

Rural aspiration: access to Higher Education in rural, coastal and dispersed communities

A report by **IntoUniversity**
funded by the Cabinet Office Social Action Fund
2015

*'I think I want to go to university,
but I don't know if there's one round here.'*
Year 5 pupil, Eastlands Junior School, Nottinghamshire



Example of a disadvantaged rural/dispersed locality: Dearne Valley, South Yorkshire.
(*Top*: The Dearne Advanced Learning Centre. *Middle left*: Highgate Primary Academy. *Bottom*: Goldthorpe.)
Photos: Tim Robertson.

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1. Executive Summary and Recommendations

Overview

Many of England and Wales' lowest rates of participation in Higher Education (HE) are found in rural, dispersed and coastal localities. These localities pose major challenges to Widening Participation (WP) practice, the bulk of which is focused on towns and cities.

There is very little academic research on the subject, and the present report does not pretend to fill that gap comprehensively. However, through an examination of existing data, through consultation with local and national practitioners, and above all through hearing the experience of school pupils in some example localities, it has been possible to identify needs and opportunities distinctive to disadvantaged rural, coastal and dispersed communities. Strategic recommendations and potential operational service models have then been generated to meet the identified needs and build on the opportunities.

Aim

The project has aimed to answer the following question:

What is the feasibility of adapting urban models of delivering Higher Education access programmes (such as IntoUniversity) in areas of lower population density, considering in particular the potential supply of local volunteer tutors and mentors?

This question was agreed at the outset with the project funder – the Cabinet Office's **Social Action Fund**. The Fund's aim is to identify and accelerate the spread of high-impact social action initiatives. Under one of its workstreams – volunteering to help young people reach their potential – it has funded the HE access charity **IntoUniversity** to expand the involvement of voluntary mentors in its current work in inner-city neighbourhoods.

This report aims to help not just **IntoUniversity** but all stakeholders in the HE access field consider whether to extend their provision into rural and coastal areas, and if so broadly how.

Methodology

Carried out between February and July 2015, the research has included:

- a literature survey;
- consultation with national and local policy-makers and practitioners,
- mapping of three example localities – in Kent, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire,
- focus groups with 110 school pupils in these localities,
- analysis of existing data, including Acorn consumer data of local activity by postcode.

Main findings

Disadvantaged children and young people living in rural areas face even greater barriers to reaching university than their urban counterparts, and they are left out of many of the services that help overcome those barriers in inner cities.

Since nearly all universities are located in or near cities, the most obvious barrier is geographical distance, but the crucial factors are the **misconceptions and local-cultural differences** that arise from that distance. Rural children are less likely to have seen and understood what a university is, and, in order to study for a degree, they are more likely to have to move away from home. Many rural communities foster a vehement local identity in the face of urban cultural dominance. This is especially true where city-led politics and economics are perceived as having destroyed traditional industries like coal-mining, seaside resort tourism and small family farms, and where subsequent regeneration initiatives have had only superficial or short-term impact. In this context, university can be seen as further evidence of the city as adversary, because it takes young people away.

To **aspire to Higher Education**, then, many rural young people need not just educational input and accurate information, but the emotional support and self-confidence to negotiate these profound issues of identity with their families and home communities. School-based careers advice and occasional university outreach sessions are unlikely to meet these inter-personal needs, and few student and corporate mentoring schemes reach these localities.

Thus the acute **service gap** for disadvantaged rural young people is for a combination of pastoral and learning support, beyond school, that is locally based and long term.

Developing a service to fill this gap in dispersed, socially-varied communities is **very challenging**. The HE access expertise almost certainly has to come from city-based providers, but local rural ownership and involvement are vital: many of the most disadvantaged young people will make progress only if their families are also won over, ideally along with the wider community. Another challenge is that such provision would be largely **trail-blazing**: it requires comprehensive and ongoing risk assessment, sufficient resourcing to innovate and respond flexibly to contingencies, and a substantial objective evaluation.

There are, though, significant **positive indicators for achieving success**. The schools and other local stakeholders encountered during this research were unequivocally enthusiastic about working with HE access colleagues to deliver a solution, and many offered use of spaces and other resources.

Volunteering flourishes in many rural areas, and volunteers are likely to be key to ensuring local involvement. The social mix of rural districts means that it is never far to the homes of current and retired professionals, who are potentially a major untapped source of mentors. Graduates who were brought up in the local area, and have returned from university to live and work there, are especially valuable role models.

The consultation for this report has generated two potential service models – a Hub and Spokes model, with outreach to rural villages from a centre based in a local town, and a Peripatetic Outreach model. Innovative pilots of this kind are often attractive to funders. The Cabinet Office and **IntoUniversity** are just two of the **national organisations** currently paying attention to the issue: for example, Teach First and the Bridge Group are also exploring rural needs, while the Higher Education Funding Council's new Networks for Collaborative Outreach offers a framework for gathering data and planning developments.

With such strategic interest coming at the same time as mounting evidence of local need and opportunity, the context is ripe for implementing substantial, innovative responses to HE access needs in rural communities.

Recommendations

1. **Funding.** New frameworks or designated sources of funding are needed to develop Higher Education access in dispersed localities. (Most existing funding is inherently biased to urban neighbourhoods where need is more concentrated and higher numbers of young people can be reached with fewer resources.)
2. **Innovation.** Since existing research and practice models are few and far between, innovative pilots need to test new models and break new ground, with a balance of vision and risk assessment. Two potential service models are outlined in Section 7 of this report.
3. **Evaluation** of these new services needs to be comprehensive and objective, with the findings openly disseminated.
4. **Local involvement** and sense of ownership are crucial, not only to service planning, so that the provision matches local circumstances, but also to service delivery, so as to overcome perceptions of Higher Education as a distant urban phenomenon and to encourage rural families to support young people's aspirations.
5. **Pastoral support** needs to be integrated with educational input to help young people through the complex emotional and identity issues involved in aspiring to university from remote, tightly knit rural communities.
6. **Sustained.** Commissioners and providers need to make long-term commitments to these developments, so as to avoid the experience of many disadvantaged rural localities of feeling let down in the past by time-limited initiatives, and because it will take years to change individual and communal misconceptions of Higher Education.
7. **Resourcing for contingency.** New projects pioneered in collaboration with vulnerable local communities will inevitably encounter unexpected challenges. Any provision needs to be sufficiently resourced to be responsive and adaptable.
8. **Volunteering** is essential for cost-effectiveness and community involvement. Creativity will be needed to draw on the largely untapped potential of rurally based graduates, especially retired professionals, as learning mentors – including innovations in recruitment, training and supervision. Skilled salaried staff will be needed for service development and co-ordination.

2. Background and context

'I think I want to go to university, but I don't know if there's one round here.'

This comment – made by a Year 5 pupil at the start of one of the focus groups for this report – encapsulates the issues for young people in rural areas who might go on to Higher Education:

- **aspiration**, already strongly held and clearly expressed – 'I want to go to university';
- **lack of knowledge** about what a university is and where it might be found – 'I think', 'I don't know';
- **distance** – 'if there's one round here' – the fact that most universities are located in cities, away from the young person's home experience.

To widen HE participation in rural communities, services need to be developed that:

- build on young people's aspirations,
- give them the information and understanding to make good decisions about their future careers,
- support them to work through the geographical, social and emotional barriers to accessing university.

These are the issues and goals that underlie this report.

Aims and remit of the report

The report was commissioned by the Cabinet Office Social Action Fund to answer the following research question:-

What is the feasibility of adapting urban models of delivering Higher Education access programmes (such as IntoUniversity) in areas of lower population density, considering in particular the potential supply of local volunteer tutors and mentors?

The question arises from two particular contexts – **IntoUniversity's** existing work in urban communities and the Social Action Fund's concern with volunteering. The report makes a contribution to further discussion in both those contexts, but is not limited to them. It does not represent a policy statement by either **IntoUniversity** or the Cabinet Office, neither of which is necessarily committed to implementing its recommendations. Implementation would, in any case, require much more detailed consultation and feasibility testing at local level.

The report does not pretend to be exhaustive, but it collects and assesses the value of existing evidence and practice. The example localities and findings from focus groups do not claim to be comprehensive, but are reasonably representative and help make issues vivid. The report does not offer a service blueprint, because any service can be effective only if it is shaped by the unique circumstances of a local area, but it does offer potential models which may then be adapted.

It is hoped that the report will contribute to practice and policy discussions by a wide range of stakeholders seeking to develop Higher Education access at local, regional and national levels.

The Social Action Fund

Launched in 2013 by HM Government's Cabinet Office, the Centre for Social Action identifies and accelerates the development and spread of high impact social action initiatives.

'Social action' is defined as being about people coming together to improve their lives and solve problems that are important in their communities. It can include volunteering, giving money, community action or simple everyday neighbourly acts.

Through the Social Action Fund, the Cabinet Office invested £36 million in 215 social action projects from 2013 to 2015, as well as developing partnership for an additional £31 million investment for these initiatives. The funding supports these projects to increase their reach and demonstrate their impact through evaluation.

The funding follows 6 themes:

- health, ageing and care,
- young potential and social mobility,
- rehabilitation of offenders,
- community action,
- employment and prosperity,
- digital services.

IntoUniversity received a grant under the second of these themes to develop its use of learning mentors and other volunteers.

IntoUniversity

IntoUniversity is a charity that aims to address the considerable educational disadvantage faced by young people from Britain's poorest backgrounds.

they do far less well at school
they are unlikely to go to university
they have little chance of entering the professions.

Launched in 2002 in North Kensington, **IntoUniversity** now operates 21 learning centres in Brighton, Bristol, Leeds, London, Nottingham Oxford and Southampton, with plans to expand further. Each centre is located in a disadvantaged neighbourhood within walking distance of primary and secondary schools where at least a third of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals. Each centre acts as base for three programmes:

Academic Support: students are given after-school support by trained Education Workers and dedicated volunteers, with coursework, revision and homework. The sessions are held at an **IntoUniversity** centre and also offer support with GCSE, AS Level, A2 Level and degree options, exam techniques, UCAS forms, interview techniques and gap years, as well as sign-posting to apprenticeships and other non-graduate careers.

FOCUS programme: students participate in workshops, days or weeks centred on specific topics. They are aimed at introducing students to university-style learning and raising aspirations from a young age. The FOCUS programme begins with whole class activities in Year 5 and 6 and continues into secondary school when specific cohorts of students are identified to take part in the programme. This also includes Business in FOCUS and Careers in FOCUS which are aimed at increasing students' knowledge of how a business operates and the career options available to them.

Mentoring programme: students are paired with university student mentors or corporate mentors in order to build their social skills as well receive support and advice for their future development. Mentoring meetings take place at an **Into**University centre on a regular basis for students between the ages of 10-18 years. The Corporate Mentoring programme involves graduate professionals supporting Year 13 students through their final year of school and first year of university study. Mentoring also includes Buddy, a two-day programme with one day spent at a university.

A fully operational urban-based **Into**University centre reaches 900 children and young people a year, and the charity publishes reports of its impact. In 2014, 79% of **Into**University students progressed onto university, compared with a national average for state schools of 34%.

Rural and dispersed communities present an obvious geographical challenge to **Into**University's centre-based model, which urban young people usually access on foot or easily by public transport. Also, the charity's current centres are located in neighbourhoods of concentrated social and educational need; in rural areas, affluence and disadvantage are more often intermingled, making it much more difficult to demarcate catchment areas.

However, many of **Into**University's existing practices are ideal for meeting the rural needs identified in this report – notably the combination of pastoral support with learning, the long-term sustained nature of the support, and the involvement of volunteers (see especially Sections 6 and 8).

The production of this report demonstrates **Into**University's recognition of unmet need in rural settings, and its openness to considering potential expansion in new areas. But any decision on rural implementation would require extensive further feasibility work on the proposed area of work. It will also depend on a range of other factors, notably the need for substantial and sustained funding. In the meanwhile, there remain numerous neighbourhoods in cities whose needs might be met by **Into**University's already-proven model.

Other providers may be in a better position than **Into**University to make a difference in rural communities, and **Into**University has produced this report as part of its commitment to learning and helping the Widening Participation sector as a whole.

Researchers and further contact

This report has been written by freelance researcher Tim Robertson, who was appointed by **Into** University through a publicly advertised process.

Brought up in rural West Yorkshire, **Tim Robertson** read English at King's College London and the State University of New York, and has an MSc in Applied Social Studies from Worcester College, Oxford. He worked for 14 years in children's services in the London Borough of Camden, including extensive research, community consultation and service innovation, especially in early years, family learning and special needs. For the last nine years he has commissioned research and managed mentoring and education programmes for offenders as Chief Executive of the Koestler Trust. He is a governor of Regent High, a community secondary school in London, and starts in October 2015 as Director of the Royal Society of Literature.

The literature review and preparatory stages of the project were carried out by Research Officer **Maeve Sinnott**, who graduated from the University of Oxford in 2014, and went on to work at Cambridge University Press.

The project has been supervised by two members of **Into**University's senior management team, either of whom can be contacted for further information:

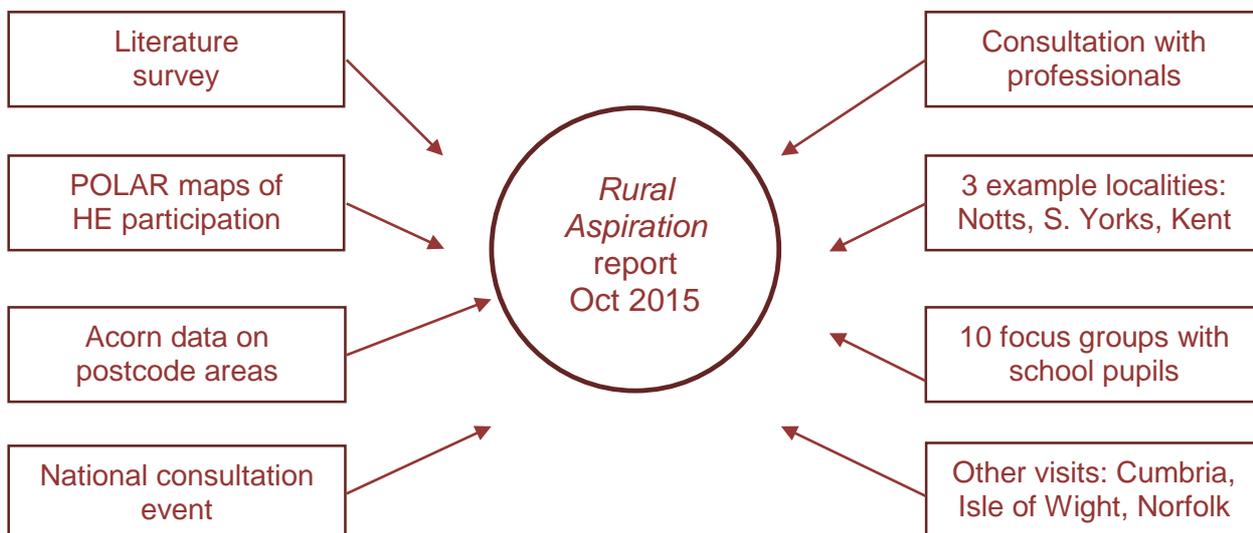
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3. Methodology

The research for this report was carried out between February and July 2015. This section of the report outlines the main sources and process of the research, which can be summarised in this diagram:



Literature and data

The project began with a **literature survey**, whose findings are summarised in the Bibliography. The survey was carried out on line, at the British Library and through consultation with stakeholders. It focused on three areas: HE access, rural needs volunteering.

The Higher Education Funding Council's searchable on-line **POLAR maps** provided a crucial sources of data, as they categorise wards across England and Wales by level of young people's participation in Higher Education. Excerpts from POLAR maps are included in Section 5 for each of the example localities.

Funding for the project also included access to the **Acorn database** of household and consumer data across the UK by postcode. Acorn data was analysed (by IntoUniversity's Senior Data and Impact Analyst) to provide further information on need in the example localities (see Section 5 below) and on levels of volunteering (see Section 8).

Consultation with professionals

National consultation event

Colleagues across the Higher Education access sector, including all university Widening Participation teams, were invited to a half-day seminar at IntoUniversity's head office on 16 March 2015 titled "Consultation on Higher Education Access in Rural, Coastal and Dispersed Communities".

The attendees included representatives from:-

- Best Course4Me
- The Bridge Group
- Brightside Trust
- Brockhill Park Performing Arts College, Kent
- Canterbury Christchurch University
- City University London
- Harper Adams University
- HELOA (Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association)
- IntoUniversity
- Kent and Medway Progression Federation
- OFFA (Office for Fair Access to Higher Education)
- University of Bath
- University of Bedfordshire
- University of Brighton
- University of Cambridge
- University College London
- University of Cumbria
- University of East Anglia
- University of East London
- University of Oxford
- University of Portsmouth
- University of Southampton

Following presentations by the Kent and Medway Progression Federation and the principal of a secondary school in rural Kent (Brockhill Park Performing Arts College), the delegates took part in two discussion workshops – one on the challenges to rural HE access, one on potential solutions. These workshops provided much of the material for Section 4 of this report (which does not necessarily mean that participating organisations endorse the report's findings or recommendations).

Other consultation

Other professionals have contributed to this report through meetings and phone conversations, including the Cabinet Office Social Action Team and front-line and managerial staff from **IntoUniversity**. Interim findings were presented, and feedback received, at a policy seminar on rural issues held by **The Bridge Group** in June 2015, and in a workshop at **NEON's** Annual Symposium, held in July 2015 at the University of Sussex.

Example localities

Three example localities – in Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Kent – were selected as a focus for exploring needs and opportunities at a local level. The selection was based on the following broad **criteria**:

- low levels of participation in Higher Education – mainly in the lowest 20% of national levels (HEFCE's POLAR Quintile 1);
- Index of Multiple Deprivation and other indicators,
- large enough to warrant a substantial HE access programme – to reach approximately 500-700 young people in schools with high levels of Free School Meals (at least a third of the school),

- opportunity for local partnerships – i.e. enough schools, and a local partner to provide initial introductions for the research,
- a geographical range,
- a range of different communities – rural, coastal, dispersed and ex-industrial,
- considerable distance from the nearest university, though with potential HE partners in the region,
- reasonable proximity to an existing IntoUniversity centre

The research in each example locality included both desk research and field visits:

- consultation with school staff and other local stakeholders;
- focus groups with local school pupils,
- Acorn analysis of local data by postcode,
- mapping, including POLAR data,

Day visits were also made to **three additional localities**:

- Cumbria;
- the Isle of Wight,
- Norfolk.

Particular local stakeholders were consulted on each of these additional visits, and the findings are reported where relevant in the report, especially in Section 4.

Focus groups with school pupils

Focus groups were chosen as the main means of assessing the views and needs of young people in disadvantaged rural areas, because they enabled flexibility and depth of discussion, as well as offering a general or collective sense of the local youth community.

The 10 focus groups were led by researcher Tim Robertson, and took place in May and June 2015. The groups shared broadly the same features and process:

- held in a rural school where at least a third of the pupils is eligible for Free School Meals;
- up to 15 participants, selected by the school, usually of mixed ability,
- lasting approximately 30 minutes,
- with a teacher or other member of staff present (or sometimes in an adjacent room through an open door),
- it was emphasised to the participants at the outset that the discussion was not a class; there were no right or wrong answers – the young people were asked simply to speak from their views and experience,
- covering two main topics – university and the local community – with open questions asked in different order, depending on the course of the conversation

In addition, the researcher met and talked about similar topics with users of a FOCUS Week and academic support at IntoUniversity Nottingham East, and with Year 11 pupils from Cumbrian schools attending a residential programme at the University of Cumbria's Carlisle campus in July 2015.

4. Findings from literature and professionals

This section summarises findings from the survey of research literature and from consultation with professional colleagues and agencies. It covers:

- a summary of the needs and challenges that have been identified, organised into strategic, operational and local cultural needs,
- a summary of the strategic and operational opportunities identified.

Extent of the findings

These findings do not claim to be comprehensive. Developing HE access provision for any specific locality will require a detail of local community research that lies beyond this project's scope. Nationally too, the growth of the Widening Participation sector in recent years means that examples of good practice will inevitably have been missed. But, given the number and range of sources for this report – see especially Section 3: Methodology and Section 10: Bibliography – it is hoped that the findings are reasonably representative of rural HE access issues in England in 2015.

Identified needs

Strategic needs

- Most sources of **funding**, public as well as philanthropic, are unintentionally but inherently biased towards urban needs, where target communities are more concentrated and can be reached with fewer resources. It is harder to make the case for funding rural services, when the costs of transport and of organisation across a dispersed area inevitably make provision more expensive per service user.
- There is a shortage of research, and of established and documented good practice, on which to base the development services. **Innovation** will require careful risk assessment and evaluation of pilot schemes.
- Many disadvantaged rural communities feel that they have been left out of, or **let down** by, earlier Government and other initiatives which were time-limited and have come to an end. For example, in the Dearne Valley, South Yorkshire (Example Locality b), the European and other regeneration schemes that followed the decline of the coal-mining industry in the 1990s are seen locally as having created new dual carriageways and industrial estates, but failed to tackle local unemployment or community cohesion.
- There is a need for **regional co-ordination** of university Widening Participation programmes so that they reach more remote schools and avoid duplication. In the Dearne Valley, for example, some schools feel that they 'fell between the stools' of outreach programmes from universities to the north and south. On the other hand, Widening Participation teams can give examples of schools that 'play the universities off each other' by booking sessions from more than one university without telling them.

Operational needs

- Services centred on a permanent **building** – such as **IntoUniversity** Centres in urban neighbourhoods, usually accessed on foot – are unlikely to be widely accessible in dispersed rural settings.
- **Transport** – especially transport of young people to services – is not only expensive, but also requires co-ordination, complicates the timing of services, and places an additional pressure on the commitment of young people, as well as volunteers. The Widening Participation Team at the University of Cumbria, working across one of the most dispersed rural areas in England, and needing to secure the best value from its transport budget, has developed a sophisticated menu of options for which activities to take to which schools, and when to bring pupils to the university's campuses. Public transport is rarely a practical alternative: for example, a youth centre in Great Yarmouth commented that the biggest barrier to young people from surrounding villages accessing their careers provision was the infrequency and cost of the local bus services.
- The **financial cost of university** is often higher for rural students than for their urban counterparts, because they are more likely to have to live away from home, and accommodation is the most expensive aspect of university life after tuition fees. Finance was the primary concern for many of the young people who took part in the focus groups for this report: many were reassured by an explanation about Student Maintenance Grants for those on low incomes, but the Government has subsequently announced that the grants will be replaced with loans from 2016. It is likely that this policy change will have a disproportionate impact on the HE access of rural students.
- Since most universities are located in cities, their outreach to rural schools is more likely to consist of one-off or occasional visits, and it rarely includes primary schools, so it is unlikely to make a difference to children with lower levels of aspiration who need **long-term input**.
- Many rural areas include a **social mix** of affluent and poor communities across a few miles, making it difficult to locate or target services at those in greatest need, especially as those left out may complain.
- There is a particular need for **out-of-school support** – spaces where young people can develop their independent learning, and work through the personal issues involved in aspiring to a university inevitably away from home – but in many villages the primary school is the only space available for homework support and other aspirational activities. Most university Widening Participation activities, and most of those voluntary sector programmes that have reached rural areas – eg. the Brilliant Club's extensive work in East Anglia – are based in schools.
- Student and corporate **volunteers** are less available in rural areas, because of the distance from most universities and big employers. New recruitment and retention practices will be needed to recruit volunteers in rural communities, especially those with the educational background to act as mentors.
- City-based WP programmes tend to be **staffed** by recent graduates, who typically stay for 2-3 years before moving on in their careers. This is equally true for university WP teams and for charities like Teach First and **IntoUniversity**. Such turnover is a major barrier to meeting the long-term needs of young people in rural communities, and anyway there are fewer recent graduates in rural areas, and they are unlikely to be able to meet the long-term needs found in rural communities.

Local cultural needs

- Many rural communities have a culture of **suspicion of outsiders**. They perceive most policies and services as coming from cities and failing to understand their local needs.
- Higher Education is often seen as an enemy of rural communities, because **university takes young people away**. As one stakeholder on the Isle of Wight put it: 'The ones who go to university from here don't come back – it's a brain-drain to the mainland.' Most graduate professionals in rural areas – teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, clergy – have moved in from elsewhere. There is a need to see university as a means for rural communities to 'grow their own' graduates who will return to live and work locally.
- The aspirations of many dispersed and coastal communities continue to be dented by the **loss of historic local industries** in the late 20th century, particularly coal-mining and traditional seaside-resort tourism. See especially the Example Localities in Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire.

Identified opportunities

Strategic opportunities

- **Government policy** continues to drive the widening of participation in Higher Education:

'The Prime Minister has set a target to double the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE from the level it was in 2009 by 2020. This requires a greater increase in participation rates than historical trends have shown.'
(Higher Education Funding Council, July 2015)

The same report draws attention to 'unexplained differences in access to HE in different places', and it is clear that the greater increase in progress required to meet the ambitious targets can be achieved only if rural areas are fully included.

- The **Office for Fair Access (OFFA)** plays a crucial national role in ensuring that universities attract and support disadvantaged students – through Access Agreements with each university – and in keeping fair access on the agenda of policy-makers and the public.
- HEFCE's **Collaborative Outreach Networks**, which have started to become operational during the production of this report, offer a significant opportunity to match WP resources more rationally to need by bringing universities into regional collaboration.
- HEFCE also provides a range of **data** to inform strategic developments, notably the POLAR maps of levels of participation in HE which have provided one of the main starting points for this report.
- **Ofsted** is increasing its emphasis on destination data (the careers of pupils after leaving school) as a measure for assessing the performance of individual schools (Ofsted, June 2014). Kent and Medway Progression Partnership reports that this has already resulted in some schools engaging more actively with university outreach.
- **Social action** continues to be a Government priority, especially through the Cabinet Office Social Action Fund that has funded this report. This may be a source of strategic frameworks

and impetus for engaging rural communities in volunteering – which can be invaluable to tackling HE access (see Section 8).

- There is considerable current interest in rural HE access among sector-wide infrastructure organisations and think tanks. For example, **NEON** – the professional organisation that supports those involved in widening HE access – regularly includes workshops and presentations on rural needs at its national conferences. **The Bridge Group** – an independent, not for profit, policy association promoting social mobility through higher education – is delivering policy seminars on ‘access to aspirational support for young people in rural and coastal communities in particular’, and will be producing a policy paper with recommendations by February 2016.
- **IntoUniversity** is only one of the **national voluntary sector providers** in the HE access field that is looking strategically at rural issues. For example, Teach First’s new strategy is placing a new emphasis on coastal schools and regional volunteering, and The Brightside Trust is developing on-line mentoring resources specifically for rural needs.
- **Funding** remains a major challenge, of course, but the innovative, ground-breaking nature of any community-based HE access programme may be attractive to philanthropic or other funders looking to demonstrate that they are forward-thinking and creative. The Government’s Northern Powerhouse initiative may also offer funding possibilities in Yorkshire or the North West.

Operational and local opportunities

- The **schools and other local stakeholders** consulted for this report were of course self-selecting, but nevertheless demonstrated the many positive opportunities for partnership to be found in rural communities. Many of the young people and the staff who work with them showed tremendous enthusiasm – even desperation – to find new ways to address HE access. A school governor and youth project manager on the Isle of Wight encapsulated this finding:

‘Being an island makes everything different, and you shouldn’t underestimate how hard it would be to get young people from here to go to university. But the schools and all the other local organisations would love to have that kind of project here and work with you on it.’

- University **Widening Participation teams** have growing evidence and experience of good practice. Some, like Cumbria and the members of the Kent and Medway Progression Federation, have specific expertise in working with rural schools. Their local contacts will be crucial to developing any new locally based provision.
- Many **national voluntary organisations** in the WP field – notably The Brightside Trust, the Brilliant Club and Teach First – are already working in some rural areas, or – like **IntoUniversity** – have urban models which may be adaptable to rural settings. During the consultation for this report, front-line staff from IntoUniversity were under no illusion about the changes that would be required for them to move away from centre-based working, but were full of creative ideas about how to adapt: ‘It’s not the buildings that make **IntoUniversity**: it’s the people – we’d make it work.’
- The consultation for this report repeatedly came across **staff** in all parts of the WP sector who, though now working in a city, had been **brought up in the countryside**. They were eager to bring their own experience and motivation to meeting the HE access needs in rural areas.
- As well as the localities used as examples for this report, the POLAR maps demonstrate that there are even **larger areas of HE access need** – notably in the Fenlands of East Anglia, Wales, and South West England. Economies of scale may be achievable in these larger areas.

- **Volunteering** flourishes in rural communities, and, as set out in Section 8, graduate residents – especially retired professionals – represent a largely untapped source of help for HE access. They are likely to be available, both in numbers and in free time, and can potentially offer an ideal combination of educational and pastoral support, sensitive to the culture of the local community.
- **On-line mentoring** and tuition can help overcome the travel distances in dispersed communities. Several platforms and providers are available, notably through the charity Brightside. Brightside and the Kent and Medway Progression Federation have recently secured funding through the HEFCE Collaborative Outreach Networks to develop digital resources specifically for rural Kent, Sussex and East Hampshire.
- The **Russell Group** of universities is using funding through the Collaborative Outreach Networks to deliver a Fair Access Project, developing teacher resources targeted specifically at "cold spot" schools at a distance from a university.
- The Kent and Medway Progression Federation uses the HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker) **database** to monitor its reach and performance. HEAT was developed by a group of universities across the rural South East, and in 2014 was funded by HEFCE to roll out as a national resource.

5. Three example localities

This section of the report summarises findings from three areas – one in Nottinghamshire, one in South Yorkshire and one in Kent – which were selected as examples of a local rural perspective on Higher Education access.

Comparative data

The three example localities are:

- a. in Nottinghamshire – the rural area between Mansfield and Worksop, bordering Derbyshire,
- b. in South Yorkshire – the Dearne Valley, an area of dispersed small towns and villages between Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster, bordering South Yorkshire,
- c. in Kent – the Romney Marsh rural area on the south coast, bordering East Sussex.

These are all areas with **low levels of participation in Higher Education**: most of their wards come within Quintile 1 of the Higher Education Funding Council's POLAR 3 Data from 2012 – i.e. they fall into the lowest fifth in England, with an average of 16.1% of 18-19-year-olds attending university, compared with 57.6% for areas falling in the highest fifth (Quintile 5).

The **criteria for the selection** of the localities are explained in more detail in Section 4 Methodology. The selection was not intended to be comprehensive, or to represent the highest levels or largest areas of need (POLAR maps show larger areas of need in East Anglia, South West England, Cumbria and Northumbria). But the localities do have many characteristics common to disadvantaged rural areas, and the provided a focus for identifying local issues, notably the consultation with schools (see Section 7).

The social make-up and degree of affluence/disadvantage in each locality was also examined through **Acorn Consumer Classification Data**. The results of this process are summarised in Table 1. Acorn brings together a wide range of public demographic and commercial data to classify neighbourhoods by postcode into five main categories, which can then be analysed in more detailed types and groups.

Acorn's five categories of neighbourhood

1. Affluent Achievers. These are some of the most financially successful people in the UK. They live in wealthy, high-status rural, semi-rural and suburban areas of the country. Middle aged or older people, the 'baby-boomer' generation, predominate with many empty nesters and wealthy retired. Some neighbourhoods contain large numbers of well-off families with school-age children, particularly the more suburban locations.

2. Rising Prosperity. These are generally younger, well educated, and mostly prosperous people living in our major towns and cities. Most are singles or couples, some yet to start a family, others with younger children. Often these are highly educated younger professionals moving up the career ladder.

3. Comfortable Communities. This category contains much of middle-of-the-road Britain, whether in the suburbs, smaller towns or the countryside. All lifestages are represented in this category. Many areas have mostly stable families and empty nesters, especially in suburban or semi-rural

locations. There are also comfortably off pensioners, living in retirement areas around the coast or in the countryside and sometimes younger couples just starting out on their lives together.

4. Financially Stretched. This category contains a mix of traditional areas of Britain. Housing is often terraced or semi-detached, a mix of lower value owner occupied housing and homes rented from the council or housing associations. There tend to be fewer traditional married couples than usual and more single parents, single, separated and divorced people than average. Incomes tend to be well below average. Although some have reasonably well paid jobs, more people are in lower paid administrative, clerical, semi-skilled and manual jobs. Apprenticeships and O levels are more likely educational qualifications. Unemployment is above average as are the proportions of people claiming other benefits.

5. Urban Adversity. This category contains the most deprived areas of large and small towns and cities across the UK. Household incomes are low, nearly always below the national average. The numbers claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and other benefits are well above the national average. Levels of qualifications are low and those in work are likely to be employed in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations. Properties tend to be small and there may be overcrowding. Over half of the housing is rented from the local council or a housing association. These are the people who are finding life the hardest and experiencing the most difficult social and financial conditions.

Table 1 shows much correlation between low levels of participation in HE and high levels of social disadvantage, but also makes clear the complexity of identifying need in socially-mixed rural areas.

The **correlation** is clearest in the data from the **Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire** localities. These areas of low HE participation have more than double the national level of 'Financially Stretched' communities (54% and 49% compared with 23%). The Yorkshire locality, which includes the edges of Doncaster and Rotherham as well as many dispersed small towns, even includes a significant level of 'Urban Adversity' (17%).

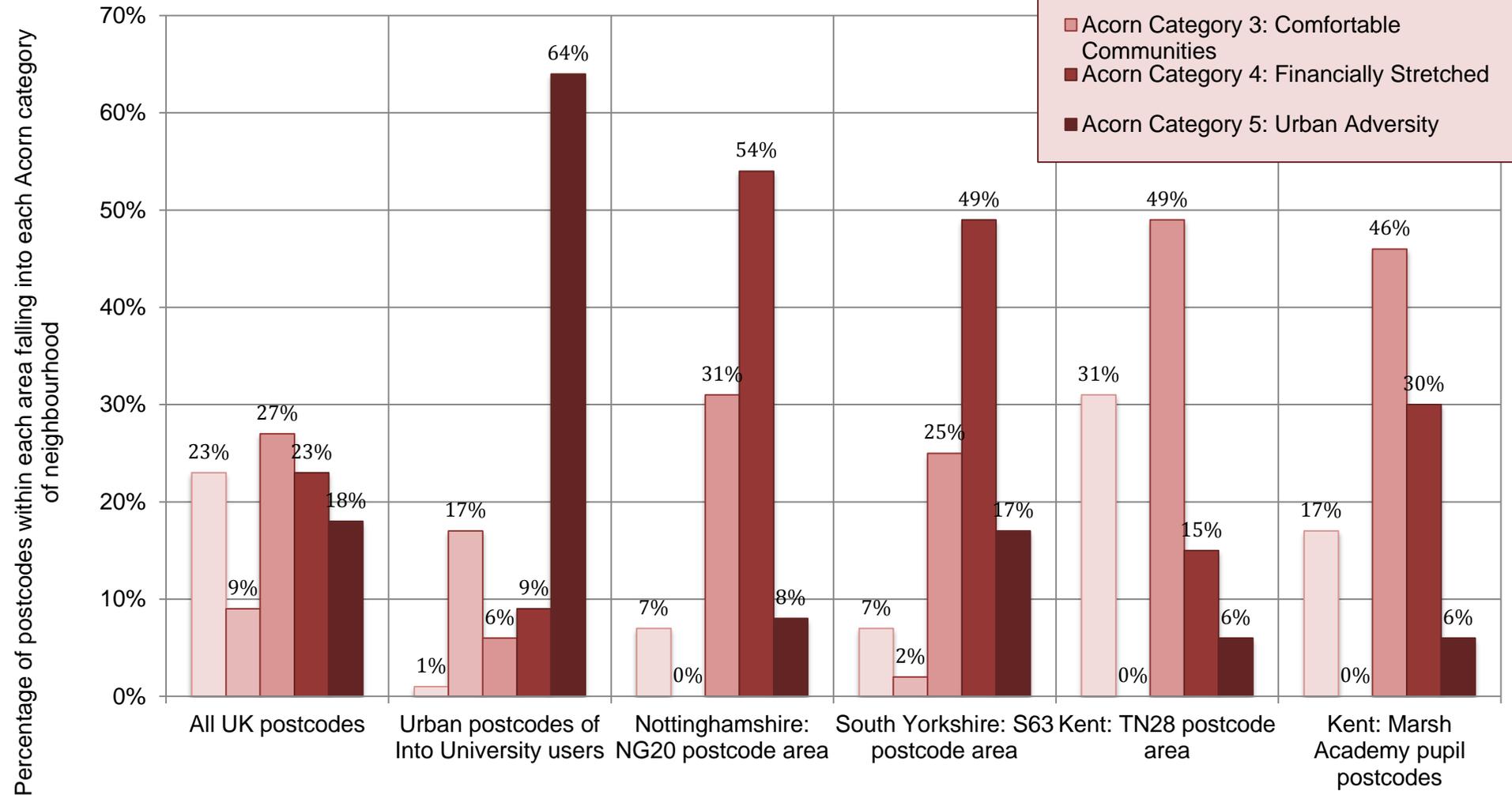
The **complexity** of the social mix in rural areas is clear in the data from the **Kent** locality. Here it is 'Comfortable Communities' that are nearly double the national level (49% compared with 27%), because of the many villages and coastal resorts populated especially by middle-class retirees. But this figure masks the needs of other small towns and villages with significant levels of unemployment and social housing, and these are the neighbourhoods with larger populations of children and young people. This is made evident by the data from the local secondary school: the postcodes where its pupils live are twice as likely to be 'Financially Stretched' than the area as a whole (30% compared with 15%). Services need to be carefully targeted if they are to reach the young people who need them most.

The data from **IntoUniversity** is for the home post-codes of the 18,049 children and young people who used the charity's services in the 2013-14 academic year in Bristol, London and Nottingham. It shows that while the provision is accessed by children from a wide range of backgrounds, the proportion from the most deprived neighbourhoods is more than three times the national average (64% Urban Adversity compared with 18% nationally). This indicates the greater concentration of need in **urban areas**, but also shows the user profile of a fully operational community-based HE access programme. The challenge for developing a rural equivalent would be to reach young people from "Financially Stretched" neighbourhoods at similar levels.

The Acorn data needs to be treated with caution because it is based on **postcodes**, which vary in the number and types of households they cover. The data for the example localities has been based on postcode areas (the 3- or 4-character first part of the postcode) which means that it consists of the average of all the full (6- or 7-character) postcodes in each area (not the average of all households). The selected postcode areas – NG20 in Nottinghamshire, S63 in Yorkshire, TN28 in Kent – include all the visited schools and give a reasonable sense of their wider locality, but are not co-terminus with their catchment areas or other boundaries such as wards or counties.

Table 1: Categories of neighbourhoods

– in the UK as a whole, in urban areas served by IntoUniversity, in the three example rural areas, and in an example school. From Acorn Consumer Classification data by postcode, 2013.



Example locality (a): Nottinghamshire

Locality summary

This example locality stretches across **north-west Nottinghamshire and part of east Derbyshire**, from the M1 motorway in the west to the A1 motorway in the east. To the north lies the town of Worksop, to the south the town of Mansfield (both towns with high levels of unemployment). This is a rural area of undulating farmland, small towns and villages. Some of the villages are affluent, with smart owner-occupied housing, historic churches and village greens, where most residents are retired professionals or commuters by car to Nottingham and other East Midlands cities.

However, most of the villages are former '**pit villages**', where nearly all families were employed in coal-mining until the 1980s. Many of the pits have been replaced with new businesses such as wind-farms and distribution centres, but these offer fewer jobs, and unemployment remains high.

The visited school, Eastlands Junior School, is located in Meden Ward, which is in the 25% most deprived wards in England on the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010), and in the lowest 4% for the educational qualifications and skills of its residents. Most of the pupils walk to school from the surrounding village of Meden Vale; most of the teaching staff live elsewhere and drive to work.

The **University of Nottingham** Widening Participation Team has a constructive working relationship with several local secondary schools, providing activities at school and hosting visits to the University. It is in the process of extending its primary schools programme into the area, which would do the same. However, the distance from the campus means that it cannot expect students to provide ongoing mentoring in this area.

Developing a community-based HE access service roughly equivalent in scale to an **IntoUniversity Centre** – i.e. 8 primary school cohorts with more than 35% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals and 2 secondary schools in proximity to the centre – would mean covering an area of around 20 miles, from Shirebrook in the west to Ollerton in the east. Services would need to be targeted carefully, for example in Ollerton where the socially deprived new town is adjacent to the affluent old town.

Local needs and opportunities

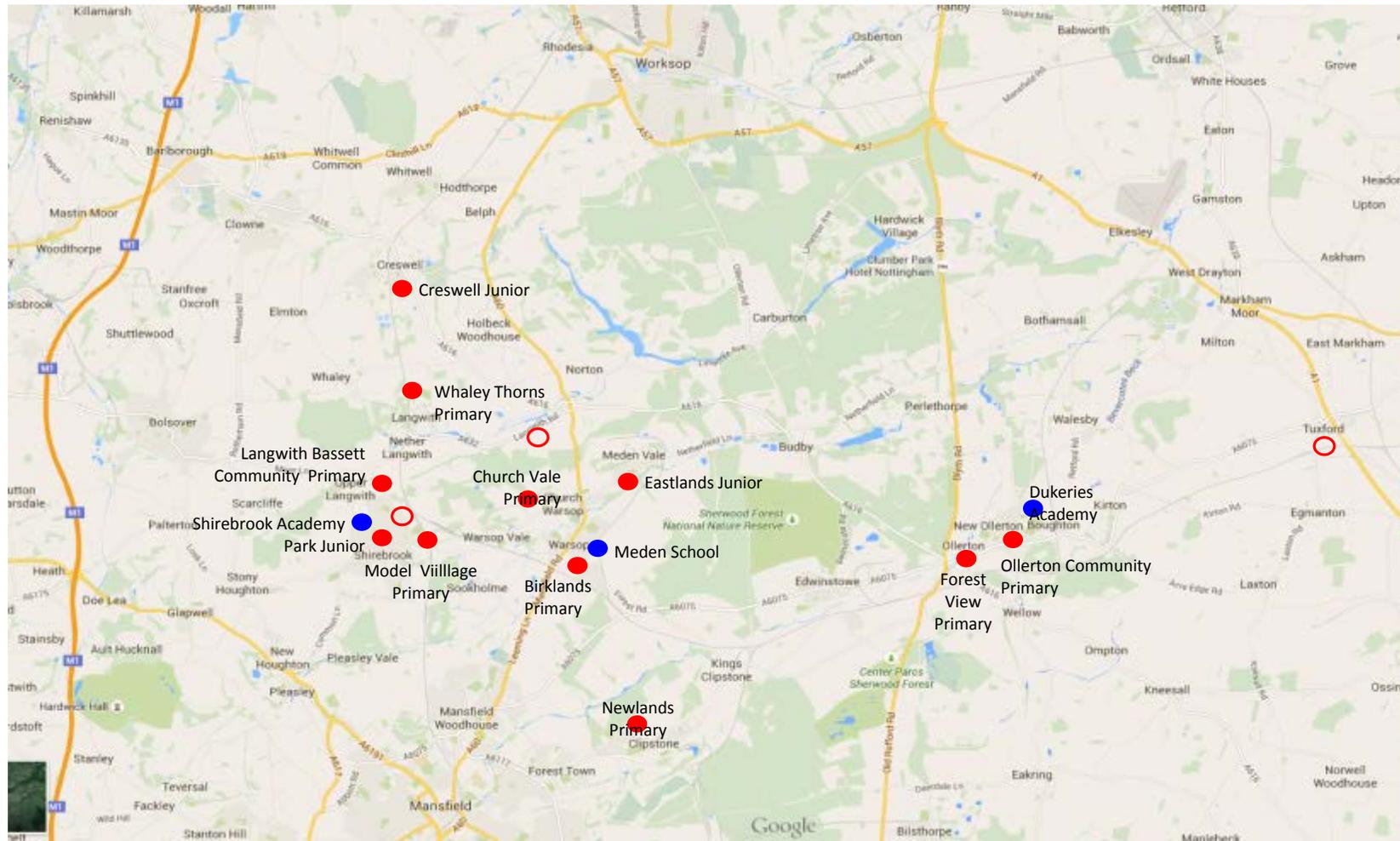
The following points were made in a group discussion organised with teaching and support staff and governors at Eastlands Junior School in Meden Vale village:-

- The village is very proud of its coal-mining heritage, and this gives many families a sense of community and connection that means they support each other when needed.
- In the former coal-mining days, while most children expected to grow up to work 'down the pit', families would recognise some children with intellectual talent and encourage them to go to grammar school and on to university. Since the closure of the pit, this channel seems to have broken down like many other traditional social structures. One participant commented: 'it wouldn't take much to tap into that spirit again: I think some of the families here would welcome any chance to help their children do better in life.'
- Another participant noted that few local parents have any experience of Higher Education, and would need lots of help to support their children: 'It's scary to know how to support your child to exceed what you achieved yourself.'

- Many local families live 'a low aspiration culture', and the school has to work hard to overcome this, especially with boys, whose attitude is often: 'My dad doesn't read and he does alright living on the dole, so I don't need to learn to read.'
- One teacher commented: 'As a school we produce several university-capable students, but they lose their way when they get older. Apathy takes over – they can't or won't do it.'
- Tuition fees and other expenses are often a fundamental factor: 'Going to university costs more than a house costs round here. It's just outside most people's world.'
- 'There's very little to do in the village. To get our children to experience anything different, we have to take them there. And it's an hour to get anywhere.'
- The teaching staff wish they had more chance to talk with pupils about future life pathways, but the school's limited resources are inevitably focused on primary educational attainment. The participants were unanimously keen to accept appropriate external help in developing pupils' study skills and aspirations, as long as any provision is run in partnership with the school's work.
- The village has a community hall which has occasional activities for children but is unlikely to be suitable for homework or academic support sessions. The school's assembly hall could be adapted for after-school sessions and made to feel different from a classroom so it is more equivalent to home-based-learning.
- There are unlikely to be village residents with the educational skills to volunteer as learning mentors. Other nearby villages are home to many graduate professionals, though most of them commute for work using the M1 or A1. The schools' extensive after-school activities – sport, music, drama, ICT club, dance and Year 6 academic booster sessions – are all run by school staff in their spare time.

Nottinghamshire (and Derbyshire) locality: map of selected schools Scale approx 1cm = 1 mile.

● = primary school Free School Meals > 35%. ○ = primary school FSM < 35%. ● - secondary school FSM >35%.



Example locality (b): South Yorkshire

Locality summary

This example locality centres on the **Dearne Valley** area of South Yorkshire. It is roughly in the middle of a triangle of three large ex-industrial towns – Barnsley to the north-west, Doncaster to the east and Rotherham to the south.

This is a former coal-mining region, with small towns dispersed across low hills of farmland. Much of the housing is in brick council estates and traditional working class terraces. More affluent commuter villages and towns can be found a few miles' drive away, and especially west of Barnsley in the Pennines.

In the last 20 years, since the closure of the pits, major roads have been built across the area, connecting industrial estates which provide employment in call centres, distribution warehouses and supermarkets. Unemployment nevertheless remains high – at 10.1% in Dearne South ward and 12.8% in Dearne North ward – compared with 7.6% nationally. Most of the Super Output Areas (sub-ward measurement areas) in both wards are in the 10% most deprived in England and Wales, with even more in the domain for Education, Skills and Training (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2010).

Some local needs and opportunities

The following points, not meant to be comprehensive, were raised during consultation with local stakeholders, especially staff and pupils at the 3 visited local schools – Gooseacre Primary, Highgate Primary and The Dearne Advanced Learning Centre (secondary):

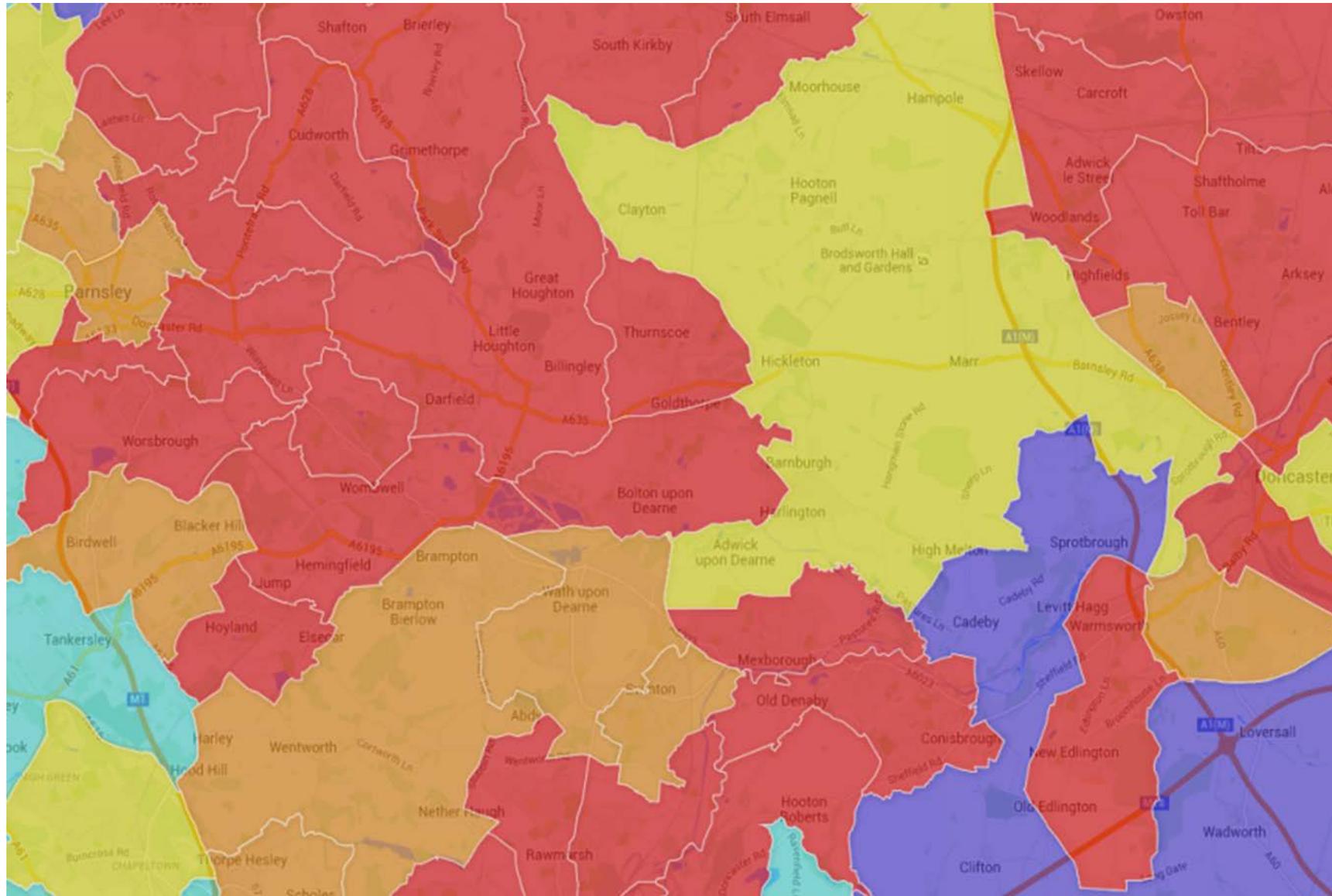
- 'People here lost hope after the mines closed.'
- Each of the visited schools reported that they have pupils whose families are in their third generation of unemployment.
- Goldthorpe (the small town where Gooseacre Primary and The Dearne ALC are located) is where an effigy of Margaret Thatcher was burnt on the day of her funeral: 'history still runs deep here'. However, some local people were embarrassed by the effigy-burning, and some young people made clear in the focus groups that they want to move on from this past.
- The former mining families create a very strong sense of local identity, partly from feeling left out or let down by the national mainstream: 'Politicians in London don't understand what we need up here.'
- Major Government regeneration schemes in the 1990s and 2000s are widely regarded as having come and gone without addressing the underlying local problems. E.g. they built local dual carriageways and roundabouts which are not busy with traffic, and industrial estates which offer far fewer jobs than the coal industry they were meant to replace.
- Local unemployment is notably higher among men than women, and there is a perception that the newer forms of employment, e.g. in call centres, are too 'female' for many of the men from old mining families.
- It is reputed that the workforce of another new local employer – in the distribution business – is more than half migrant workers from other parts of Europe 'because many local people have a poor work ethic, and can't hold down the jobs'.

- Thurnscoe, Goldthorpe and other local towns have stations on a railway line direct to Sheffield and Leeds – offering an easy link to universities, and University of Sheffield student-volunteers have in the past provided regular learning support at a local primary school.
- There is a perception among school staff that they have ‘fallen between the stools’ of outreach programmes by different universities in the region. At one school, a teacher takes pupils every year on a visit to the University of Oxford, not because of any specific partnership or assessed need, but because Oxford is his alma mater.
- Many local schools have been refurbished through the last Labour government’s Building Schools for the Future Programme in recent years (The Dearne is a complete new-build) and many schools (both local authority and academy) have substantially improved their performance in results and Ofsted inspections.
- The visited schools expressed concerns that Pupil Premium and other funding streams favoured urban schools, and that budget reductions in future years might inhibit their capacity to develop students’ aspiration – e.g. savings are more likely to be found from externally contracted careers input than from classroom teaching.
- Five of the local primary schools are operated as academies by the Navigate Trust, which is enthusiastic to work on new initiatives to support their students’ aspirations to university.
- Schools found that many parents at first had little understanding of how to support their children’s learning, but, once contacted and encouraged (e.g. by family support workers), they attended parents’ evenings and took the role seriously.
- Local community organisations offer potential partnerships, e.g. the Gr8M8s Youth Club in Thurnscoe.

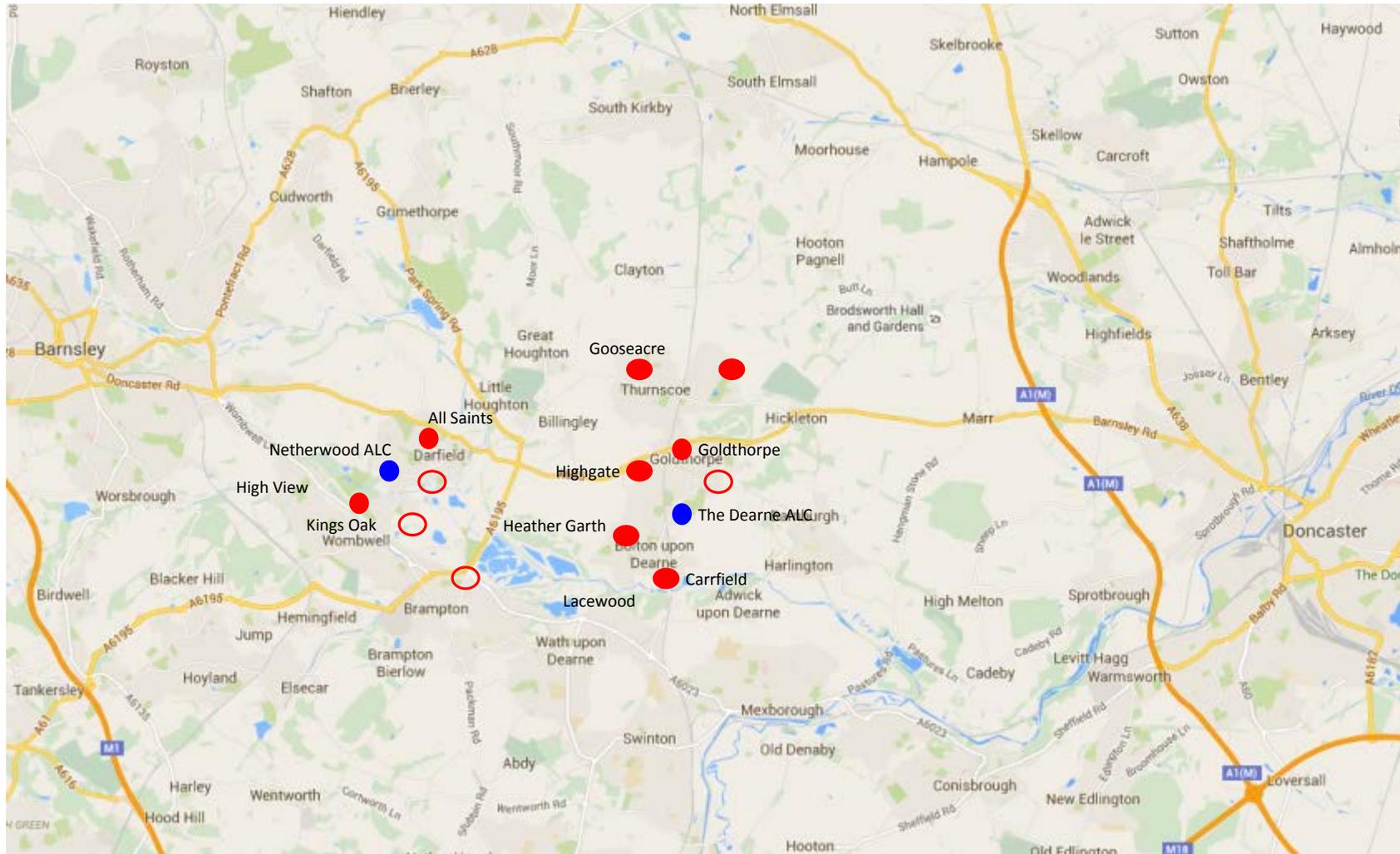
South Yorkshire example locality: POLAR map of levels of 18-19-year-old participation in HE

(Higher Education Funding Council, 2012). Scale approx 1cm = 1 mile.

Red = quintile 1, lowest level of participation. **Orange** = quintile 2. **Yellow** = quintile 3. **Turquoise** = quintile 4. **Purple** = quintile 5, highest.



South Yorkshire, Dearne Valley example locality: map of selected schools Scale approx 1cm = 1 mile.
 ● = primary school Free School Meals > 35%. ○ = primary school FSM < 35%. ● - secondary school FSM >35%.



Example locality (c): Kent

Locality summary

This locality centres on the small seaside town of New Romney, where the visited secondary school The Marsh Academy is located. Inland lies the flat farmland and scattered villages of Romney Marsh. About 14 miles to the west is the boundary with East Sussex; about 15 miles to the north is the town of Ashford, with fast train connections to London; about 13 miles along the coast to the east is the harbour and resort town of Folkestone. South of New Romney more former marshland stretches to the shingle peninsula of Dungeness, with its nature reserve and power station.

On the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the wards of New Romney and its surroundings rank between 21% and 40% of the most deprived in England, but this relatively affluent-looking data masks local variety. The main A259 coast road marks a social barrier. To the north, the villages are more prosperous, with many retirees and professionals who commute to London via Ashford: unemployment in Romney Marsh ward is at 5.4%, below the national average of 7.6%. To the south of the A259 – apart from the coastal part of New Romney itself, which is mainly comfortable retirement homes – unemployment levels nearly double to 9.1%, and there is a particular centre of social disadvantage in the large village of Lydd, where most of the housing is in brick council estates.

Some local needs and opportunities

The following points, not meant to be comprehensive, were raised in discussions with staff and pupils at The Marsh Academy in New Romney, with the headteacher of Brockhill Performing Arts Academy near Folkestone, and with the Kent and Medway Progression Federation:

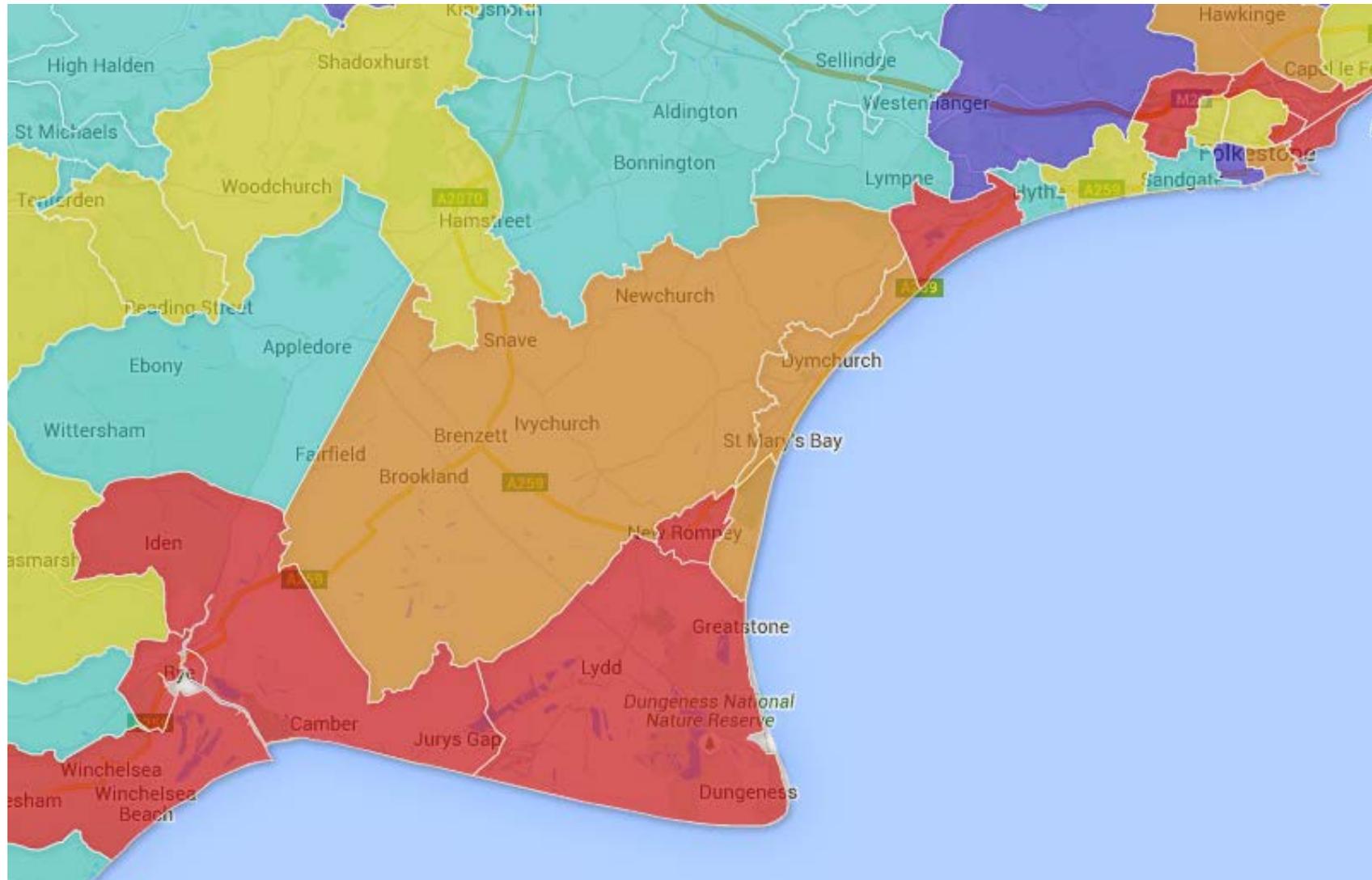
- Most secondary students are transported to and from school by school bus, with few public transport alternatives available. This creates a major challenge for after-school activities, and, for example, if a pupil has to miss part of a school day for a dentist or other appointment, it usually means that s/he misses the whole day.
- The home-school distance makes it difficult to engage parents, e.g. in parents' evenings.
- The social mix of the area is epitomised by the experience of Brockhill Performing Arts Academy, which is located in an affluent retirement village. Local residents often look askance, and some have complained, at the buses of young people from less 'desirable' places brought through the village.
- Dungeness Power Station used to be a major local employer, but automation has reduced the number of jobs. Farming, sea-fishing, traditional seaside resort tourism, and the Folkestone ferries have also declined as local industries.
- The village green in Lydd is a meeting point for many local youngsters, who have few other activities. The police are frequently called to anti-social behaviour on the green, with implications for school behaviour the following day.
- Brockhill and The Marsh both have new buildings. The Marsh is adjacent to and runs a sports centre and a community hub, with spaces for hire and its own entrance separate from the school. The hub offers ideal space for an out-of-school aspirational learning programme on the lines of an **Into**University Centre, although New Romney is too small a town to warrant a permanent centre on its own, so it would need to be supplemented with targeted outreach to villages across the area.

- The social variety of the villages in the area is shown by the variation in Free School Meal eligibility in the village primary schools – ranging from 43.6% in Lydd to 6.5% in Lympe.
- The nearest universities are in Canterbury – about an hour's drive north-east of New Romney – or Brighton – about 1 hour 45 minutes drive to the west. These distances mean that it is not possible for students to attend university by public transport.
- A well-developed programme of university outreach sessions is run locally by the Kent and Medway Progression Federation, a collaboration of Canterbury Christchurch University, the University of Kent and the University for the Creative Arts, in partnership with schools and local authorities. The Federation has a national reputation for Widening Participation practice in rural and coastal communities, though it emphasises that its work always depends on responding to very local contexts, often with an understanding of the capacity and enthusiasm of individual headteachers.

Kent (and East Sussex) example locality: POLAR map of levels of 18-19-year-old participation in HE

(Higher Education Funding Council, 2012). Scale approx 1cm = 1 mile.

Red = quintile 1, lowest level of participation. **Orange** = quintile 2. **Yellow** = quintile 3. **Turquoise** = quintile 4. **Purple** = quintile 5, highest.



Kent (and East Sussex) example locality: map of selected schools Scale approx 1cm = 1 mile.
● = primary school Free School Meals > 35%. ○ = primary school FSM < 35%. ● - secondary school FSM >35%.



6. Findings from young people

This section summarises findings from 10 focus groups with a total of 110 pupils at 5 schools. Each school was located in one of the three example localities in Kent, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire – i.e., in disadvantaged rural or dispersed communities with low levels of participation in Higher Education. Details of the schools are summarised below. Details of the focus group process are summarised in Section 4 Methodology.

Assessment of young people's views and needs

All the **young people aged 10 to 14** who took part in the focus groups were aware that just ahead of them lay the first major adult decision of their lives: what to do when they leave school.

Most were eager, some desperate, to talk about their hopes and concerns, and to find out about their options. Most had had some classes in school on careers or future aspirations, but few appeared to have had individual conversations in personal or pastoral terms, even at home.

Most had limited understanding of Higher Education; many had considerable misunderstanding. Once the focus groups opened up the realities of going to university, many of the young people became visibly conflicted about how to reconcile this possibility with their families and home communities.

When asked if there was anything new or different that might help them with their education, the young people's almost universal request was for more help with their homework. It was clear that homework was a source of considerable worry, especially for Year 7 and 8 pupils. This suggests both that their families are able to provide only limited support for learning, and that the young people were not confident in the out-of-classroom, independent studying that is typically required in Higher Education.

IntoUniversity staff report many similar concerns coming from young people in disadvantaged communities in cities. However, in the rural focus groups, the physical distance to a university was a significant additional factor. Fears and lack of knowledge about university appear to be more acute for rural school pupils than for their urban counterparts.

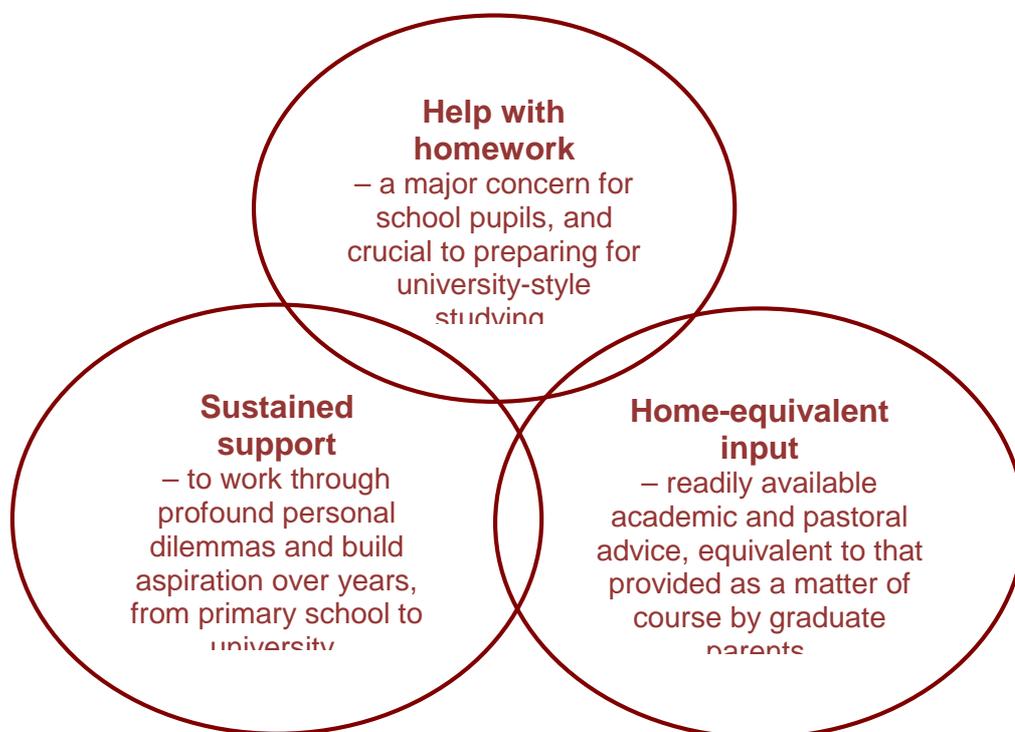
This finding was supported by the one focus group held with **17 and 18-year-olds**. These 6th Form students were just completing their A Levels and would be leaving school in a few weeks' time. Most of them had visited one or more universities, and some recalled taking part in school-based sessions run by a university (which would have been the Kent and Medway Progression Federation).

Those 6th-Formers who were planning to move away to university were readily able to articulate the social and practical challenges that they had and would need to overcome: it was obvious that they had been living with and working through these issues for months or years.

Of the 6th-Formers who had decided not to go to university, the male students were intending to take up apprenticeships or work in small businesses run by their family or friends, while the female students were hoping to find local work or job training while carrying out caring responsibilities in their families. Most of these students said that they would like to resume Higher Education later in life, or would have considered part-time study directly had there been a university nearby.

Priorities identified through focus groups

Based on the views expressed in the focus groups, the HE access needs of children and young people in disadvantaged rural areas can be summarised as three overlapping priorities:



Focus group topics

The following table gives more detail of the topics raised in the focus groups with school pupils and their responses. Note that the questions did not necessarily follow the order given here.

Question	Summary of young people's answers	Some young people's comments
1. About the local community (rural, dispersed or coastal)		
1a. What is it like to live here? Some words to describe your local community. Good/bad things about this place.	<p>Two secondary school pupils described their local community as a dump that they couldn't wait to leave. One group of primary school pupils who seemed to be put on the defensive by this question, described their village in holiday-brochure terms, and would not admit to it having any shortcomings. However, most participants gave a balanced view.</p> <p>The most frequently mentioned positives were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and play spaces. • Countryside to explore, especially by bicycle. 	<p><i>'It's peaceful round here. We don't really have gangs and drugs like they do in big cities.'</i></p> <p><i>'It's good to have nature all around you.'</i></p> <p><i>'People come on holiday here – we're lucky to live here.'</i> (Kent coast)</p> <p><i>'We're lucky to live in the countryside, but the</i></p>

Question	Summary of young people's answers	Some young people's comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being close to family and friends. • Being able to walk to school. • People are friendly. • Low levels of crime. • Specific local amenities and clubs, eg. swimming pool. <p>The most frequently mentioned negatives were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not much to do. • Too much litter and noise. • Distance to larger towns with shops and cinemas. • Not many jobs - lots of people out of work. • Slow internet connection. 	<p><i>nearest MacDonald's is in Mansfield.'</i> (Nottinghamshire)</p> <p><i>'In cities you can get caught up in terrorism, and it's not like that here.'</i></p> <p><i>'There are some streets you don't go down [in this small rural town], because there are noisy pubs there and litter and things.'</i></p> <p><i>It would be better if we had a swimming pool.'</i></p> <p><i>'It's a long way to go to the cinema – though the buses are good.'</i></p> <p><i>'You can get a good education here.'</i></p> <p><i>'There always seem to be roadworks.'</i></p>
<p>1b. Has your family always lived in this area?</p>	<p>Most of the young people's families had long-term local connections, especially in the former pit villages, where several younger pupils described themselves as coming from mining families and listed numerous relatives living within walking distance. Others said that one or more of their parents came from outside the area, meaning towns or cities 20-30 miles away.</p> <p>Some of the Yorkshire secondary students seemed irritated when the conversation turned to the local mining heritage, as if they had heard it too many times and wished to move on.</p> <p>More of the Kent students' families came from a wider range of areas.</p> <p>The overwhelming majority of participants appeared to be white British in ethnicity, but in most groups there were one or two pupils whose parents had migrated to the UK, including from Asia and Eastern Europe.</p>	<p><i>'My gran lives across the road, my other gran in the next street, and my Dad's family are all round about here.'</i> (Yorkshire)</p> <p><i>'No, my mum isn't from round here – she's from Sheffield.'</i> (Yorkshire)</p> <p><i>'Most people round here are proud to be from Yorkshire.'</i></p> <p><i>'My granddad talks all the time about the old mining days. It does make you think.'</i></p>
<p>1c. How do you get to</p>	<p>Most of the primary pupils came to school on foot, with the remainder being brought by car. The</p>	

Question	Summary of young people's answers	Some young people's comments
and from school?	secondary students were fairly evenly divided between walking, car, public bus and school bus.	
1d. What after-school or holiday activities do you have here?	<p>Participants were glad to have the chance to talk about the after-school activities they use during term-time, especially sports, arts and crafts, chess and IT. There were no mentions of homework or revision groups, though most schools provided these.</p> <p>There were fewer responses about activities in school holidays, when most of the young people seemed not to attend organised activities, apart from some boys who took part in village sports teams.</p>	
1e. What is the largest city you have visited in the UK?	<p>Most of the young people had little experience of major towns or cities. In the Yorkshire groups, most had been to Leeds, Sheffield or Manchester, though several had not. In the Nottinghamshire groups, a handful of young people had never been to Nottingham. In the Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire groups, few had been to London.</p> <p>Many of the young people were excited at the prospect of visiting more cities, at the same time some seemed content not to.</p>	<p><i>'The furthest I've ever been is Blackpool.'</i> (Yorkshire)</p> <p><i>'I've been to London but only to the airport to go on holiday.'</i></p> <p><i>'I wouldn't want to go to London.'</i></p>
2. Questions around Higher Education		
2a. What is a university?	<p>Apart from the 6th form group, the young people appeared to have very limited understanding of university.</p> <p>Usually one of the more articulate participants would kick off with a partial answer, and others would contribute to build up a group view, when the researcher would offer help. There was general awareness that university means a higher level of education, and the most common statement was that university leads to a better job.</p> <p>Almost none of the young people from Years 5 to 7 knew that students often leave home to go to university, that a degree means specialising in a particular subject area, that most courses last 3 years or that it has to be paid for. Terms like 'degree', 'campus' and 'graduate' were new to nearly all the young people.</p>	<p><i>'I think I want to go to university, but I don't know if there's one round here.'</i></p> <p><i>'Is it like another kind of school?'</i></p> <p><i>'It's like more than a college.'</i></p> <p><i>'It's a big building where you get education at a higher level.'</i></p> <p><i>'You go to university to train for some jobs, like electrician.'</i></p> <p><i>'It's where you go to study more.'</i></p>
2b. Do you have any close family	Almost none of the young people had graduate parents. Those who did couldn't say what university their parent had attended, or what	<i>'I think my brother is going to university.'</i>

Question	Summary of young people's answers	Some young people's comments
who have been to university?	<p>subject they had studied. A small number had siblings currently at local universities, but didn't know what courses they were studying.</p> <p>Several young people said that they had family members who had been to university, but it turned out to have been Further Education or job training.</p> <p>It seemed that families are not a strong source of information about HE, and that many young people would aspire to university only if they could begin to see beyond their families' current experience.</p>	<p><i>'My auntie went to university to get her qualification. She's a hairdresser.'</i></p> <p><i>'What would they wanna go there for?'</i></p>
2c. Have you ever visited a university?	<p>In most of the focus groups, none of the young people had seen a university, apart from the 6th formers, most of whom had attended more than one university open day.</p> <p>Another secondary school group had visited Oxford University in an informal trip organised by a teacher who was an Oxford graduate. The pupils had clearly loved this trip with a popular teacher, though they didn't seem to have gained much understanding about university, and none said that they were thinking of applying to Oxford.</p> <p>In one of the primary groups, a pupil had visited her sister in her halls of residence at Sheffield Hallam University. This led to a lively discussion in the focus group, with other young people asking questions about what university was like.</p> <p>It was clear that personal stories or connection through a known person are powerful ways of enthusing pupils about HE, though this then needs to lead to fuller knowledge about what university means.</p>	<p><i>'I don't know if you really get to see a place on open days, but I've been to two of them. They're fun.'</i></p> <p><i>'I didn't really see myself going there.'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm not sure if it's for me, but it gave us an idea, anyway.'</i> [About visiting Oxford]</p>
2d. Where is the nearest university?	<p>The Year 7s in Kent all knew that there is a university in Canterbury (there are in fact two), though they did not know that their nearest universities along the coast would be at Brighton.</p> <p>In Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, the most common answers given were towns like Rotherham and Mansfield, where there are FE colleges but not universities, although many of the Yorkshire young people did name Sheffield (where there are two universities).</p>	
2e. What are some good reasons for	<p>The almost universal first answer to this question was about getting a better paid job, although two or three young people talked first about getting a higher level of education. The discussion would</p>	<p><i>'To get a better job, innit.'</i></p> <p><i>'You go to get a better career and a better life.'</i></p>

Question	Summary of young people's answers	Some young people's comments
going to university?	<p>then sometimes move on to the love of learning a particular subject, but only the 6th formers mentioned the social aspects of university – about meeting new friends and having new experiences.</p> <p>In terms of jobs, there was lots of confusion about which jobs have a graduate entry requirement: the young people could generally name doctor, vet and nurse, but not teacher, lawyer, architect, social worker or engineer. Many young people mistakenly named electrician, builder, plumber and hairdresser as graduate jobs, perhaps because they were familiar with these jobs from their own families. Almost none of the young people were aware that, in many professions, though a degree is not required, it may be advantageous.</p> <p>The 'graduate premium' – commonly given that graduates earn around £200,000 more over a lifetime than non-graduates – appeared to be new information to all the young people.</p>	<p><i>'So you can get extra training, like, if you want to be a doctor.'</i></p> <p><i>'So you can go and learn whatever you want.'</i></p> <p><i>'To study more about stuff.'</i></p> <p><i>'So you can get to learn more.'</i></p>
2f. What are some good reasons for NOT going to university?	<p>By the time this question came up in the focus groups, the participants understood (often apparently for the first time) that university would probably mean moving away from home – and all the groups then gave this as the main reason for not going to university. Lots of discussion was raised by this point, including some of the most personal and emotional comments made by the young people.</p> <p>Perhaps the prospect of leaving home is inevitably worrying to people as young as 10 years old, and many needed to be reassured that during 3 years at university they could still spend weekends and vacations at home. But many of the same young people had also expressed enthusiasm for future studying or specific careers, and what emerged vividly was the dilemma that they would face between their rural life at home and any aspiration to go to university in a city.</p> <p>This appeared to be particularly troubling to the young women, several of whom expressed concern about letting down the caring responsibilities they have in their families. One 6th former planned to work part-time in the local hairdresser after leaving school, specifically so that she could help her mother look after her younger siblings.</p>	<p><i>'I wouldn't want to move away from home like that.'</i></p> <p><i>'I wouldn't want to leave my mum.'</i></p> <p><i>'I wouldn't mind going to university, but I wouldn't want to live in a city.'</i></p> <p><i>'That's a lot to go through just to do more studying.'</i></p> <p><i>'I guess it could be daunting going to a big building.'</i></p> <p><i>'If that's how much it costs, it's not something we'd do in my family.'</i></p> <p><i>'So you could get paid to go to university, have a good time, then just stick to a nice easy job and never pay it back. Cool!'</i></p>

Question	Summary of young people's answers	Some young people's comments
	<p>It may be that the male participants faced similar issues of personal split loyalties, but were less expressive about them. Offering ideas about part-time or distance studying seemed to open up HE possibilities for some participants, but most of them held an assumption that university was not for them.</p> <p>Apart from the 6th formers, most of the young people knew nothing about student finance. A handful of participants mentioned students loans or a figure of £9,000 a year. Most of the young people were shocked to learn that they would have to pay for university. For many this news seemed to shut off the option: several young people sat back in their chairs and folded their arms, clearly feeling that university was no longer relevant to them. Explanation about the loan repayment process allayed a few concerns; more young people were reassured by an explanation of Student Maintenance Grants for those on low incomes. (The focus groups took place a few weeks before the Government announced that these grants will be replaced by loans from 2016.) With all the younger groups, the researcher emphasised that the financing and other arrangements for university may well be different by the time they are 18.</p> <p>Another reason given for not going to university was to leave school and go straight to paid work, although this was complicated by the young people's confusion about which jobs do not require a degree. There was discussion about apprenticeships and work-based training as equally valid options to university.</p>	
2g. Do you think you want to go to university?	<p>Apart from the 6th formers, who had already made this decision, the groups responded to this question broadly as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • around a quarter of the young people expressed a clear decision to go to university; • around a quarter expressed a clear decision not to go to university; • around half were undecided. <p>With all the groups the researcher emphasised that there is no right or wrong answer, that these are personal decisions to be reached over time.</p>	<p><i>'I want to go, but I'd want to come back.'</i></p> <p><i>'I want to study English: I love writing stories.'</i></p>
2h. Do you know what	About half of the young people expressed particular aspirations for a future career, ranging	<i>'I want to be a vet.'</i>

Question	Summary of young people's answers	Some young people's comments
you would like to do for a career?	from qualified professions to specific jobs in local shops and garages. Many had attended careers or future planning classes at school, but most appeared to have had little one-to-one input to help them understand how realistic their plan was or how they might work towards it.	<p><i>'I want to be a mechanic – do I have to go to university?'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm going to work in my dad's friend's garage. I help out there now.'</i></p>
2i. How much help do you get from your family with your education, and possibly going to university?	<p>The visited schools had evidently developed a positive attitude to learning in their pupils, who spoke about how important education is, and how much their parents support it.</p> <p>A small number of young people were being directed to specific jobs by their parents – e.g. to work in a family business – and were happy with this. Most young people talked about their parents supporting them to make their own life choices.</p> <p>However, few of the young people's families had direct experience of university, or could give informed advice about HE or careers. There was also lots of discussion about homework – generally that, though parents often wanted to be supportive, they did not have the education themselves to help with specific subjects, especially maths, languages and history.</p>	<p><i>'My parents have taught me that a good education is really important.'</i></p> <p><i>'I know my parents will support me whatever I decide to do.'</i></p> <p><i>'My parents are no use with homework.'</i></p> <p><i>'My brother helps me with my homework.'</i></p> <p><i>'My mum doesn't want me to leave home. When she's not there, my Dad says: 'You make sure you go to university.'</i></p> <p><i>'There's no way my dad would say yes to that [a student loan].'</i></p>
2j. What more could be done to help you go to university? - or to help you decide?	<p>The focus groups raised many young people's curiosity about HE, and they were eager to learn more through careers sessions, meeting university students, or visiting a campus. In other words, they showed the need for the sort of activities often provided by university Widening Participation teams.</p> <p>Most of the young people were surprised to realise that their own teachers had all been to university. Where teachers were present in the focus groups, this often led to a lively discussion about their personal experience. Many young people said that they would now go and ask their teachers or family members about their time at university.</p> <p>In terms of building the academic achievement to reach university, the area where the young people most wanted help was homework. Homework was a source of stress to many pupils, especially</p>	

Question	Summary of young people's answers	<i>Some young people's comments</i>
	in Year 7. They were worried to learn that degree studies are largely self-directed in a similar way to homework. It was clear that building confidence in independent studying, out of the classroom, would be crucial for the young people to work towards university.	
2k. Why do you think fewer people in this area go to university than in other parts of the country?	This question produced the fewest responses – usually a repetition of the geographical distance to the nearest university. However, some young people were aware that their communities were socially disadvantaged, especially in the ex-mining community in Yorkshire.	<i>'Since the mines closed, lots of people find it hard to get a job round here.'</i>

The schools where focus groups were held

Eastlands Junior School		
<u>Locality:</u> Nottinghamshire, NG20 – in the small village of Meden Vale	<u>Type of school:</u> Local authority community junior, ages 7-11 (Nottinghamshire County Council)	<u>Focus groups:</u> (i) 13 from Year 5, (ii) 12 from Year 6, both mixed ability, male and female
<u>Number of pupils:</u> 120	<u>Most recent Ofsted rating:</u> Good (June 2015)	<u>Pupils eligible for Free School Meals over last 6 years:</u> 55.8%
Gooseacre Primary Academy		
<u>Locality:</u> South Yorkshire, S63 – in the large village of Thurnscoe	<u>Type of school:</u> Converter primary academy, ages 3-11 (Navigate Academies Trust)	<u>Focus groups:</u> (i) 11 from Year 5, (ii) 12 from Year 6, both mixed ability, male and female
<u>Number of pupils:</u> 279	<u>Most recent Ofsted rating:</u> Good (June 2014)	<u>Pupils eligible for Free School Meals over last 6 years:</u> 66.7%
Highgate Primary Academy		
<u>Locality:</u> South Yorkshire, S63 – in the small town of Goldthorpe	<u>Type of school:</u> Converter primary academy, ages 3-11 (Navigate Academies Trust)	<u>Focus groups:</u> (i) 7 from Year 5, (ii) 9 from Year 6, more able pupils, male and female
<u>Number of pupils:</u> 300	<u>Most recent Ofsted rating:</u> Good (February 2013)	<u>Pupils eligible for Free School Meals over last 6 years:</u> 39.1%
The Dearne Advanced Learning Centre		
<u>Locality:</u> South Yorkshire, S63 – in the small town of Goldthorpe	<u>Type of school:</u> Local authority community secondary, ages 11-16 (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council)	<u>Focus groups:</u> (i) 14 from Year 7, (ii) 9 from Year 8, both mixed ability, male and female
<u>Number of pupils:</u> 279	<u>Most recent Ofsted rating:</u> Requires Improvement (December 2014)	<u>Pupils eligible for Free School Meals over last 6 years:</u> 50.3%
The Marsh Academy		
<u>Locality:</u> Kent, TN28 – in the small coastal town of New Romney	<u>Type of school:</u> Sponsored secondary academy, ages 11-18 (independent academy)	<u>Focus groups:</u> (i) 11 from Year 7, mixed ability (ii) 12 from 6th form. Both groups mixed male and female.
<u>Number of pupils:</u> 792	<u>Most recent Ofsted rating:</u> Good (April 2013)	<u>Pupils eligible for Free School Meals over last 6 years:</u> 42.6%

7. Potential service models

This section outlines two potential operational service models aimed at meeting the needs identified through the research – a Hub-and-Spokes model, with outreach to rural villages from a centre based in a local town, and a Peripatetic Outreach model. It then summarises the role that mentoring and on-line learning might play in either of these models.

Rationale for the models

The models have been developed to respond to the priorities identified for meeting the HE access needs of rural young people:

- for provision that is based in and owned by the local community;
- for a combination of pastoral and learning support, equivalent to that provided by graduate parents;
- for this support to be sustained from primary school through to university, in order to meet the complex, long-term needs of individual young people, and to avoid the past experience of disadvantaged communities feeling let down by time-limited initiatives.

Through the process of this research, as soon as these needs became clear, it also became clear that they are not being met by existing provision. The need to find viable new service models was perhaps the overriding issue to emerge from the consultation with professionals, and so the consultation events were then used to generate ideas, comment on draft proposals, and gradually refine them.

The models remain outlines, and continue to present significant challenges, but it is hoped that they offer a rationale and operational framework for commissioners or providers to consider launching some operational pilots.

Potential implementation

The models have been designed around credible but hypothetical geographical situations (not necessarily to any of the localities used as examples in this report). Implementation would mean careful adaptation to any specific location, through a detailed process of planning and local partnership that lies beyond the remit of the present research. There will also be places where neither model would be feasible, and in these areas a substantial piece of community development work may be needed to grow a bespoke solution.

The selection of a locality for implementation will require not only assessment of need, but also the likelihood of partnerships with schools, at least one HE institution, and ideally other local community organisations, employers and the local authority. Given the innovative nature of a pilot, risk assessment will have to be comprehensive and continual, extra management and front-line staff-time will be needed to create new practices and respond to contingencies, and an external evaluation will be needed so that both the project itself and the sector more widely can learn from the experience.

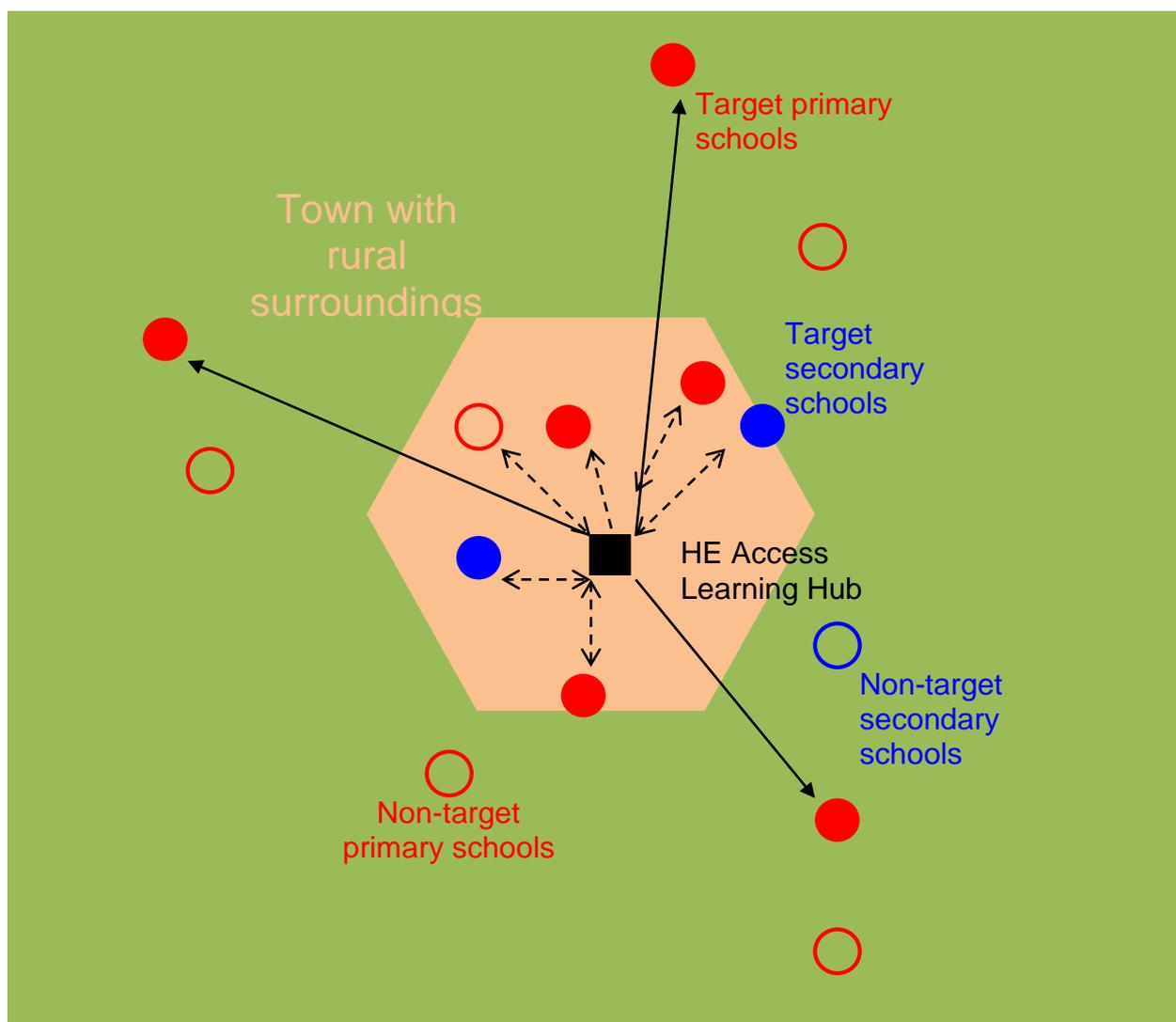
Costings will also depend on local needs, but it is obvious that these start-up features, as well as the expense of transport and multi-site working, will make a community-based rural pilot more expensive than a city- or school-based programme. IntoUniversity has offered a ball-park

indicator of costs. A current **IntoUniversity** centre, renting a building in an urban area with four centre-based staff, becomes fully operational by its third year, reaches 900 young people a year, and costs in the region of £250,000 per annum. **IntoUniversity** estimates that operating either of the rural models proposed here would require six staff (including the local manager), reaching probably 600 children, and costing in the region of £350,000 a year (at 2014 costings). The costs of any external evaluation and dissemination of findings would be additional.

The service models outlined here would present major challenges to **IntoUniversity**'s current way of working, which is centre-based rather than peripatetic, located in the community as well as in schools, and works face-to-face rather than on-line. Throughout this research, it has been emphasised to all those consulted that no funding is in place for implementing a rural pilot, nor is **IntoUniversity** or any other organisation yet ready to decide whether to proceed. But the potential service models can make a contribution towards that decision-making, whether for **IntoUniversity** or for others.

Potential service model (i): Hub-and-Spokes

Diagrammatic map of Hub & Spokes model



Outline of the Hub-and-Spokes model

This is in effect a hybrid model – part centre-based, part peripatetic. It requires a **semi-rural setting**, where a town is surrounded by or adjacent to an extensive area of countryside and villages, which might be coastal or inland.

The **'hub'** is a centre for out-of-school learning and HE access work. It is located in a building in the town, within walking distance for the town's young people. Its services might include regular homework and revision sessions for up to 30 young people at a time, whole-class study weeks with campus visits, one-to-one mentoring and careers advice. Shortage of venues may mean that the hub has to be based in a school, but it is preferably in a community or ex-commercial building, so that it is equally accessible to young people from different schools, and creates a home-equivalent experience of learning out of a formal classroom.

The **town** must be large enough to warrant this permanent presence, with at least one secondary school and two or three primary schools. It might be a large market town or small coastal resort or harbour town. But, because the cohort for the service will also be made up of young people from the rural area, the town does not need to be as populous as the catchment area for an urban **IntoUniversity Centre** (which requires eight primary years and two secondary schools within 1.5 miles).

Specific partnership working is targeted at **schools** with high levels of need, e.g. based on the level of Free School Meal entitlement or lower than expected progression to university. Within the town, services are probably offered to all the schools, whether or not they meet the criteria, so as to avoid any resentment in a relatively small community.

In the **adjacent countryside**, however, there are almost certainly affluent localities where young people's aspirational needs are already well met, so the outreach is targeted at those villages where there are high levels of social deprivation or poor educational outcomes. The young people in these villages are either bussed to and from the Hub in the local town, or services are provided regularly within the village – with sessions run in a primary school or community hall, following the Peripatetic Outreach Model outlined below.

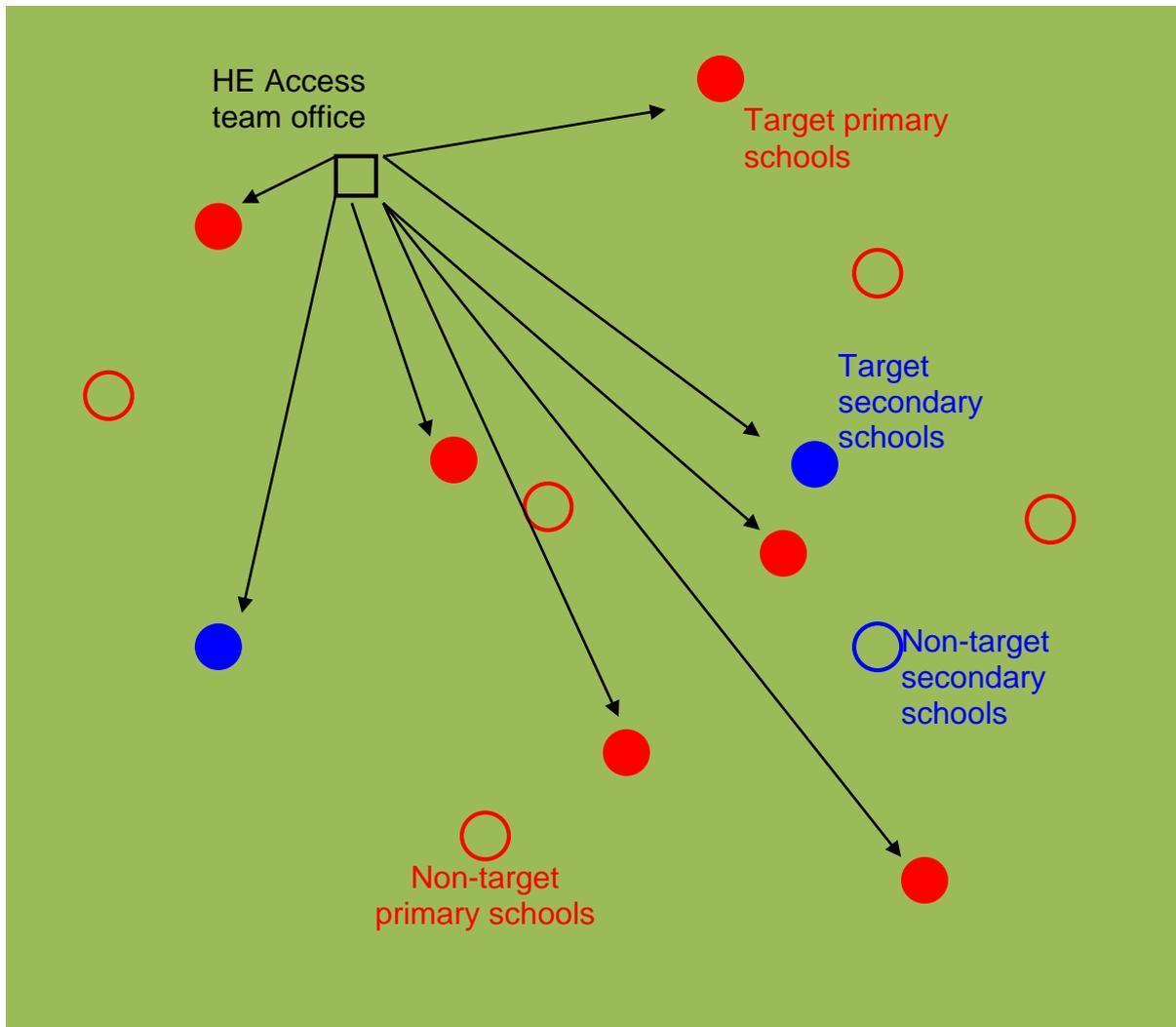
The **staff team** of at least six workers (ideally recruited locally) have their office base in the hub, and travel to provide outreach sessions as necessary. Local community **volunteers** are recruited within the town to support the sessions held at the hub, and in the villages to support the sessions there. Local graduates, likely to include retired professionals, will be recruited as learning mentors, and the mentoring may be supplemented by student or corporate mentoring as outlined at the end of this section of the report.

Assessment of the Hub-and-Spokes model

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A centre-based service has numerous advantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ becoming a familiar presence in a community, ○ helping young people enjoy learning out of school, ○ available whenever the service needs it (assuming occupancy is not shared), ○ providing a base and group support for staff and volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If young people from the rural areas are bussed into town for HE access sessions, this may reinforce the common rural fear that university takes young people away from their home communities. • The model is not suitable for a purely rural area, and it may be difficult to identify locations with the necessary mix of town and country.

Potential service model (ii): Outreach

Diagrammatic map of Outreach model



Outline of the Outreach model

This model is for a **largely or purely rural setting**, where there may be a variety of disadvantaged and more affluent communities dispersed across a wide area, which can be coastal or inland.

Instead of being centre-based, all services are targeted at the schools or villages with the highest levels of need, and delivered in the most **accessible local venues**. For example, the service may make a regular booking of a social club, scouts hut, church room or village hall to run after-school academic support sessions. In many villages though, the primary school is the most appropriate venue and often has the only hall large enough for whole-class study weeks.

Whatever the venue, the staff and volunteers use their creativity – e.g. with signs, banners, display boards, books, laptops and other portable equipment – to give the room a distinctive, aspirational feel that is different from a formal classroom. The equipment is either stored at the venue between sessions or brought by car or van by the team.

Most of the young people walk to and from the sessions in their own village; some are brought relatively short distances by car by parents or appropriately insured volunteers.

The **numbers of young people** at each after-school session is of course much smaller than in a town-based centre – sometimes just a handful – so the sessions include a mix of age-groups, probably with only one member of staff. In smaller villages the sessions may be only once a fortnight. The model is not fixed, rather it is always adapted to very local resources and needs.

Volunteers from the village or nearby have an important role to play in these sessions, helping the staff in preparing and tidying up the venue, welcoming and supporting the young people. More experienced volunteers may run some sessions without staff present – perhaps every other week. Locally recruited learning mentors, who are often retired professionals, may also provide one-to-one mentoring sessions when staff are not present, following training and robust guidelines about boundaries and safeguarding. Input from student or corporate mentors follows the mentoring model outlined below.

The paid **staff** – probably six of them to reach around 600 children a year across the area – are based at an office within an hour's drive, and they use their own cars to drive to the sessions and transport the equipment. On any date, members of the team may be running services in several different locations. They are insured to give lifts to users and volunteers when required. They organise and deliver services, as well as supervising volunteers.

Assessment of the Outreach model

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model can serve a very dispersed rural area with a wide range of needs. • The model can largely choose which villages to target – so the size of the team can be more easily scaled to the available resources, and those resources can be more accurately targeted at communities with the greatest needs. • The use of local community venues and volunteers promotes local ownership and accessibility. • The more independent role for volunteers gives them opportunities to gain more confidence and skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable venues are not easy to find in country villages. Most community halls are already heavily booked with other activities, and shared use of spaces is often problematic. • Primary school halls are not home-equivalent, and may be off-putting to secondary school pupils who want to grow up, not go back to their childhood school. • Connecting with local stakeholders, reaching local young people, and establishing a local presence, are all more challenging without a permanent local base. • Sessions run by individual members of staff are vulnerable to that member of staff being ill, on holiday, or changing jobs. • Peripatetic lone-working posts are unlikely to be appropriate for the recent graduates who make up the front-line workforce of many Widening Participation projects such as Teach First and Into University. • Unsupervised volunteering carries a range of risks for which careful mitigation will be needed. • Considerable management resources will be needed to set up, support and monitor a potentially large number of small projects across a wide area.

The option of a mobile learning centre was raised and considered during the consultation for this report, but was ultimately not recommended. The idea was that, instead of renting a hall in each rural location, an 'Aspiration Bus' – or a large vehicle similarly named – would park in each village at a regular time every week. The bus would have been specially adapted inside so that local young people could get on board to take part in homework support or mentoring sessions.

Buses do feature in some creative ways in the Widening Participation field. For example, King's College Cambridge has a well-established 'Access Bus' project, in which a minibus takes student ambassadors to schools in the North East. Anglia Ruskin University reached 11,000 schools pupils and others in 2014 with its 'Roadshow Bus', which contains a mini student bedroom and kitchen to give an impression of university life.

However, no instance has been found of a bus providing a regular group learning space, and the proposal faces too many practical and other objections:-

- space on board would be very limited;
- staff would be required to have the additional qualification of a Heavy Goods Vehicle Licence;
- the initial capital outlay on the bus, notably including the adaptation, would quickly lose value through depreciation;
- substantial staff time and expenditure would be needed for garaging, insuring, servicing, fuelling, parking and so on;
- renting community halls would almost certainly be cheaper and reach more young people than a single bus, and multiple buses would multiply their costs;
- a high-profile bus arriving in a village could reinforce a sense of Higher Education being imposed from elsewhere, and in consultation some stakeholders felt that it could be stigmatising for young people to use 'the brainy bus'.

Options for mentoring and on-line learning

On-line learning has the obvious advantage for a dispersed community that it avoids the need for travel. It offers home-based access to a wide range of educational resources, at the same time as developing IT skills, and can enable e-mentoring by university students or corporate graduates.

Some of these advantages may be undermined by the **slow broadband speeds** in many rural areas, which was a complaint raised by several young people in the focus groups for this report. All the focus group participants said that they had access to the internet at home, although they may have felt embarrassed to admit otherwise in front of their peers. Some of their teachers said that they had a mixed experience when they asked pupils to access the internet for homework: in many pupils' households, there was one computer or laptop, priority for accessing which was given to older family members.

IntoUniversity has used on-line mentoring only very occasionally (e.g. Skyping to maintain contact with student mentors on vacation overseas): **face-to-face interaction** is seen as essential to the charity's practice of meeting the social and emotional needs that are bound up with young people's learning needs. These pastoral needs can be even more acute in rural communities, where going to university means moving away from home, often in apparent contradiction of local identity and tradition. Thus, in Section 8 of this report, the overall recommendation for volunteering is that local graduate residents would make ideal learning mentors. Only locally-based mentors can provide locally sensitive, long-term person-to-person support, and act as role models of university graduates living in the rural community.

However, recruiting graduate mentors in rural areas is a largely untried activity which will take considerable time to establish, and there continues to be particular value in mentoring by current university students and/or graduate employees of major businesses. The following **hybrid model** of mentoring – combining on-line and face-to-face contact – has emerged from the consultation for this report, and could work with either of the service models outlined above.

A potential mentoring model

- Student or corporate volunteers are recruited, trained and supervised as per current city-based practice.
- At the start of the course of mentoring (usually over an academic year), up to around 30 mentees and mentors are brought together in one place, probably a large hall, where they all have their first one-to-one meetings at the same time. There may also be some whole-group training, e.g. about general mentoring ground rules or how to use the on-line software. This launch event is likely to be held at the university campus or corporate office, probably on a Saturday, with the young people transported by bus from their rural home communities. Alternatively, it may take place in a school or village hall in the rural locality, with the student or corporate mentors travelling by their own means or brought by bus.
- The subsequent mentoring sessions then take place via Skype or other on-line platforms, following an agreed course of frequency, timing, remit etc. Ideally the young people access the on-line mentoring from a learning centre or homework session provided locally by the programme where it can be supervised and where other support is on hand. However, within appropriate boundaries, mentors and mentees may also use their home computers.
- At the end of the mentoring course, and/or at set times during the course (perhaps once a term), the mentors and mentees are brought together as in the launch session. These face-to-face sessions review progress, reinforce the learning, and provide closure.
- The final session may also include a 'graduation' celebration, also attended by the young people's families.

This model could be commissioned and operational much more quickly than the recruitment of local rural volunteers – for which a strategy is outlined in Section 8 – by building on mentoring practice already established by many universities, charities and businesses. The on-line mentoring charity **The Brightside Trust** has developed particular expertise in education and careers, offering a range of learning frameworks adaptable to specific contexts. From 2015, with funding through HEFCE's Collaborative Outreach Networks, The Brightside Trust will be working with Kent and Medway Progression Federation to pilot an on-line HE access project specifically for rural areas of Kent and Sussex: this may well provide further resources and good practice for the future.

8. An outline strategy for local volunteering

This section explains the value that local volunteers bring to addressing HE access in rural areas, assesses the likely availability of such volunteers, and outlines a strategy for recruiting and supervising them.

The value and role of volunteers

Higher Education access in rural areas almost certainly cannot be addressed without the effective involvement of local volunteers, but the resources needed to recruit and supervise volunteers in dispersed communities should not be under-estimated, and the complexity of innovation and co-ordination required to develop such a service will need to remain the responsibility of salaried staff.

The **roles** that volunteers can play in rural access programmes include:

- assisting in group sessions with young people such as study support sessions or campus visits: for this role, volunteers need the inter-personal skills for working with groups of children and young people, but do not need specific educational or professional training;
- mentoring individual young people in school work or application to university: for this role, volunteers need a good level of education, ideally to graduate level;
- acting as ambassadors for HE institutions: this role is usually for current or past students, or the parents of students;
- governance and strategic links, e.g. as charity trustees or school governors: these roles usually require specific skills, such as finance, law or fundraising, or the ability to act as a representative for others, e.g. for parents, a community or a student body.

Local volunteers bring a **value** that is specifically needed in rural areas:

- Local volunteers root the service in the local community, dispelling concerns about do-gooding outsiders or about university being an urban phenomenon at odds with rural life.
- Local volunteers help create the home-equivalent ethos of the provision: young people can see that volunteers are offering their time because they care, not as a paid job.
- Local volunteers add to the long-term sustainability of the programme, because they are cost-effective and likely to make a long-term commitment to their home neighbourhood, helping reduce the impact of the experience of many disadvantaged rural communities of feeling let down in the past by time-limited interventions.

Availability of volunteers in rural areas

HE access programmes in cities often rely on two sources of volunteers that are much less available in rural areas:

- **Corporate volunteers** are typically recruited from large city-based businesses with substantial numbers of graduate employees and a Corporate Social Responsibility team to co-ordinate the scheme. For example, a partnership with a major City of London accountancy firm provides many of the mentors for Teach First's Futures programme for

urban 6th Forms. Rural areas, by contrast, tend to have small businesses with fewer graduate staff.

- **Student volunteers** tend to be based in cities where most universities are located, and are unlikely to be able to travel to a regular commitment in a rural area. For example, the University of Nottingham's Widening Participation Team successfully recruits students to act as mentors at **Into**University Centres in Nottingham city centre, but, when consulted for this report, commented that they would be reluctant to expect students to make such a commitment even to the city's outer suburbs, and that this would especially be the case for science and medical students, whose study timetables are particularly busy.

To overcome the barrier of travel, Section 7 of this report proposes a **potential service model** in which rural young people are bussed to a university or city-based business at the beginning and end of a course of mentoring, with the interim mentoring contact taking place on line. However, this would not address – and might even undermine – the crucial rural need for a sense of ownership by the local community, and it is clear that **local residents represent both the main challenge and the main opportunity for volunteer recruitment.**

At most of the rural schools consulted for this report, parents or other local residents were acting as volunteers in after-school activities such as sports clubs, scouts and guides. This indicates the availability of **general support volunteers** for study support sessions or campus trips. School staff were doubtful that these volunteers had the educational skills to become **learning mentors**, or that such mentors could be found in their immediate neighbourhoods. Several headteachers commented on the difficulty of recruiting school governors.

However, while each of the visited Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire schools is located in an ex-industrial, working class village or small town with lots of social housing, they are only a few miles from more picturesque villages where many residents are current or retired professionals. On the Kent coast, too, affluent and disadvantaged villages are often adjacent. **The social mix of rural and coastal regions presents a significant, untapped opportunity for harnessing the skills of past graduates to mentor potential future graduates who live nearby.**

The extent to which graduate residents of rural areas might actually engage in volunteering for HE access is necessarily speculative, because of a lack of evidence from existing practice. But **Acorn data** on consumer activity by postcode includes current levels both of volunteering and of regular donation to charity, which is a strong indicator of likelihood to volunteer in the local community (Cabinet Office, 2013).

Tables 2 and 3 show that levels of voluntary charitable activity in the three example localities – which are indicative of disadvantaged rural and coastal areas more generally – match those in the country as a whole: **residents are volunteering and donating in just over a quarter of postcodes.** These levels are maintained (in fact slightly exceeded) even in the home neighbourhoods of pupils at an example school (The Marsh Academy, Kent).

Variations within postcodes, on which Acorn is based, mean that these averages have to be treated with some caution, but the correlation of the local and national figures is clear enough to indicate that there are plenty of residents of disadvantaged rural communities – probably 1 in 4 people – who are willing and able to carry out some sort of voluntary work. And the figure may in fact be considerably higher: in the national sample of the *Community Life Survey*, 44% of respondents had undertaken 'formal volunteering' (Cabinet Office, 2013).

Table 2: Levels of volunteering in example rural localities + for an example school

Average % per postcode from Acorn consumer data 2013

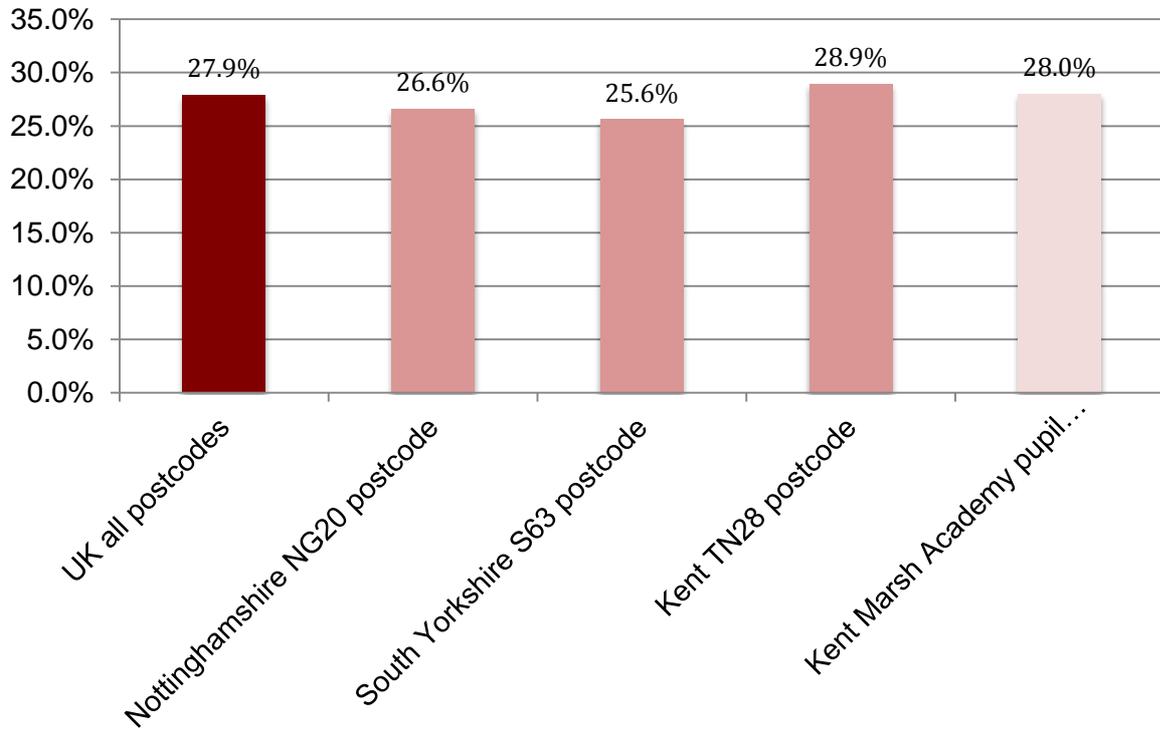
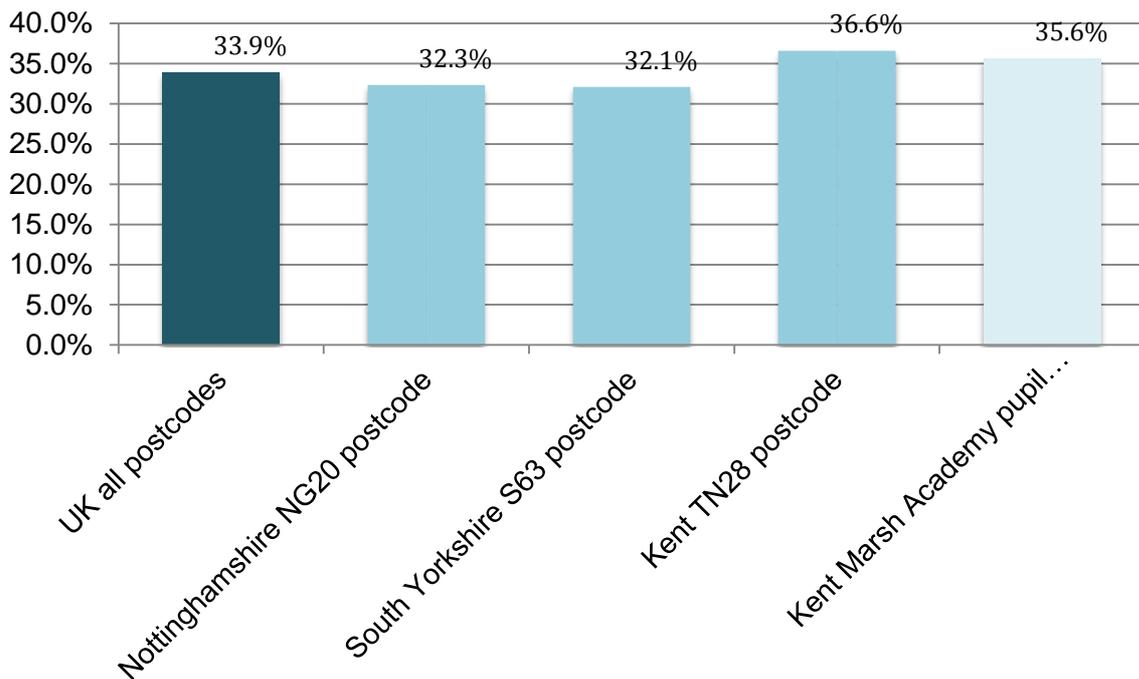


Table 3: Levels of regular donating to charity (a strong indicator of likelihood to volunteer) in example rural localities + an example school

Average % of postcodes from Acorn consumer data 2013



Recruitment and support for local learning mentors

To engage rural residents as voluntary mentors – offering sustained one-to-one educational and pastoral support to individual young people – there are **three key challenges**:-

Challenge (i): moving from a general to a specific role

The most comprehensive and recent research into rural volunteering in the UK has found that rural charities tend to focus on ‘the local community or neighbourhood groups, youth/children, or religion’ and that rural volunteering tends to be in ‘generalist roles’:

‘The findings support the characterisation of rural volunteering as being broad across several roles or activities, while urban volunteering is deeper, focussed on fewer and more specific roles or activities.’ (Woolvin and Rutherford, 2013, pp. 5-6)

Some caution may be needed in applying this Scottish experience to English locations, but it matches the findings of this report that volunteering in rural schools tends to be in such roles as group leisure activities, while educational mentoring is focused in cities.

This suggests that rural communities offer a strong supply of volunteers as support assistants in group activities for HE access, eg. using general practical and social skills to ensure a safe and welcoming atmosphere at homework sessions or on trips to campuses. But it is also likely that there are many local residents willing to volunteer who can bring a higher level of educational and professional experience – as the UK's most comprehensive survey of voluntary action has found:

‘There are clear similarities in the profile of people who get involved in giving time or money. Compared with those who are not involved, these people are more likely to be older, with higher levels of education, in higher-level occupations and actively practising a religion.’ (Cabinet Office, 2013, p.2)

Therefore a central challenge for developing HE access provision in rural areas is to reach these more educated residents, most likely retired, and to attract them to a volunteering role that is probably more specialist than any they have undertaken before, that may be both more rewarding and carry a higher level of responsibility.

Both the Scottish and Cabinet Office research quoted above refer to a link between volunteering and religion. Local churches and other worship groups are likely to be routes for recruiting learning mentors, as well as building community engagement.

Challenge (ii): responding to individual motivation

People's reasons for volunteering are highly individual, often multiple, changeable over time, and dependent on their circumstances, especially their paid employment.

In the national sample of the *Community Life Survey*, a wide range of motivations for formal volunteering was given by the following percentages of respondents:-

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Wanted to improve things/help people | 59% |
| • The cause was really important to me | 40% |
| • Had spare time to do it | 33% |
| • Thought it would give me chance to use my existing skills | 32% |
| • Wanted to meet people/ make friends | 30% |

- It was connected with the needs of my family/friends 26%
- I felt there was a need in my community 26%
- Thought it would give me a chance to learn new skills 25%
- My friends/family did it 23%
- It's part of my philosophy of life to help people 23%
- It's part of my religious belief to help people 16%
- It helps me get on in my career 10%
- I felt there was no-one else to do it 9%
- It gave me a chance to get a recognised qualification 3%
- None of these reasons 2%

(National Council for Voluntary Organisations, *UK Civil Society Almanac 2015*)

The challenge this presents is to tailor recruitment and support as flexibly as possible to individual views and needs.

Challenge (iii): arms-length supervision and support

If paid staff are working across a dispersed area, they may not be able to be present at every local study session – e.g. they may be present every other week. Local volunteers will then need to run services unsupervised at times. Mentoring, too, may not always be able to take place within a supervised group setting.

This offers volunteers the opportunity to use or develop leadership and other higher levels of skill, but it also faces them with increased levels of responsibility. Arms-length or off-site roles carry significant implications for volunteer training, supervision and support, particularly to ensure safeguarding and quality. Staff need to be available for consultation by phone even when they are potentially running services at the same time elsewhere. Insurance premiums will be higher, and detailed operational handbooks will need to be produced and disseminated for the volunteers.

Widening Participation providers whose current work is based mainly in schools or centres will need to undertake major revisions of their procedures and programmes. Good practice models can be adapted from other providers that use volunteers with children and young people, often vulnerable ones – notably those developed through the Cabinet Office's Social Action Fund, which have a specific remit to disseminate their expertise.

The three challenges outline above are surmountable only through volunteering that is **well-resourced** and carefully-matched to specific needs. In the estimated staffing for the potential service models set out in Section 7, it has been assumed that all staff roles will include volunteer support, and that there will be one post specifically for a Volunteer Co-ordinator responsible for recruitment, training, and ongoing supervision.

The following table outlines a strategy for engaging with and resourcing different groups of potential volunteers in rural or dispersed areas:

Rural HE access: volunteer recruitment and roles

Potential volunteer type	Any specific motivation to volunteer	Likely availability	Role/s	Recruitment channels	Assessment
Local 6 th Form students	Add to CV and UCAS statement. Take on a responsible role with potential for future career. Use own experience.	Maximum availability 18 months, in lunch breaks or after school. Needs to be on-site or supervised.	Mentoring or assisting groups sessions. Local role model of achievement & aspiration. Support school learning, up to GCSE. Guidance on subject choices. Probably limited pastoral support.	Through FE and 6 th form colleges, school heads of 6 th form, careers advisers. On-line promotion.	Helps to introduce students to volunteering at a young age. Careful matching required to ensure one pupil can effectively mentor another. Numbers likely to be small. May provide general support at group sessions.
Under-graduates	Add to CV. Add variety to university life. Use own experience.	Likely to be on urban campus, so travel required unless mentoring on line. For 1 or 2 academic years.	Support school learning up to A level. Help with UCAS form. Guidance of subject and university choice. Role model of achievement.	Through university Widening Participation teams or Student Unions. On-line channels.	Link with city-based mentor risks reinforcing the stereotype of university as urban, distant and outside. See Potential Mentoring Model in Section 7 of this report.
Corporate volunteers	Add to CV. Meet Corporate Social Responsibility targets. Add variety to work life. Give back to the community.	Many big businesses based in cities, so travel required unless mentoring on line. Commitment may be disrupted by business priorities.	Support school learning. Careers input. Work-based perspective. Role model of achievement. Potential work experience or use of professional networks to access jobs.	Corporate Social Responsibility or equivalent teams in businesses. Or specialist providers like Employee Volunteering.	Link with city-based mentor risks reinforcing the stereotype of university as urban, distant and outside. See Potential Mentoring Model in Section 7 of this report.
Recent graduates at home looking for work	Add to CV. Keep busy while unemployed. Re-connect with home community.	Likely to be short term and may end suddenly.	As for undergraduates above, except may be in short bursts.	Advertise in local media, especially local Facebook and Twitter profiles.	Likely to be appropriate mainly as assistants in group sessions, so that individual users do not feel let down if volunteering ends.
Graduate professionals living locally	Own children going through similar process. Give back to local community.	Limited availability if commuting to city-based job or based in a small local business: available	Support school-learning and university choices. Role model of local graduate employment.	Advertise in local press and through local organisations, eg. places of worship.	An ideal role model, but likely to have very limited availability.

Potential volunteer type	Any specific motivation to volunteer	Likely availability	Role/s	Recruitment channels	Assessment
	Add to CV. Use own experience.	weekends or late evenings only.	Potential work experience and links to local jobs.		
Non-graduates living locally	Own children going through similar process. Meet people and connect with local community. May have religious or ethical motivation. Add to CV.	Non-graduate jobs less likely to involve a commute, so should have more flexible hours for volunteering.	Help provide welcome, behaviour management and pastoral support in group sessions. Support school learning, depending on own educational attainment. Link to local work experience and apprenticeships.	Word of mouth. Through local schools and other organisations, eg. places of worship. Advertise in local press.	Essential support volunteers for running locally based study or homework sessions, and accompanying campus visits. Unlikely to be appropriate as learning mentors.
Graduate professionals who have retired locally	Sense of purpose in retirement. Keep intellectually active. Keep or resume contact with younger generation. Religious or ethical motivation. Own grandchildren going through this process.	Available term-time daytimes – depending on caring and other	One-to-one or group support. Learning support – likely to be two-way, as mentor learns about modern schooling. Reflections on long-term career and life choices. Life experience to offer pastoral support.	Advertise in local newspaper. Through local resources, eg. adult education classes, clubs and places of worship. Word of mouth.	Retired professionals can bring the ideal combination of educational and pastoral input needed to support HE access in rural areas, and are likely to be more available than any other type of volunteer, but they would require major innovations in volunteer recruitment and support.

9. Bibliography and resources

This section lists sources used in the body of the report, together with research, policy and other publications identified during the literature survey, and a small selection of organisations that may be able to provide further information. The shortage of literature or resources on HE access specifically in rural areas means that the information is divided into the three constituent parts of the topic – HE access generally, rural needs generally, and volunteering.

Higher Education access

Publications

Association of Teachers and Lecturers *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural Areas* (2008)
"Whilst the use of ICT might represent a cost-effective means that goes some way towards tackling issues of remoteness and practicality, ATL believes that ICT provision in itself cannot address the underlying socio-economic issues of social exclusion and deprivation in rural communities."

Dunworth, F. and Chapman, V. *Collaboration to Widen Participation in Rural and Coastal Contexts* (2014, unpublished paper obtainable from the Kent and Medway Progression Federation)

Harrison, N. and Hatt, S. *Disadvantaged Learners* (University of the West of England, 2010; in Higher Education Quarterly, 64 (1))
Examines the targeting of widening participation activity in the UK using demographic data from South West England.

Higher Education Funding Council *POLAR3: Young Participation Rates in Higher Education* (HEFCE, 2012)

Higher Education Funding Council *Delivering Opportunities for Students and Maximising Their Success: Evidence for Policy and Practice 2015-2020* (HEFCE, July 2015).

Hillier, Y. et al *Progression to Post-16 Education and Training in Hastings* (University of Brighton and HEFCE, 2010)
Research on educational participation in a disadvantaged coastal town.

Into University *Impact Report 2015* (IntoUniversity, 2015)

Moore, J., Sanders, J. and Higham, L. *Literature Review of Research into Widening Participation in Higher Education* (Report to HEFCE and OFFA, 2013)

Office For Fair Access *Strategic Plan 2015-20* (Offa, 2015)

Ofsted *Key Stage 4 & 5 Destination Measures* (Department for Education, June 2014)

Speilhofer, T., Golden, S. and Evans, K. *Young People's Aspirations in Rural Areas* (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2011)
"Young people eligible for higher education may not want to move away and decide not to pursue this route because there is a lack of locally available jobs requiring a university degree."

Teach First *Impact Report* (Teach First, 2014)

Universities Scotland *Action on Access Recommendations to achieve further progress on widening access to higher education in Scotland* (Universities Scotland, 2014)

Wilkinson, S. and Lane, K. *Rural and Coastal Participation in Higher Education* (2010, unpublished report, University of East Anglia, Centre for Applied Research in Education).
Evaluation of the Aim Higher programme in Norfolk.

Education organisations

- The Bridge Group <http://www.thebridgegroup.org.uk/about/>
An independent, not for profit, policy association promoting social mobility through higher education.
- The Brightside Trust <http://www.thebrightsidetrust.org/who-we-are/>
A charity that helps young people access education and career pathways especially through online mentoring.
- The Brilliant Club <http://www.thebrilliantclub.org>
A charity aiming to widening access to universities for outstanding pupils from non-selective state schools, especially through placing graduate students in those schools.
- CUREE (Centre for the Use of Research & Evidence in Education) <http://www.curee.co.uk>
An independent centre of expertise in evidence-based practice in all sectors of education.
- Education Endowment Foundation <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk>
A grant-making charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement.
- Fair Education Alliance <http://www.faireducation.org.uk>
A coalition working to tackle educational inequality.
- HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council) <http://www.hefce.ac.uk>
Government agency which funds and regulates universities and colleges in England, as well as carrying out data and analysis and developing policy.
- HELOA (Higher Education Liaison Officers Association) <http://www.heloa.ac.uk/about/>
Professional organisation of Higher Education staff.
- HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) <https://www.hesa.ac.uk>
Government-sponsored agency for UK-wide data on higher education.
- IntoUniversity <http://intouniversity.org>
A charity that provides local learning centres where young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to attain either a university place or another chosen aspiration.
- The National Education Trust <http://www.nationaleducationtrust.net>
A charitable foundation dedicated to the promotion and sharing of excellent practice and innovation in education.
- NEON (National Education Opportunities Network) <http://www.educationopportunities.co.uk>
Professional organisation supporting those involved in widening access to higher education.

- NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) <https://www.nfer.ac.uk>
A charity working to provide evidence that improves education and learning and as a result the lives of learners.
- OFFA (The Office for Fair Access) <https://www.offa.org.uk>
The independent regulator of fair access to higher education in England.
- Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>
Government agency that inspects and regulates services that care for children, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.
- The Russell Group <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk>
Association of 24 leading UK universities.
- The Sutton Trust <http://www.suttontrust.com/about-us/us/>
A think-tank and funder of projects and research, aiming to improve social mobility through education.
- Teach First <http://www.teachfirst.org.uk>
A charity that aims to end inequality in education by building a community of exceptional leaders who create change within classrooms, schools and across society.
- Universities UK <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx>
Membership organisation of executive leaders of universities.

Rural, coastal and dispersed communities

Publications

Burgess, S. *Barriers to Education, Employment and Training for Young People in Rural Areas* (Commission for Rural Communities, 2012)

Centre for Social Justice *Turning the Tide: Social Justice in Five Seaside Towns* (2013) <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/Turning-the-Tide.pdf>

Examines data from Blackpool, Clacton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Margate and Rhyl, including evidence that "coastal towns are now amongst the most educationally deprived parts of the country".

Champion, T. and Shepherd, J. *Demographic Change in Rural England* (Rural Evidence Research Centre, 2006)

Midgely, J. and Bradshaw, R. *Should I Stay or Should I Go? Rural Youth Transitions* (Commission for Rural Communities, 2006)

Does not look specifically at HE, but concludes that inadequate access to education and training in rural areas may lead young people to move to cities.

Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion and JH Research *Deprivation in Rural Areas: Quantitative Analysis and Socio-Economic Classification* (OCSI, 2008)

Rolfe, H. *Rural Opportunities: A Study of Work-Related Learning Opportunities in the Rural Economy for Young People Aged 14-19* (NESTA, undated)

Shucksmith, M. *Exclusive Countryside: Social Inclusion and Regeneration in Rural Areas* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000)

Storey, P. and Brannen, J. *Young People and Transport in Rural Areas* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000)

40% of 15-16-year-olds report that transport issues play a part in their decisions about post-16 education.

Rural organisations

- ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) <http://www.acre.org.uk>
National association of rural community councils.
- Campaign to Protect Rural England <http://www.cpre.org.uk>
Campaigning organisation aiming to protect, promote and enhance towns and countryside as places to live, work and enjoy.
- Rural Community Network <http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org>
Network of organisations working on poverty and inequality in rural communities in Northern Ireland.

Volunteering

Publications

Cabinet Office *Giving of Time and Money: Findings of the 2012-13 Community Life Survey* (Cabinet Office, 2013).

Cabinet Office *Social Action: Harnessing the Potential - A Discussion Paper* (Cabinet Office, June 2015)

Garringer, M. *Web Forum: Does Mentoring Work in Rural Areas?* (chronicle.umbmentoring.org, 2014)

Institute of Volunteering Research *Pathways through Participation* (National Council of Voluntary Organisations, 2011).

3-year study of volunteering and other participation in 3 areas: inner city Leeds, suburban Enfield and rural Suffolk.

Russell, J. *Making Volunteering Easier: the Story of Environmental Volunteering in South West England* (Institute of Volunteering Research, 2009)

Detailed case study of rural volunteering (in the environment field).

Woolvin, M. and Rutherford, A. *Volunteering and Public Service Reform in Rural Scotland* (Rural Policy Centre, Scotland's Rural College, 2013)

York, F. and Henderson, L. Rural and Remote Students, the arts and local history: creative encounters through Web-based learning and e-mentoring (Proceedings of the IADIS International Conference, Madrid, 2004).

Evaluation of an American distance learning programme.

Volunteering organisations

- Centre for Social Action <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/centre-for-social-action-funding>
A unit within the Government's Cabinet Office aiming to identify and accelerate the development and spread of high impact social action initiatives.
- Institute for Volunteering Research <http://www.ivr.org.uk>
Specialist research and consultancy agency focusing on volunteering.
- Volunteering England <http://www.volunteering.org.uk>
Charity and membership organisation supporting and enabling volunteering.
- Volunteer Scotland <http://www.volunteerscotland.net>
National centre for volunteering in Scotland.

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- NEON
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The Different Challenges of Urban and Rural Communities

From presentation by Kent & Medway Progression Federation, courtesy of Dr Felicity Dunworth

URBAN	RURAL AND COASTAL
Concentrated population	Dispersed population
Organised and varied transport links	More reliance upon private transport
Other infrastructure is available – shops, youth centres, sports facilities	Very little infrastructure
Several HE providers, often competing	Few or no universities, often in small towns, less likely to compete, though competition may come from adjacent urban areas
A range of businesses, including wealthy multinationals, with a remit to offer support to challenged schools	Very little big business – a dominance of small to medium enterprises with no resource to offer support. ‘There’s always the health service’ mentality.
A range of third sector organisations available to supplement state WP activities	Third sector business models are unusually not suited to the demographic and geographical conditions of dispersed communities
A highly mobile population	A strong attachment to place, to local communities in local families.
A diverse age range of population	An increasingly aged population. Counter-urbanisation
Ethnic diversity	White British local community with some significant immigration from specific hard-to-track European groups
Though employment prospects for young people everywhere are diminished, urban centres tend to present a range of opportunities to work with a mix of larger and smaller companies offering starter jobs.	Apart from public sector employers, agriculture and some shipping, mostly SMEs serving tourist and service industries, often with no prospects for promotion and much sessional and zero hours work. Fewer work experience opportunities