enable' through strategic engagement. Their growth is indicative of the increasing need to coordinate strategy and policy.

In contrast, delivery partnerships (60 per cent) were targeted at specific practical outcomes but could also, through such action, generate 'capacity-building'. The range of these initiatives included general regeneration activities (including economic development at local or district scales, and the environmental and physical regeneration of townscape or streetscape); social provision; explicit local capacity-building activities (notably training and participation); and advisory services. Many were multi-purpose, embracing several of these functions.

At the regional scale or above, most partnerships were facilitative, especially in Wales, and their primary sources of finance were quangos, followed by the EU and local authorities. At the county scale or below, most partnerships were concerned with delivery, and their funding came predominantly from local authorities in England but from TECs in

Wales. Private sector funding was very rare. Edwards et al. conclude that, even at the sub-county scale, very few partnerships emerge organically from the grassroots:

Partnerships are driven from above in terms of funding and output requirements, rather than solely reflecting endogenous development or self-help as the rhetoric so often claims. Therefore the State remains, in various guises, as the key funder of partnerships in rural areas.
(Edwards et al. forthcoming)

This is crucial because the State, as lead funder, can then determine the types of partners to be enrolled, the life-span, scope, competence and territorial scale of partnerships, and their working practices, reporting and evaluation procedures. From this perspective, Edwards et al. conclude, partnership working has not, as claimed, led to a dispersal of State responsibilities nor empowerment of communities, but rather has produced a new way of discharging public sector responsibilities. This issue is returned to in the next section.

From studying these experiences, Edwards et al.[1] draw out a number of key elements which have guided partnership development in these rural areas.

Often, they find, rural partnerships appear to have been initiated in response to competitive opportunities for funding from Brussels on specific rural programmes, and this has produced a highly uneven geography of partnership working. These inequalities between areas are then reinforced and intensified, because areas where established

"I don't think that three or four years is a very long time. All the literature says seven or ten years."

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1 The next few paragraphs are largely taken from Edwards et al. (forthcoming) *Partnership working in rural areas: Evidence from mid-Wales and the English borderlands.*

partnerships have successfully encouraged communities to become proactively involved in regeneration tend to generate more applications to funding programmes, and have the advantage of experience and stable structures in bidding for new sources of funding. In this way, some areas become 'partnership rich' and others 'partnership poor', reinforcing geographical inequalities.

The importance of EU funding for partnership activity, and the launch of many EU partnership programmes from 1994/95 onwards created a direct relationship between the focus of partnership activities, the availability of funds and the duration of partnership arrangements (typically three to five years). It might be argued that similar observations could be made for urban partnerships funded predominantly through EU sources. However, the different focus of such programmes, the mix of partners involved, the resources available and the delivery practices employed would make them qualitatively different from the rural initiatives explored in the study by Edwards et al.

Almost as a consequence of this, rural partnerships appear to have been adopted more than urban partnerships as a mechanism for policy development and delivery. Most of the partnerships identified had been established during the last five years, although informal networks and alliances at a community level were developing prior to this. Such networks and alliances pre-dated formalised rural partnership activity and framed those that were subsequently to emerge; such developments parallel the formal arrangements created within the urban areas of the UK in the 1980s. Both of these factors position rural partnerships as benefiting from, yet

potentially differing from, earlier urban initiatives. However, Edwards et al. observe that these features are circumstantial to the form that rural partnerships have taken. More important are the constraints imposed by the context in which such partnerships develop, notably the geography, institutional framework and the potential stakeholders and agencies that might be enrolled in partnership working in a countryside context.

First, in terms of geographic constraints, the nature of rural areas with dispersed populations and limited resources inevitably leads to the creation of partnerships over territorially extensive areas, which contrast in size with their urban equivalents. Partnership working in rural areas has been used to co-ordinate strategy and policy across county boundaries in order to achieve 'economies of scale' and 'joined-up governance'. This means flexible scaling of policy is needed to meet local needs, and it generates complications such as whether strategy should be geographically targeted to particular places or sites, or whether delivery can occur over wider geographical areas, perhaps oriented more to 'client groups'. Such partnerships then have to make choices over what will be funded where and inevitably there will be winners and losers, so generating further unevenness in the geography of regeneration.

Second, institutional constraints - the institutional framework evident in rural areas and particularly the relationship between quangos and local authorities is critical in understanding the distinctive forms of rural partnership that have emerged. In seeking to stimulate rural regeneration over the last 30 years, the State in Wales has developed regional

agencies (e.g. the Welsh Development Agency) charged with a leading role in shaping and delivering new policy initiatives: accordingly, these agencies dominate partnership working. Their eventual willingness to incorporate local authorities and the private and voluntary/community sectors in strategies for rural regeneration encouraged new initiatives, though this occurred to a lesser degree in Shropshire. Indeed, the rate of incorporation of local authorities into partnership activity has been geographically uneven, with leaders and laggards. This suggests that the institutional structure of governance in rural areas may play a key role in the form taken by partnerships.

This may be another source of difference between rural and urban partnerships. While this approach has been promoted in both urban and rural contexts, the implementation of partnership activity reflects the dominant institutions and their territorial reach and remit: this subsequently influences implementation. As a consequence, it might be argued that rural areas are developing a particular form of partnership reflecting their institutional structure.

Third, in terms of stakeholders and agencies, partnerships encourage cross-sectoral engagement and stakeholding in both urban and rural areas. However, rural partnerships incorporate a particular type of stakeholder and require of them particular roles and responsibilities in the partnership process. The range of institutions and actors that exist in rural areas differs from an urban setting. Most obviously there is a smaller scale private sector with few major companies, and this limits the leverage of private funds and the involvement of private partners (this was also a feature of the coalfield areas).

Those private firms that do participate below regional level tend not to contribute funding, although limited support has been given to regional and local partnerships developing capital projects. This may be no different from the challenge that partnership construction faces in urban areas, but there at least, larger corporations do exist that may be incorporated. The rural private sector tends to be dominated by small and medium enterprises, with over 90 per cent of firms employing fewer than ten people, as noted in Chapter 1. Such firms have neither the surplus capital to invest in partnerships, nor the surplus personnel or office space for secondment. Even membership of partnerships may be regarded as a costly distraction without obvious returns. The only enterprises with the size and profit to allow effective participation in partnerships are frequently the privatised public utilities, but more usually employers are represented by colleges, hospitals, chambers of commerce, or through TECs.

Finally, it might be claimed that a tradition of self-help and collaborative action has characterised rural areas and this gives a predisposition to inclusive partnership working. However, while there has been a tradition of quango engagement with community-focused economic development in rural Wales, Edwards et al. show that actual community involvement within rural partnerships is rare. Frequently the community is represented through key local organisations (community associations, chambers of commerce or Young Farmers' clubs), or by a councillor, rather than from the community at large. These may reflect selection by partnership co-ordinators rather than a choice of representatives by local residents. Direct

"[*It is*] difficult to get the private sector involved in projects which have more of a social focus. They want to see some direct benefit back to themselves [and] with a lot of projects they cannot see any benefits from being involved so they don't bother."

input from people, for example through surveys or public meetings, is often restricted to the identification of needs and discussion of possible solutions. This raises questions about the accountability and legitimacy of partnerships, and about their success in community capacity-building. This echoes the findings of Bennett et al. (2000) from the coalfields, and a number of other studies, and again this is returned to below.

Key requirements for effective partnership working according to Edwards et al. are listed in the box.

Development from within?

In Bennett et al.'s study of coalfield community initiatives, noting their great variety in scale, scope, extent and form of community involvement, inherent philosophy and aspirations, the authors found that "the key that unlocks, and begins to make sense of, these differences is how community initiatives are started."

Key requirements for effective partnership working

- **An adequate lead-in time** The lead-in time for partnership initiation is frequently too short to enable appropriate structures and sustainable relationships to be constructed. Time needs to be allowed for the enrolling of partners and for establishing rules.

- **Time, resources and training for community involvement** Many partnerships feel that more time is needed for local consultation when defining the structure and programme of the partnership. Time and resources will also be needed to develop the capacity of communities, and especially of the most marginalised, to participate effectively in partnership working. Otherwise such initiatives may be exclusive, rather than inclusive.

- **Recognition of different partners' cultures** Levels of bureaucracy and paperwork are higher, and longer time-scales exist for decision-making and action than in the private sector, such that private sector partners may be frustrated by the different culture. The community and voluntary sector may also find such a culture alien.

- **Time and resources to build trust** Trust needs to be built between partners, and clear administrative procedures need to be developed. Time is required to develop good working relations and collaborative processes.

- **Stable programmes of adequate duration** Where partnerships are developed under limited-life programmes, a considerable proportion of available time can be consumed in developing effective partnership working and seeking further funding. Those developed from existing organisations or in a later round of funding are able to focus more effectively on regeneration objectives, and this militates against 'partnership-poor' areas.

They divided the initiatives into three groups.

1   **Those initiated by socially entrepreneurial incomers**
These projects were set in motion by key individuals who had moved into the area and set up a community initiative. Socially entrepreneurial incomers are often charismatic individuals who capture the imagination of some of the existing residents, who in turn are incorporated into the project as volunteers or as paid workers. Socially entrepreneurial incomers who 'kick start' community initiatives often have good links, or are good at developing links, outside of the localities in which their projects are based. They are networked individuals with links with academic institutions, politicians, people within local government, key players within umbrella community development organisations, or even people with links to the royal family. This network of external relationships helps to publicise their projects, and as a result these projects are often used as exemplary case studies in the literature of umbrella community organisations. Their positive publicity helps them to transform outside perceptions of their place and to access funding. The individuals are often driven by particular agendas, such as religion, radical politics, or children and young people's issues.

2   **Those locally initiated by committed local residents**
These projects are initiated by a group of local residents who seek to address the particular needs of a place – of their place – as they see them. A common theme inspiring all such projects in the coalfields is first-hand experience of a place's tragic transformation since the closure of its pit(s) and the devastating repercussions of this for individuals, families and community life. Within other rural communities such an initiative might be triggered by a threat to the local school or hospital, or the loss of a major local employer, or might grow out of other collective activities such as the development of a local history society. Whilst all of these initiatives are of some benefit to the wider place-based community, when they first start they tend to be focused on a specific facility or issue. Once the project has developed and a service or facility has been established, then the initiative sometimes moves on to embrace wider community issues, even employing community development workers and other staff. Unfortunately, these initiatives often experience the greatest difficulty in accessing resources.

3   **Those formally initiated by Government and other organisations**
These projects are initiated and controlled by the formal sector, particularly local authorities and quangos. These were the initiatives that were found to be most likely to fail, and they are also the most common. In the coalfields, Bennett et al. found that local people's reaction to such initiatives may be at best one of indifference, at worst one of confrontation and opposition. Partly this may be because the aims and aspirations of the community and voluntary sector do not coincide with those of the public sector, who are constrained by formal policy networks and targets. "The two sides talk

different languages, think differently about how best to tackle the problems facing them." Those public sector initiatives most likely to succeed are those most in touch with local communities.

From a review of initiatives of each of these types in the coalfields, Bennett et al. identify some key issues for community development approaches to regeneration. They emphasise, though, the uniqueness of each locality, its physical characteristics, history and people. "Community projects are shaped by their context, making their successes – or failures – particular to a place and the people who live there."

All of the community initiatives found in the coalfields by Bennett et al. were dependent on public funding. This raises considerable doubts as to the extent to which they can be thought of as constituting part of the 'third sector', independent of both market and state. Moreover, as observed also by Edwards et al., the structures of public funding affect the objectives and characteristics of community initiatives, sometimes for the worse, with the development of projects often being constrained by funding stipulations, monitoring requirements, and performance criteria. In their discussions with those involved, Bennett et al. found that the issue of funding and the problems associated with it (endless form-filling and accountability) predominated. The consistent list of complaints and difficulties included:

● **Time consuming**   The constant pursuit of grant aid diverts expertise, energy and resources away from meeting the needs of the community.

● **Complex**   The process of seeking funding from several sources is far too complex.

● **Quantifiable outputs**   Funding bodies demand quantifiable outputs, such as jobs created, which may not be consistent with the essentially process-oriented objectives of initiatives which remain ignored and undervalued. The real successes remain invisible precisely because they are hard to quantify. The danger is that effort may be diverted away from the pursuit of what is important to what is measurable.

● **Novelty**   Funders sought new projects, rather than continuing to finance existing projects to allow initiatives to consolidate their work. Project managers and workers therefore have to keep thinking of new ideas in order to access funding.

● **Short-term**   Projects are usually financed for too short a time for community initiatives to develop and meet their objectives. This is likely to generate further social exclusion, since the most marginalised will tend to need most time to engage (see next section).

● **Matching funding**   Often applications for public funding require matching funding, and this is not only hard to obtain but may also lead to the 'capture' of the group's agenda by the provider of scarce matching funding. This is frequently a problem with EU funding.

● **Capital or revenue?**   Some funding bodies fund either capital or revenue costs but rarely both. This means, for example, that community initiatives

have somehow to absorb revenue costs once a facility is built.

- **Sustainability**   Most projects are required to aspire to self-sustainability in their bids, but this is very often unrealistic. Community development may require different skills and expertise from a community business, and some respondents argued that business objectives meant compromising those of community development. Moreover, community businesses operate in places in which people are unlikely to pay the full cost of provision for their services, and private businesses are unlikely to set up because of a lack of profitability. Their very existence is a reflection of market failure.

- **Competition**   Funding structures require competition between projects as they seek to access the same finite finance. This often causes conflict between projects started by new socially entrepreneurial residents and those initiated by longstanding residents, leading to in-fighting rather than promoting solidarity and co-operation. Between places, as Edwards et al. noted, this leads cumulatively to 'project rich' and 'project poor' areas.

- **Private sector**   The private sector contributed little to the development of community initiatives, especially in direct financial terms.

Almost all the community initiatives studied provide services rather than produce goods. This is partly because manufacturing enterprises require higher levels of capital outlay, and partly because such enterprises are more individualistic. Former coalfield communities contain a significant proportion of people on sickness-related benefits and disaffected people who have been unemployed for a long time, limiting both their ability to travel and their confidence in approaching outside service providers.

In the English rural development areas, Beatty and Fothergill (1999) have also found labour market detachment, poverty and lack of transport which, together with local cultures of independence and hard work, inhibit access to public service provision, so leaving large spaces for the voluntary sector to fill. In this context, 'success' is measured on a very small scale indeed. Just providing a meeting point where people can chat and 'have a laugh' may be vital - seemingly tiny successes can have a great significance.

There may be a need for capacity-building at one or both of two levels: first, to enable the most marginalised individuals to gain the confidence, competencies and skills they need to participate as active citizens in local civil societies; second, to allow new institutions and groups to emerge in disadvantaged places which can articulate a collective view on the form and content of regeneration for their place and on ways of delivering policies to realise this vision. Others feel that the problem is not a lack of capacity but a lack of funding. It is therefore important to be clear as to the precise nature of the problem in any given place.

A truly 'bottom-up', community led approach is, no doubt unintentionally, being hampered by the structures of public sector funding regimes and formal sector policies in the coalfields. Whilst the community sector is practising initiatives which attempt to engage constructively with individuals and communities experiencing exclusion, the formal sector is failing to recognise and

"In contrast to a lot of other programmes which are perhaps under the remit of local authorities, we are not looking at 'worst' first. We are not necessarily going for the areas with greatest needs."

respond to their particular needs. There is a danger that rural regeneration strategies will also fail to 'act locally' and to acknowledge what true 'development from within' would require in terms of enabling and facilitating public policies and funding regimes.

Who is empowered?

At the same time as raising the importance of a community-led approach, it is important not to be seduced by the concept of 'community'. Often the deployment of the concept obfuscates rather than clarifies - diverse social groups are present within one place, and individuals have varying and sometimes conflicting interests. This reality of 'divided places' needs to be explicitly confronted and dealt with (not swept under some conceptual carpet because it is easier to do so) if place-based regeneration is to succeed. Likewise, the concept of 'empowerment' raises the question of who precisely is being empowered, and to do what, and by whom ? To what extent can the least powerful be empowered through community development approaches to rural regeneration ?

Experience in the past has been mixed, with many problems emerging as well as positive features. One difficulty is that it has often proved difficult to secure adequate participation of local people in the development process or initiative, and frequently it has been the local notables who have dominated the process of development in rural areas, to the exclusion of marginalised groups. Even where projects address the needs of marginalised groups, for example through credit unions, the volunteers (unlike their urban counterparts) tend to come from better-off households rather

than from socially excluded groups (Barker 1995).

Related to this, pre-existing structures of inequality have not altered. In many instances existing power-holders became more powerful, partly as a result of the failure to consider systems of governance and the dimension of power. Without proactive measures, those who already have the capacity to act stand to gain most from rural development initiatives, which often tend to supplement the capital resources of the already capital-rich. Doubts therefore exist about the extent to which empowerment in rural areas is possible without a reorganisation of systems of governance and power, and without promoting the active involvement of socially excluded or disadvantaged groups. Often neither empowerment of rural people nor widespread participation have been achieved.

As suggested above, one cause of this was a neglect of the concept of community itself. Rural development today, like the community development approach of the 1950s, often tends to view 'community' as a group of people with common interests, living in the same geographical area, and frequently feeling a sense of belonging to the community or of 'community spirit'. Yet this conflates a community of interests with a community of place and a 'sense of community', at worst denying the possibility of conflicts of interest within a local society, and allowing powerful local actors to claim to be acting in the name of the locality or community. This raises the central question of whether an area-based approach, characteristic of 'bottom-up' development initiatives, is at all appropriate to promoting social inclusion in rural contexts, given the

greater disparity in rural areas between communities of place and interest (the 'community' in a geographic sense and the 'community' in terms of social and financial groupings). There is an urgent need for pilot projects which can explore how such an area-based approach might empower the least powerful, most excluded members of rural societies.

Despite this, experience shows that the notion of community development has a continued rhetorical significance - people want to believe in community, and this has positive practical implications alongside the dangers. Community development agents and rural development workers may be given the task of building on people's wish to believe in their 'community', so encouraging and developing its symbolic construction, so long as its contested nature is recognised. It is vital to recognise and manage the conflicts of interest which exist within such symbolically-constructed 'communities', as well as to evolve ways of working with those (perhaps fragile) rural communities which lack internal cohesion, organisation, will or resources. Experience has shown the crucial importance of community spirit and the existence of a considerable voluntary effort which can be mobilised to promote development.

Finally, it must be emphasised that broadening participation to include marginalised groups is likely to be more difficult in rural contexts, where the excluded 'communities of interest' are dispersed and hidden across many 'communities of place'. Not only may they not be networked but their participation may involve them in considerable expense in terms of time and travel, particularly in more remote areas. Women face barriers to participation because of the lack of childcare and eldercare facilities, for example, so restricting their capacity to engage in boards, committees or other organisational activities. A priority for both research and policy must be to investigate how established community development approaches might be adapted to empower excluded groups within rural societies, if this is possible.

Conclusion

Many questions remain concerning the new rural governance, partnerships and regeneration. The new partnership culture requires a collective negotiation of policy and, while this can be inclusive and empowering, it can also lead to problems. Trust has to be earned and given; shared strategy has to be agreed; defined territorial areas of operation have to be demarcated; and medium to long-term policies have to be negotiated. Such collective negotiation of policy can lead to the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities, creating difficulties for the public in identifying which agencies are responsible for policy delivery. Lines of accountability are also blurred - indeed, there is often a significant 'accountability deficit' in the new rural governance given the lack of directly elected representatives on rural partnerships. Yet basic questions concerning which communities, and which interests, are being represented and by whom, are rarely raised.

Most funding agencies will demand community involvement in order for a partnership to win, or even take part in, the bidding process for competitive funds. Often, however, this can amount to little more than the co-option of key individuals. The substance of community involvement is variable, with the

community being more commonly engaged in the initial identification of needs than in either project implementation or feedback and monitoring. As such, it could be argued that the much vaunted 'community engagement' is simply used by many partnerships as a 'resource' which must be enrolled and demonstrated in order to secure funding, rather than as a necessary system of accountability and capacity-building.

Full empowerment would require the development of a rural policy programme designed specifically to enhance community and individual capacity. An emphasis on partnership alone assumes a level of capacity - local knowledge, skills, resources and influence - and an availability of support, which may well be lacking in isolated and small rural communities, and amongst the most marginalised groups. Building such capacity means developing programmes which improve the skills and confidence of individuals; and strengthening the capacity of local groups to develop and manage their own rural regeneration strategies.

Rural areas and people subject to restructuring need strong support from national government and the EU, as well as from regional agencies and the private sector. But formal, 'top-down' programmes alone are insufficient: policies must be formulated, implemented and managed to facilitate local people to use their own creativity and talents. Too often, external agendas, formal requirements for partnership working, competitive bidding regimes, short-term funding and existing power structures limit the effectiveness of regeneration initiatives.

Action in rural areas: implications for policy

The Government's vision, set out in its consultation paper *Rural England* (DETR 1999), of a living, working countryside in which not only the environment but also the life-chances of residents are safeguarded will not be easy to achieve. The studies carried out as part of the JRF Action in Rural Areas programme show that rural areas are changing rapidly and unevenly under a number of pressures, summarised in Chapter 1. The suggested principles of responding to change, strong communities, a fair and inclusive society, and working in partnership do offer means of delivering the vision, although putting these into practice will be more difficult. It is important that the interests of disadvantaged groups within rural societies are not overlooked either because of the hidden nature of social exclusion in rural Britain or because inequalities are obscured by an uncritical notion of consensual rural communities.

This final chapter draws out the policy implications of the studies in the Action in Rural Areas programme, and makes a number of specific suggestions.

Key points

The programme's findings suggest a number of key points which should underpin the Government's vision for a rural policy:

- Processes of social exclusion operate widely in rural Britain, even though these may not be as visible as in urban areas. This lack of visibility in itself makes social exclusion harder to address.

- Those experiencing social exclusion in rural areas live dispersed amongst apparent affluence, rather than concentrated together in specific areas. Area-based intervention may therefore be insufficient.

- While community development and empowerment are required in order to address social exclusion in rural Britain, standard area regeneration initiatives may only reach the already powerful. Moreover, 'top-down' agendas driven by local and central government, requirements for partnership working, competitive bidding regimes and short-term funding hinder initiative. New approaches to capacity-building, adapted to the rural context, are therefore required.

- All the studies in the JRF programme identified transport as a major barrier to social inclusion in rural areas. There is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Government policies when seen in a rural context, as policies intended to reduce car ownership and use exacerbate rural social exclusion, and intensify barriers to employment in particular. Fresh ideas for overcoming transport barriers are needed.

- The studies suggest that progressive 'gentrification' of rural England will continue, as wealthier households outbid poorer groups for scarce housing, and 'social exclusion' thus becomes 'geographical exclusion'. Planning for and resourcing affordable housing provision is fundamental to sustaining rural communities and to the life-chances of many people.

Tackling social exclusion

The groups most affected by exclusion are older people, young people, low-paid people in work, self-employed people, people detached from labour markets, and women. While some of the triggers to poverty and exclusion are the same as those operating in urban areas (notably loss of job, marital breakdown, and other changes in the composition of the family or household), these have less salience in rural areas. Other factors which are important in rural areas include low pay, inadequate pensions, poverty in self-employment, lower levels of benefit uptake, and fear of stigma in small communities.

The key issues for policy may therefore be summarised as follows:

- Poverty in rural areas is hidden and dispersed, which makes it hard to address through area-based policies or community development.

- There is a high incidence of poverty among older households, who are often in private housing.

- The take-up of benefits is low, reflecting inaccessible advice and information services, differing perceptions of poverty, and a culture of independence.

- Pay is generally low, especially in small workplaces which dominate rural economies, and people may become trapped in a lifetime of low-paid work.

- Older people often become detached from labour markets.

- There is a high incidence of poverty among self-employed people in rural areas.

- The lack of transport, childcare, and affordable housing compounds inequality.

- Exclusion in rural Britain is given a low priority by policymakers.

Policy measures which could address social exclusion in rural areas include:

'Rural exclusion-proofing' Poverty and social exclusion are not confined to the most visibly poor council estates, nor even to the cities and towns, but bear on the lives of a substantial minority of those in rural Britain. It is important that their needs and their life-chances are not overlooked by the Government and its agencies. There would be merit in subjecting all existing policies and practices and all proposed legislation and policy initiatives to audit in respect of their likely impact on people on low incomes in rural areas. Such universal rural exclusion-proofing would ensure that the potential impact of any policy on excluded groups in rural Britain would have to be considered prior to its implementation. This has parallels with the application of equal opportunities audits and social impact statements.

Tackling low pay People in rural areas are more likely to suffer persistent low pay than those in non-rural areas. The introduction of the National Minimum Wage has helped many, but there is also a need for enforcement, and for policies which address the limited wage-mobility of employees from small rural workplaces. This is not only a matter of training, but must also address the demand side of the labour market.

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Integration into work   Most of those on low incomes are not in employment, even when one considers only those of working age. Eliminating low pay will be important for those in work, but this will not in itself assist most of those who experience low incomes. In rural Britain, most of those of working age on low incomes are self-employed, permanently sick or family carers. Their low incomes can only be improved by integrating them into paid employment; this confirms the crucial importance of extending Welfare to Work to older workers, together with related policy initiatives directed at transport, childcare provision and eldercare services.

Increasing benefit take-up   The majority of those with low incomes in rural Britain experience poverty for relatively short spells, during which the level of benefit and other welfare payments they receive are critical in assisting them to cope. Yet there is evidence of a lower take-up of welfare entitlements in rural areas, for several reasons (lack of advice and information, cultural barriers, housing tenure, stigma). Maintaining an adequate level of benefits is of major importance to households during these short spells, as will be better access to information and advice about benefit entitlements.

Raising pensions   Poverty in rural areas is most prevalent among older people. The single most effective measure to address poverty in rural Britain would be an increase in the level of the state pension. Special efforts are required to reach people relying only on state pensions and unaware or unconvinced of their other entitlements. Specific policy changes also impact adversely on older people in rural areas, such as increased fuel prices, and thought should be given to how to mitigate such effects.

Joined-up policies   Poverty and social exclusion are characterised above all by the interconnections which exist between the various facets of rural living. There is a need for policies to offer a multi-faceted, integrated response to these complex problems, and for appropriate mechanisms of government to be established at all levels, perhaps within the framework of Community Planning.

Labour markets, transport and housing

The barriers to labour market participation identified in these studies appear qualitatively different to those in urban areas. Particularly significant were the divisive effects of 'word of mouth' and informal methods of recruitment and job search; the fundamental importance of transport; and the mismatch between skills and the available jobs. Public transport is unable to provide a comprehensive solution to problems of accessibility, and cars are essential.

Possible ways of addressing these obstacles to labour market integration include :

Economic development   While measures addressing the 'supply' side of rural labour markets are helpful, the principal problems of low wages, low skills and detachment from paid employment arise from an insufficient demand for labour in many rural areas. More energetic and imaginative approaches to rural economic development are required. One aspect is to widen the definition of worthwhile activities pursued by economic development beyond formal job creation to include, for example, intermediate jobs and volunteering.

Jobs outreach　More Personal Advisers could be engaged in outreach work in rural areas, taking a proactive role in matching available jobs to the people registered with them. They would need to take account of where people and jobs are located and to evaluate and address issues such as training needs, transport needs and family responsibilities.

Training through local firms　Local firms, perhaps linked to distant colleges, could be used as the focus for training provision. Training packages could be tailored to local firms or, where more generic or basic skills are being offered, the training could take place in a factory or workshop rather than in a 'classroom'.

Childcare　Innovative ways of offering formal childcare provision in dispersed communities are essential to women's ability to take paid work. One option might be to extend the use of primary school facilities as one-stop family support centres, where there is no existing nursery provision on which to build. These would not only address the needs for pre-school care, but also for breakfast clubs, homework centres, after-school clubs, and for summer community activities. Government schemes to help with childcare costs require evaluation in rural contexts.

Linking new residents into networks
For example, work experience and training based in local firms would provide contact with employers and people who are in work. For children, school-based work experience or employment 'compacts' might be effective.

Grants for transport or childcare　The Government should accept that a car is essential to people in rural areas. Grants to help buy a car, building on the Rural Development Commission's successful Wheels2Work scheme, or help with tax and

insurance, could overcome a real obstacle to integration into paid work. These would pay for themselves in benefit savings and taxes and could become available on the offer of work.

Hypothecation of fuel duty revenues from rural areas　Fuel duties levied in rural areas might be allocated to rural transport measures (e.g. subsidised taxis for targeted groups, or means-tested help with tax and insurance) or to general rural sustainability measures, such as the provision of mobile services and the retention of small shops and schools.

A considerable body of research reveals a severe shortage of low cost housing in many rural areas, which is recognised not only as a major contributor to rural disadvantage, but also as the principal engine of social change in rural Britain. This is particularly important in excluding indigenous younger households on low incomes, unable to buy a property and with limited opportunities available in the rental market. But although the provision of affordable housing opportunities is crucial to the sustainability of a living, working and inclusive countryside, levels of investment in social housing in rural areas continue to be low.

There are two ways in which affordable housing in rural areas should be addressed.

Housing policy　Adequate resources need to be devoted to social housing provision in rural areas. Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on rural housing enablers highlighted concerns over the distribution of resources by the Housing Corporation and local authorities which tended to favour bigger schemes in larger settlements (Lavis 1995), and recently the former Rural Development Commission

(1999) has raised similar concerns over the distribution of not only the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme but also the DETR's allocation of the Housing Investment Programme and capital receipts funding. Investment in the provision of social rented housing is the top priority to extend the life chances of less prosperous members of rural society. If the resources allocated are insufficient, then housing associations and local authorities should be encouraged to set up arms-length local housing companies,[1] still accountable to local electorates, which can use their asset bases to borrow private funds for building affordable rented housing.

Planning policies   The issue must also be addressed through planning policies, since constraints on the supply side of rural housing markets are forcing up house prices, to the exclusion of less wealthy people who would like to live in rural England. The Government, Regional Development Agencies and local authorities should recognise the central role of housing markets as the motor of social change and of social and geographical exclusion in rural England.[2] This recognition should lead to a more integrated approach which places the provision of affordable housing at the heart of policies which pursue sustainable development and social inclusion.

Young people

Two particularly striking findings emerged from this programme's studies of young people in rural areas. The first is that young people from rural areas become integrated into one of two quite separate labour markets – the national (distant, well-paid, with career opportunities) and the local (poorly paid, insecure, unrewarding and with fewer prospects). Education, and of course social class, are the elements which allow some young people to access national job opportunities, in the same way as those from urban areas. But for those whose lack of educational credentials traps them within local labour markets, further education and training are much less available than for their counterparts in towns, and their life-chances are reduced.

The second key point is the interplay between transport, employment and housing. Young people in rural areas, earning low wages, must have a car to get to work, but this together with the shortage of affordable housing leaves them unable to afford to live independently. There is also an initial problem: young people need a job in order to afford a car, but need a car to secure a job; help might well be given at this crucial stage in the youth transition.

Policy suggestions relating to young people therefore include the following:

A Youth Unit   There is no systematic approach to working with young people in rural areas, or elsewhere. The whole system is fragmented and often very localised. Integrated and coherent policy strategies, multi-disciplinary working and inter-agency collaboration are themes constantly addressed by those concerned with policy and practice with regard to rural areas, and with regard to young people. A Youth Unit has been recommended by the Social Exclusion Unit in its National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, and such a unit should be given responsibility for developing

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1 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has conducted a series of research projects examining local housing companies (see Nevin 1999).

2 The Foundation has funded a series of studies examining the relationship between planning policies and the provision of affordable housing, including Lefcoe 1994; Jackson, Morrison and Royce 1994 and Jackson, Monk, Royce and Dunn 1994.

a clearer strategy for young people in rural areas and for co-ordination of services at national and local levels.

Improved access to further education and training   It is important to find ways of ensuring that young people do not get trapped in an endless succession of dead-end jobs. A more flexible implementation of the New Deal may be appropriate, given that many rural employers are unable to meet the minimum training requirements. This would offer a new option in which work experience with such employers is combined with more general education or training in alternative settings. The combination of general education and work experience may be more effective in providing bridges to work than discrete packages which offer either education or specific skill training programmes. There is also a case for a mobility grant for rural youth wishing to access educational opportunities which are not available locally, once they are no longer eligible for school buses.

Increasing mobility   While there are no simple solutions to travel problems, a number of measures may help. Driving licences are particularly vital and driving lessons could be provided either at school or through the New Deal. Schemes that offer some formalised system of arranging lifts, perhaps through internet newsgroups, may constitute another response to meeting transport needs. If young people are to be encouraged to use public and community transport then there is a need for them to be more involved in the planning and delivery of services, giving them access to leisure facilities and work, as well as to schools. In this, as in many other respects, young people rarely have a voice.

Space for young people   Young people are often viewed as a threat by other members of rural communities, and certainly they tend to be viewed as 'apart'. Rather than subjecting them to social control, efforts should be made to include young people in activities and in decisions, so giving them a voice. Space for young people should also be available.

Regeneration, partnerships and rural development

Partnership working has become established as a significant vehicle for the implementation of rural development policy in Britain, as elsewhere in the European Union. Partnerships involving the public, private and voluntary sectors are expected to allow the voices of local communities to be heard and to foster a sense of shared objectives. In practice neither local communities nor the private sector have often been successfully involved in rural areas, and the public sector has tended to dominate the agendas and working of rural partnerships. Very few emerge organically from the grassroots. While some have been successful, external agendas, formal requirements for partnership working, competitive bidding regimes, short-term funding and existing power structures have often limited the effectiveness of rural regeneration initiatives. Instead, policies must be formulated, implemented and managed to facilitate local people to use their own creativity and talents.

In continuing to emphasise area-based partnerships as a key mode of delivery, rural policy needs to address the following key issues:

'Top-down' agendas   There needs to be a modification of the requirements placed on partnerships by programmes and funding bodies, to allow flexibility to address an area's specific needs, and to ease the

development of effective partnership working. Local initiatives must be allowed room to 'grow' and find their own ways of working.

Partnership-poor areas   Many partnerships are formed in response to competition for limited funding opportunities. In contrast to the comprehensive responsibilities of former councils, which covered all areas of the country equally, what is emerging is a very uneven pattern of regeneration initiatives. Direct intervention by local government or development agencies may be required to engender a more widespread capacity for regeneration initiatives and effective partnership working in all areas. This does not mean imposing an external agenda.

Sustainability   Longer lead times are needed, to allow a workable relationship between partners to be established. Start-up funding may be required during this establishment phase. Sufficient revenue funding should also be provided throughout the lifetime of the partnership to underpin effective administration and delivery. Partnerships need a sufficient lifetime to allow for the development of effective working practices and capacity-building in communities, if there is to be a chance of continued regeneration beyond the funding period. Most initiatives will not be self-sustaining, although some of their lessons and achievements may be 'mainstreamed'.

Training   More training is needed to allow all partners to contribute effectively, and especially voluntary sector and community sector partners.

Promote social inclusion   Perhaps the greatest challenge emerging from the experience of area-based partnerships and community development approaches to rural development derives from the inequalities

within each community of place, and especially from the unequal capacity of individuals to participate and benefit from rural development constructed at an area-level. Everyone involved in rural development work must continually ask 'who is being empowered?'

Legitimacy and accountability   There is a need to devolve more decision-making power to local groups, along with the responsibility. At present direct representation of the full spectrum of interests is rare and there is often a significant accountability deficit. It may be worth experimenting with various mechanisms to increase participation, such as 'planning for real', citizens' juries, or local residents' forums to see if these can overcome the barriers of distance, compliance and deference which exist in many small communities.

Long-term commitment   There must be a long-term commitment to sustainable regeneration at all levels of government. A strong Ministerial lead should be provided, together with regional coordination and visonary local leadership to create: co-operation between departments and agencies; effective partnerships; policy integration at the local level; links between funding streams; and consistency in community involvement and consultation.

Conclusion

Policies for rural areas are currently under review in all areas of the UK, and indeed in the European Union and elsewhere. There is an opportunity to develop evidence-based policies, drawing on the research summarised in this report and the policy suggestions made in this chapter, to meet the issues and challenges experienced in rural Britain today.

It is clear that the policies required to promote social inclusion and regeneration in rural Britain go well beyond narrow 'rural policy' and touch on many departments of government at all levels, posing challenges for the mechanisms of 'joined-up government'. Nevertheless, this report shows that there are many specific and easily achievable actions which the Government and its agencies could implement at once, and which would improve the lives of many people in rural Britain, countering current tendencies towards an ever more exclusive countryside.

Appendix: the Action in Rural Areas research projects

The projects commissioned under the Action in Rural Areas programme are as follows:

1 **Poverty and exclusion in rural Britain: The dynamics of low income and employment**
Polly Chapman, Euan Phimister, Mark Shucksmith, Richard Upward and Espe Vera-Toscano
(Aberdeen University)

2 **Labour market participation and rural disadvantage**
Sarah Monk, Jessica Dunn, Maureen Fitzgerald and Ian Hodge
(Anglia and Cambridge Universities)

3 **Social exclusion and insertion of young people in rural areas**
Stephen Pavis, Stephen Platt and Gill Hubbard
(Edinburgh University)

4 **Youth unemployment in rural areas**
Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel
(Glasgow University)

5 **Getting a job, finding a home: Capturing the dynamic of rural youth transitions**
Julie Rugg and Anwen Jones
(York University)

6 **Rural areas: Learning from the coalfields**
Katy Bennett, Ray Hudson and Huw Beynon
(Durham and Manchester Universities)

7 **Community action, partnerships and emergent forms of governance in rural Wales**
Bill Edwards, Mark Goodwin, Simon Pemberton and Michael Woods
(University of Wales, Aberystwyth)

8 **Young people and transport in rural communities: access and opportunity**
Pamela Storey and Julia Brannen
(Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London)

9 **Changing work-family configurations in three rural communities**
Natasha Mauthner, Lorna McKee and Monika Strell
(Aberdeen University)

10 **The role of social housing in rural areas**
Mike Coombes, Mark Bevan and Stuart Cameron
(Newcastle University)

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