



Helping to inform and engender better rural policy making by:

- **Providing independent research and evidence**
- **Supporting rural information exchange**
- **Building a network of rural stakeholders**

Contact us: info@ruralengland.org

State of Rural Services 2018

What is it? Why produce it?

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

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



A rural exploration of the state of:

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

**Download the full report at:
<https://ruralengland.org>**

Many services contracting in rural areas

Most notably those delivered by local government
which are discretionary

Subsidised bus services:

- **Four rural shires no longer subsidise any bus routes**
- **202 shire bus routes were withdrawn and 191 scaled back in 2016/17**
- **Bus passenger numbers fell (-7%) from 2014 to 2016 in predominantly rural areas**

Youth clubs or centres:

- **Shire local government spend on young people's services down 38% in three years**
- **Many local authorities no longer fund youth clubs**
- **Some youth clubs adapted and survive, whilst others have closed**

Public funding for services

Nearly always lower in rural than in urban areas

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

Based on spend per resident in 2017/18.
Predominantly rural areas compared
with predominantly urban areas.

Bus subsidy	39% less
Discretionary concessionary fares	78% less
Public health	36% less
Library services	25% less

Digital connectivity

Rural coverage is improving, but it still lags behind

Broadband (fixed line):

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

Mobile networks:

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

Public health outcomes

Do services meet the needs of rural young people?

Young people in rural areas score better than average on:

- + School exclusions
- + Emotional and mental health needs

Young people in rural areas score worse than average on:

- Risky behaviours
- Alcohol consumption
- Smoking
- Being bullied

Community-run rural services

High expectations of communities and volunteers

Community-run Shops

- about 300/nearly all rural

Community-managed Libraries

- 10% libraries/most rural

Community Transport Schemes

- 52% mainly serve rural

Volunteer-run Youth Clubs

- 12% rural based

Can deliver benefits:

- Broader service offer
- Better opening times

But there can be risks:

- Volunteer capacity limits
- Places lacking volunteers with skills and time
- Sustainability, where grant-dependent

Widening the service offer, co-location and service hubs

Rural convenience stores:

53% give cash back

44% host an ATM

32% have a PO counter

Community-run shops:

43% include a cafe

Community-run libraries:

25% offer IT access

19% have a room for hire

17% host cultural events

Benefits likely to include:

- **Cost savings for the service providers**
- **Increased footfall at the service facility**
- **Added convenience for the service users**

Rural services evidence base: Four key gaps have been identified

- 1) Accessibility statistics – the existing access data measures too narrow a range of services
- 2) Big trends – to think through rural implications of more online services, struggling high streets, an ageing population, etc
- 3) Policy reforms – to evaluate rural impacts e.g. NHS Sustainability & Transformation Plans
- 4) User impacts – to find out what rural users do if bus routes disappear, bank branches close, etc

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

