

Study of the Relative Costs Associated with Delivering the Connexions Service in Rural and Urban areas

P.N. Bradley and P.R. Barratt

University of Hull

Research Report

No 390

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A full list of contents and meetings is shown in Appendix 1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the Study

The objective of this study was to determine if the costs of delivering the Connexions Service differ between urban and rural Partnerships. In this context we have considered a range of common and specific cost factors which affect the Connexions Service. The research also involved an analysis of a range of definitions of rurality, relevant to the Connexions Service. Pre-existing and new measures of rurality have been applied to each of the 47 Connexions Partnerships.

In recent years there has been a growing awareness and concern regarding rural issues. This stems in part from the publication of the Rural White Paper in November 2000 and the need to rural proof all relevant policy decisions. Much of the concern centres around the decline, and associated quality, of essential rural services.

Connexions Partnerships are currently funded via a formula that is based on demographics, with an additional weighting component for a range of particular needs. These are related to poor educational attainment, non-engagement in training, unemployment and social security claims. The funding formula does not specifically recognise geographical dispersion and in this sense it is 'blind' to the effects of concentration and/or dispersion of the client base.

A precise definition of costs has proven difficult for several reasons. At the present time a universal, standardised tracking and monitoring system has not yet been fully implemented. This has made the collection of a consistent set of data difficult. In addition, there is no single or necessarily 'most effective' model for delivering the Connexions Service. Different Partnerships have developed different approaches, concordant with local circumstances. This again has made comparison difficult.

Until a standardised data management system is fully implemented and a more consistent set of Connexions Partnership structures emerges, cross-Partnership comparisons based on quantitative measures will remain difficult.

Research Methods

This study utilised a range of methods within three research phases. These included interviews with key staff across a range of Partnerships, a workshop involving representatives from a number of Connexions Partnerships who expressed a wish to participate in the study, sourcing data from within individual Partnerships and from the Connexions Service National Unit and accessing a range of documentary sources from within the DfES and from related agencies. Diaries and logbooks from selected delivery staff from 3 Partnerships also informed the study. From these sources a number of cost factors were developed. These included delivery staff unit costs, travel costs, premises costs, management and data collection costs, and income from sources other than the Connexions Service National Unit grant. Where appropriate, quantitative analysis was undertaken on the data collected. Personal Advisor case studies and workshops provided a more holistic and inclusive insight into frontline service delivery costs and issues. More intensive data collection was pursued through a smaller sample of mixed rural and urban and urban Partnerships.

The Main Findings of the Report

RURALITY

For the Connexions Service, the most useful measure of the rural-urban gradient is based on the population density (by LEA) of the 13-19 year-old client base (Section 3.3.1).

However, neither this measure, nor any other that we have examined, can provide a useable cut-off point between rural and urban situations. Rather, there is a long gradient, from sparsely populated, relatively remote Partnerships such as Connexions Cumbria and Northumberland, through a large group of mixed rural-urban Partnerships, to an urban extreme, in which the metropolitan Partnerships such as Connexions London South and The Black Country are located (Section 3.3.1).

The majority of Connexions Partnerships contain a mix of urban and rural areas. These represent the norm which, ipso facto, is addressed by the current funding formula. If the funding formula were to be adjusted through the addition of a rural 'element', very few Partnerships would actually benefit. With one or two exceptions at the extreme of the range, resources would merely be re-allocated within the same central group.

COST DIFFERENCES BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Although a relatively large number of cost elements were highlighted in early discussions and have been investigated, few of these are both potentially significant and measurable under current conditions (Sections 2.1.1; 4.1). This study includes substantial analysis of those deemed potentially significant.

Data regarding the cost of premises is very limited, but from the largely qualitative data that is available, we believe that economies of scale tend to benefit urban situations, even if the costs per square metre are higher than in rural areas (Sections 7.1.4; 7.2.5; 7.3.5). The 'efficiency' of use of rural outreach centres is likely to be lower, particularly where part-time opening is the norm. In these circumstances, unit costs are higher. Data from Connexions Cornwall shows that in this situation and when assessed against walk-in contacts, rural costs are higher. Commentary from the logbook survey also supports this observation.

The availability of income from sources other than the Connexions Service National Unit grant was repeatedly suggested by Connexions Partnerships to be lesser in rural areas. However, our analysis of available data, though only from Connexions Partnership budgets, does not support this view (Section 5.1). The Partnerships for which we had budget data were ranked in terms of their percentage of non-Connexions Service National Unit finance and no distinguishable pattern between rural and urban Partnerships emerged.

Some of the more rural Partnerships, which tend to be smaller (in terms of population), suggested that they bear a disproportionate cost in meeting core administrative costs, in particular the costs of tracking, monitoring and other data gathering processes. The suggestion is that these activities constitute a fixed cost regardless of the size of Connexions Partnerships. In practice, rural Partnerships do tend to be smaller than urban ones, although there are exceptions (Section 5.3).

We have compared Partnership size (as determined by the allocation resulting from the funding formula) to the population density of 13-19 year-olds (as a measure of rurality) to determine if, for rural Partnerships, this cost is disproportionate. Using these measures, results suggest that there is some truth in this assertion (Section 5.3). We believe these costs to be significant for a limited number of rural Partnerships and that it is an issue that might warrant closer attention in the next funding formula review.

The quantitative data obtained for travel costs was partial. However, it is supported by qualitative information, logbook information and budget data. There is indicative evidence of costs specific to both rural and urban areas and the overall situation is complicated by the use of differing delivery methods. For example, logbook data suggests that travel times need not always be greater in rural Partnerships, whilst urban areas tend to face unique problems such as congestion and parking difficulties. On balance, the available data points to extra costs for the rural delivery of the Connexions Service (Section 5.5). In the Partnerships for which we have comparable data from both rural and urban sectors, rural costs are clearly higher than urban costs. However, on the evidence we have gathered, it is noted that travel costs only account for between 1.7 and 4.4 per cent of the total Connexions Service National Unit allocation.

Although a proxy measure rather than a direct costs item, evidence concerning delivery staff caseloads and intervention ratios suggests that clients in rural Partnerships and rural sub-regions within mixed Partnerships are less intensively served than their urban counterparts (Sections 5.2; 5.6). In general, and on a per capita or per need basis, fewer personal advisors are assigned to rural areas and contact rates are lower than in urban settings. This may well reflect the use of approaches to delivering the service in rural areas that rely less on direct Personal Advisor contact than is the norm in other locations. For example, there may be increased provision of ICT based resources. Alternatively, it is possible that allocative decisions within Partnerships reflect a perception that more 'effective' service can be delivered where clients are concentrated.

Conclusions

Our general conclusions must remain tentative, because of the fragmentary and partial nature of the data that we have been able to access. To a certain extent these limitations result from the fact that the Connexions Service has only been operational for a short time, but the lack of consistency in the data is also a consequence of the different ways in which it is held across Partnerships. In establishing the Partnerships, national guidelines deliberately avoided a standardised 'blueprint' approach; instead promoting the view that local circumstances and local decisions should determine the specific structure and operational procedure for each. In the light of these differences and for some cases, retrieval of key information has been possible. In others, the data cannot easily be identified and extracted. These differences are due in part to the different models of delivery adopted by Partnerships. A second constraint is that a standardised tracking and monitoring system has not yet been fully implemented. Once this is achieved, consistent and comparable data may be more easily accessible.

The study found that many Partnership staff perceived the cost of rural service delivery to be higher than urban service delivery. For many of the issues that have been raised and which potentially

increase the cost of rural Connexions Service delivery, the evidence base was qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. Partnerships were able to identify a number of cost factors and argue a case for them, but quantitative data was not always available. In other cases, the evidence suggested that there were no significant cost differentials. However, for a small number of Partnerships and in relation to a limited numbers of factors, these costs do seem to be real and would therefore warrant further investigation – but only when adequate data becomes available and when genuine and effective comparisons can be made. This would depend on a standardised data gathering system and a sufficient period of time for the full network of Partnerships to have 'bedded down' and stabilised their delivery operations.

It may be the case that the widely-held perceptions about high rural costs (not all of which are considered valid here) are, in effect, distorting the allocation of resources within individual Partnerships. The possibility exists that Partnerships perceive a greater effectiveness of delivery in 'concentrated' urban settings and adjust their allocation of resources accordingly. In this scenario, more can be achieved for the same resources in urban contexts.

Despite a limitation in the availability of quantitative information, we consider it important that the views of all respondent Partnerships are expressed. Therefore all the issues and opinions raised during the interviews and workshops have been detailed within the contents of the study. However, from the evidence available to the study, we believe that significant costs differences are only indicated in relation to a limited numbers of cost factors. In particular, we believe that there may be significant and potentially measurable rural-urban costs differences in relation to fixed core management functions and travel costs.

It is clear that the majority of Partnerships include both urban and rural components, or are profoundly urban. As mixed urban-rural Partnerships are therefore the norm, it follows that adding a rural component to the funding formula would have little if any benefit for all but a small number of the most rural Partnerships.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The brief for this study was to establish the comparative costs of delivering the Connexions Service in rural and urban settings, with a more specific focus upon the costs associated with rural service delivery. The aim of the study is to inform policy response to the widely-expressed view that it costs more to deliver the Connexions Service in rural areas. In pursuing this aim the study considers definitions of rurality as are relevant to the operation of the Connexions Service, and identifies, and assesses the scale and significance of specific issues and costs associated with delivering the Connexions Service in both rural and urban areas.

In recent years there has been a growing awareness and concern regarding rural issues. This stems in part from the publication of the Rural White Paper¹ and the need to rural proof all relevant policy decisions. Much of the concern centres around the decline and associated quality of essential rural services. Consequently, as Connexions wishes to offer a universal service to all young people between the ages of 13 to 19, it is essential that it recognises and acts upon issues related to rurality as they may affect the delivery of Connexions service.

This study of the relative costs associated with delivering the Connexions Service in rural and urban areas represents part of the DfES's overall strategy for evaluating the Connexions Service. The Connexions Service has been introduced in part as a result and in response to the work of the Social Exclusion Unit and the 'Bridging the Gap' Report². A key task is to address problems in the established support systems for 13-19 year-olds, especially those with multiple and profound needs. The Connexions Service intends to raise aspirations and the participation of all young people, but especially those at risk of underachievement and social exclusion. The Service is built upon the idea of coherent multi-agency working, through which a range of services are made available in a 'non-intimidating way', within a variety of outlets which are accessible to young people.

The Connexions Service is made up of 47 Connexions Partnerships, one for each Learning Skills Council area. The majority of these are located or part located in rural areas. Therefore an element of rural service delivery represents the norm.

The Connexions Service National Unit funding formula allocates resources to Partnerships on the basis of need in terms of the actual numbers of 13 to 19 year-olds, with an additional weighting for

1 *"Our Countryside: the future. A fair deal for rural England"* Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, November 2000

2 *"Bridging The Gap: New Opportunities For 16-18 Year Olds Not In Education, Employment or Training"*, The Social Exclusion Unit, 1999

those with specific needs. However, it has been suggested that the delivery of the Connexions Service within Partnerships with a predominantly rural character involves increased costs. For example, in a response made to the Connexions Service Funding Consultation Document³ one Partnership stated, “rurality and scarcity greatly increase costs of service delivery especially where service delivery is based upon reaching out to the hardest to help and providing an in-depth service”. Furthermore, it has been argued that in rural areas deprivation is hidden and hence not fully accounted for by the funding formula. Connexions Partnerships which service an extended rural hinterland from a few urban centres would be most affected.

The rationale for this study can be found in two documents: ‘Lessons Learned from the Connexions Pilots’⁴ and the ‘Connexions Service Funding Consultation’ (Connexions, 2001). These publications raised many issues regarding the potential problems and costs faced during the delivery of the Connexions Service in rural areas. Dickinson (2001:231) arrived at the following conclusions concerning rural issues:

“Some rural issues have resonance in urban areas but there are additional issues to be faced.

The main issue was transport. Young people living in isolated communities were dependent on public transport, which was often infrequent and expensive in the daytime. In the evening non-existent.

Education and training opportunities, especially post-16, can involve much travel or young people having to move away from home, which some are reluctant to do. Support services are also difficult to access for the same reasons.

Employment opportunities in rural areas can be scarce or seasonal. Many are low paid and do not include training.

Lack of access and opportunities can also lead to low aspirations, which can be a vicious circle affecting confidence and motivation to access any opportunities that are available.

Issues of access and opportunity were further compounded if the young person faces additional barriers, such as, poor basic skills, low motivation or a disability.

There were many support projects initiated in rural areas that address particular rural issues e.g. isolation, but they need to be sustained.

Lack of potential sites in isolated areas. There may not be appropriate sites to deliver services from, even if they were available ...”

3 “Connexions Service Funding Consultation: A Report on Partners Views on the Consultation Paper”, CSNU, June 2001-page 15.

4 “Lessons Learned from the Connexions Pilots” Dickenson, 2001

From these observations a number of recommendations were put forward, including the need for more research on the implications of delivering the Connexions Service in rural areas. This study represents part of the DfES's strategy to fulfil this recommendation.

The Connexions Service Funding Consultation was produced to allow Connexions Partnerships and a wide range of other stakeholders to comment on issues surrounding the funding of Connexions. The respondents who supported the case for rural weighting to cover higher costs of delivery put forward several reasons, including:

- Rural transport costs
- 'Dead staff time' lost in travel
- Paucity of provision
- Recruitment difficulties
- Population scarcity
- Diseconomies of scale

Furthermore it was suggested that 'hidden rural deprivation' and issues concerning rural access should be included as a proxy in the funding formula.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilised a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess the potential cost differences of delivering the Connexions Service in urban and rural locations. The research was structured in three phases:

Phase One Definition of rurality and the establishment of the basic cost factors which differentiate rural England from its urban counterpart as relevant to the Connexions Service.

Phase Two Application of rurality index to target rural Connexions Partnerships: detailed cost analysis of a targeted sample.

Phase Three Final analysis and report generation.

2.1. Phase One

An initial workshop was held at the DfES Sheffield offices, attended by representatives – from a number of the more rural Partnerships – who had expressed an interest in contributing to the study. In addition, preliminary interviews were conducted with a small number of Connexions Partnerships from across the rural - urban gradient, including one at the urban end of the spectrum (The Black Country) two from the 'mixed' set in the middle (Cheshire and Warrington, and Humber) and one from the rural extreme (Cumbria). The purpose of these interviews was to discuss issues of cost concerning service delivery in both rural and urban areas. Additionally, these sessions aimed to determine the nature and scope of information obtainable from the different Connexions Partnerships. This was intended to help in the definition of cost factors which could help to identify rural - urban cost differences. These could then be carried over to the Phase 2 research stage.

2.1.1 COST FACTORS

To aid the process of measuring differing rural and urban costs in a meaningful manner, at the end of Phase 1 a number of cost factors were targeted. These were presented to the steering group and expert panel members for further consideration. The cost factors that emerged from Phase 1 interviews and wider research are discussed below, with a consideration of the relative methodological advantages and disadvantages of each.

Personal Advisor unit costs

Consultation with the steering group and Connexions Partnerships suggested the generation of a proxy unit cost for delivery staff interventions. This was to be based upon the ratio of delivery staff to the numbers of interventions they perform. Tracking data from the different Connexions Partnerships was to be used for this. During this process it was recognised that delivery staff and types of interventions differ, making it potentially possible to identify the differences in delivery staff - intervention ratios with Priority 1, 2 and 3 clients. Consequently, if the issues raised by the rural Partnerships are verifiable – such as increased travelling times, problems of access to a sparse population, and less 'efficient' visits due to smaller school sizes and smaller group work sessions – it can be assumed that delivery staff based in rural areas cannot service the equivalent numbers of clients that their urban counterparts. However, a number of disadvantages with this technique can be raised concerning the quality and standardised nature of the tracking systems currently being used. Additionally different service models operating across the country may not be directly comparable. Furthermore, delivery staff often have generic roles servicing clients from all Priority groups in differing numbers and locations.

Travel expenses

Travel expenses were repeatedly claimed to be higher in rural areas, both for the client and Connexions Service staff. By examining the travel claims of the differing Connexions Partnerships we were able to establish a cost differential and a correlation between rurality and travel claims. The disadvantages of this method included differing methods of collecting data, differing amounts paid for mileage, and the fact that the data often included all Connexions Staff rather than just service delivery staff. Additionally, meetings with urban Connexions Partnerships suggested that although mileage may be higher in rural areas, urban travel may take a similar time due to congestion on city roads.

Setting up and maintaining Partnerships

The cost associated with setting up and maintaining Partnerships was one of the major issues to emerge from the Sheffield workshop. Rural Partnerships argued that the costs of travelling and the time spent in arranging and conducting Partnership meetings were very significant. Because of the distances to travel and the time involved for all members of a Partnership, meetings were difficult and costly to arrange. However, counter to this, urban Partnerships have suggested that they often have a greater number of partners and a busier schedule, which also makes meetings hard and costly to conduct.

Mobile phone costs

Rural Partnerships suggested that mobile phone costs were higher in their regions due to increased time spent out of the office travelling, in schools and conducting outreach work. However, as urban Partnerships also argued that mobile costs were high due to outreach work this cost factor was left out of any further analysis.

Personal Advisor case studies

It was decided that a qualitative study of the costs associated with Connexions Service delivery would illustrate the costs of service delivery in rural and urban areas. This study was conducted over a one week period and involved a range of delivery staff from differing Connexions Services across the rural-urban gradient. The following list identifies the elements included in the diary format to assess costs – in terms of time, effort and money: travelling times, mileage, time with client, type of client, meeting type (a brief description of meeting and outcomes), the specific role of the Personal Advisor, the type of Personal Advisor, time spent conducting administrative work and brokering, liaisons with other agencies, costs of buses and taxis, costs incurred by the Personal Advisor, costs incurred by the client, and whether the client attended or the meeting was cancelled (see appendix 3 for sample delivery staff logbook).

Cost of delivering planning guidance as a proportion of the available budget

Many Partnerships in rural areas have suggested that the proportion of the resource funding spent fulfilling core administrative tasks, takes a disproportionate amount of resources away from service delivery. It is argued that this is not accounted for by the current funding formula, which is based on demographic parameters rather than the costs of core administration.

Internal comparisons of costs

For those Connexions Partnerships which incorporate both urban and rural zones, budget comparisons of budgets for similar activities across both urban and rural areas will expose urban-rural cost differentials. For example, a project was undertaken on our behalf by one Connexions Partnership with four multi-agency teams operating in its rural and urban regions to determine the differential costs involved. It was concluded that by working with mixed urban-rural Connexions Partnerships we would gain a more valid representation as they are unlikely to benefit from any changes to the funding formula on a rural-urban basis.

2.2. Phase Two

In Phase 2 the Connexions Partnership sample size was extended to nine Partnerships. Using the cost measures established during the Phase 1 interviews, a series of more detailed discussions with Connexions Partnership staff were conducted. Interviews were conducted with key Connexions Partnership management and in certain cases delivery personnel. These interviews were guided by topics derived from the Phase 1 interviews and wider research.

The interviews were also used to source the secondary data required for the cost analysis. However, there was not always sufficient time to collect all the secondary data by these means. Thus, after the initial interviews, further contacts were often conducted via the phone and e-mail to request and collect data. Although specific quantified costs were sought from the sampled Connexions Partnerships they were not always able to deliver consistent and comparable data for a variety of reasons. Firstly, there were difficulties due to the fact that the Connexions Service has only been operational for just a short time. Thus not all Partnerships have fully functional tracking systems nor are they fully staffed, having not achieved a full service delivery infrastructure. Secondly, the use of the sub-contracting model by some Connexions Partnerships was problematic for data collection, as Partnerships had to seek information from their various sub-contractors, who were not always compliant. Furthermore, currently Connexions Partnerships are using several different systems for collecting and representing tracking data making comparisons difficult. This problem will be overcome in the future when the Connexions Service National Unit implements a standardised Connexions Customer Information System (CCIS). Additionally, due to regional differences in the collection of travel data, including differing mileage payments and standardised journey payments, comparisons between Connexions Partnerships, and within Connexions Partnerships with a number of subcontractors, were not always possible.

The consequences of these difficulties meant that much of the evidence of potential costs differences was fragmentary. Much of the data was only directly relevant to the Connexions Partnership it was derived from. However, it is considered that the evidence gathered as a whole will be indicative of the cost differences present in rural and urban Partnerships across England.

2.2.1. SAMPLE SELECTION

The sample Connexions Partnerships selected for this study were chosen in consultation with the Steering Group according to several purposive factors. Firstly, it was important that the Connexions Partnerships were part of the 'first phase' of Connexions start-ups from April and September 2001. This was deemed relevant as these Partnerships have more developed and mature management and service delivery structures, and thus have more experience of the costs, problems and advantages

associated with the delivery of the Connexions Partnership in rural and urban areas. Additionally, the early work conducted on the definitions of rurality as relevant to the Connexions Service was utilised to select Connexions Partnerships with varied rural to urban characteristics to ensure a spread of representation. Lastly, we included several Connexions Partnerships which had significant rural and urban subregions. This allowed us to make internal comparisons of cost within a single Connexions Partnership to ensure costs were not distorted by different data recording practices. Furthermore as a mixture of rural and urban areas is the norm for Connexions Partnerships it was hoped we would receive an unbiased response in terms of the costs, problems and advantages of delivering the Connexions Service in the differing regions of their Partnerships.

In addition to the Partnerships sampled in Phases 1 and 2, a number of other Partnerships have been involved in the study. This included five representatives who attended the Sheffield workshop, which was held as part of the Phase 1 initial scoping activity to raise our awareness of the issues relevant to the study. Contact was maintained with these Partnerships and valuable contributions made.

2.3. Phase 3

The final analysis and report writing phase of the study included qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative assessment was conducted upon data supplied by the Connexions Service National Unit concerning Partnerships, demographics and levels of need. Further, quantitative analyses were conducted upon the differing data sets sent in by Connexions Partnerships, including, travel data, interventions, referrals, staffing costs, delivery staff numbers and income from other sources. The research concerning the definition of rurality as relevant to the Connexions Service was also refined. Qualitative analysis was undertaken upon the delivery staff logbooks, Connexions Partnership profiles and data obtained during the interviewing process. This enabled us to reveal the descriptive issues behind the quantitative statistical trends. Lastly, the results were reflected upon and further analysed in order to draw conclusions and recommendations for further research and policy decisions.

3. RURALITY

3.1. Rural concerns

Current concerns about rural deprivation and the need to ‘rural proof’ policy are reflected in a number of studies and briefing papers, which detail some of the problems surrounding the delivery of government services to rural areas. These range through health services, funding for education, definitions of rurality (including sparsity and super-sparsity) and attempts to measure the extra costs associated with service provision.

A constant theme of these studies is the problem of rural transport provision, for both service providers and their potential clients. Rural households are more dependant on the car for transport than their urban counterparts. Eighty four percent of rural households own a car (compared to 69 percent for their urban counterparts) but this still leaves 16 percent without one⁵. Public transport generally fails to fill this gap. Trains or buses are more than three times as likely to be used for journeys to work in urban compared to rural areas. Seventy five percent of rural parishes are without a regular bus service⁶. For students, the school bus is usually the first to leave in the morning and the last to return in the evening. This effectively prevents rural children from attending extra-curricula activities⁷.

Health care provision is also more expensive in rural areas. In England the per capita costs of providing domiciliary care are 2.23 times more expensive in N. Yorkshire than Birmingham⁸. The study goes on to suggest that the English NHS allocation formula fails to capture the extra costs of rural service provision. In contrast, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland apply rural weightings in their allocation practice. For Northern Ireland, the rural travel costs adjustments for professional staff amounts to an extra 22 percent to 30 percent. Direct financial costs are not the only concern. The study calculated that rural health providers spend between 12 percent and 25 percent of their day travelling to and from clients. Costs of telecommunications, training, consultancy and other support services also tend to be higher in rural areas; and networking is more difficult.

5 EERA, H&SI Panel Meeting 22nd April 2002, Wisbech *"Briefing Points of Rural health and Social Exclusion"*

6 *ibid.*

7 CCN report for Education Funding Review - Sparsity (EFSG 34)

8 Asthana, S., Brigham, P. and Gibson, A. (2002) *"Health Resource Allocation in England: What case can be made for Rurality"* University of Plymouth, Department of Social Policy

Educational provision in rural areas shares these cost implications. The CNN report⁷ lists several components:

- Replication of small-scale provision (to minimise transport) – mostly for nurseries, playgroups, primary schools.
- Mobile services (e.g. libraries)
- Home-to-school transport
- Remote access provision

All of these involve higher than average costs of delivery. Current expenditure regression analysis for educational funding (SSA) shows that rural communities have 1.5 percent higher costs because of these extra provisions. This figure (based on 1990-1991 data) has almost certainly increased as transport costs have climbed. School size is also important. In Shropshire, seven primary schools are needed per 1,000 pupils – almost twice as many as in urban situations. As a result, unit costs (£s per pupil) are higher in these smaller schools. For example:

- Cheshire: rural primary schools are half the size of urban ones and cost 33 percent more per pupil to run.
- Lancashire: in small schools (<75 pupils) costs per pupil are 47 percent higher than the county average

According to the CNN report, the DfES uses a 'basic entitlement', which is calculated on population size. It does not therefore recognise the additional cost of running small schools. The same argument applies to the cost of home-to-school transport provision.

3.1.1. THE DYNAMICS OF RURAL ENGLAND

Whatever the situation is today regarding the character of rural England, the picture is unlikely to remain static. Demographic, social and economic change will affect the countryside as much as it will urban England. In its purview of rural Britain, the Countryside Agency regularly monitors changes in service provision, second home ownership and the changing age profile of the different regions. As far as the Connexions Service is concerned, these changes will be revealed through the shifting pattern of needs. Moreover, the recently released White Paper on Rural England⁹ clearly shows the Government's intention to improve rural service provision. One target, for example, is to ensure that

9 *"Our Countryside: the future. A fair deal for rural England"* Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, November 2000

50 percent (as against the current 37 percent) of rural dwellers will be within a 10 minute walk of an hourly, or better, bus service by 2010. The Rural Service Standard also refers to an entitlement to assistance with access/travel costs (from the Further Education Access Fund). These and other measures will have an impact on accessibility and travel costs/times for the Connexions Service and its clients.

3.2. Defining rurality

In the present context, the purpose of defining rurality is simply to assist in analysing Connexion Service delivery costs. There is no attempt here to engage in the more general debate about the nature of rurality and what it might imply for the full range of government and other services. This project is, therefore, not designed to shed light on the broader issues of rural deprivation. If the funding formula is to be revisited, it is essential to determine – within the context of Connexions Service operations – which are the urban Connexions Partnerships and which can be considered rural – according to a set of appropriate and clearly articulated criteria – which are themselves particularly relevant to the Connexions Service. Above all we focus on the 13-19 year-old cohort which constitutes the client base of the Connexions Service.

Nevertheless, much work has already been completed on rural definitions and more is currently being conducted. Where appropriate, these existing definitions have guided the current project. In conjunction with the Countryside Agency, DEFRA is currently in the process of examining the question of rurality and how it may be defined. The most recent review of existing definitions (*Urban and Rural Area Definitions: A User Guide*) has been published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in collaboration with DEFRA, the Countryside Agency and the Office of National Statistics¹⁰. Two approaches have been adopted in the User Guide:

- A definition of urban settlements (a minimum population of 1,000 and a minimum land area of 20 ha);
- An administrative area classification (from ward level upwards), based on a range of social and economic criteria.

The pre-existing ONS area classification, the Local Government Finance sparsity measures and the Countryside Agency's Rural Parishes Services Survey are not recommended for general use.

The 47 Connexions Service Partnerships are based on amalgamations of Local Education Authority (LEA) areas, and are coincident with the Learning Skills Council (LSC) areas. The LEAs in turn can

10 Urban and Rural Area Definitions, cited at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/urban_rural.asp

be mapped onto Local Authorities/Unitary Authorities, with the result that the CA’s administrative area classification can be 'fitted' to the Connexions Partnerships. However, this classification is based on a range of socio-economic factors, some of which are not directly relevant to the current project (ratio of economically active population to economically non-active population; percentage of people in agriculture, forestry and fishing; percentage of people in primary production; ethnicity). This classification defines 145 (41%) Local and Unitary Authorities as rural. Twenty eight percent of the country's population live in these Local and Unitary Authorities.

3.2.1. SCALE EFFECTS

The scale, or the 'size' of unit of measure, is critical. Local Authorities and Unitary Authorities may be large and frequently include both an urban centre and a rural hinterland. Thus as the User Guide highlights (page 23), Carlisle LA is not considered rural because, despite an extensive, and sparsely-populated rural hinterland, the city contains 75 percent of the LA's population and 'distorts' the otherwise very rural character of the whole district. In the case of Mid Suffolk, however, the urban centre of Stowmarket accounts for a smaller proportion of the of the LA's total, with the result that it emerges from the analysis as rural. Table 3.1 illustrates this anomaly:

Table 3.1 Comparison of Carlisle and Mid Suffolk LAs

LA and principal urban centre	LA population (mid-1999 estimate)	Area (sq.km)	LA population density (persons per sq.km)	urban centre population	% of LA population in principal urban centre
Carlisle (Carlisle)	102,300	1,040	98.4	77,250	75.5
Mid Suffolk (Stowmarket)	83,800	871	96.2	13,000	15.5

Outside of their urban centres, with 25,050 citizens spread across most of 1,040 sq. km, Carlisle LA is clearly more sparsely populated than Mid Suffolk; and arguably more rural, yet according to the criteria, Mid Suffolk is classed as rural, whilst Carlisle is not.

These types of scale-dependent anomalies become even more apparent as the areal unit of measure increases in size. For the Connexions Partnerships which may consist of several LAs, almost all will include at least one sizeable urban centre. In fact, the majority are of this type (e.g. Coventry and Warwick, Swindon and Wiltshire, Cheshire and Warrington). Table 3.2 illustrates this scale problem with a number of examples.

These data are based on total population only, not the full set of socio-economic characteristics which underpins the User Guide. Nevertheless, using a simple measure such as population density, they closely approximate the review's findings. In any event, they clearly highlight the scale problem.

Table 3.2 Connexions Partnerships characterised by a major urban centre and a rural hinterland

Connexions Partnership	Principal urban centre	% of population in principal urban centre	% of Connexions Partnership area occupied by principal urban centre
Leicestershire	Leicester	47.9	3.4
Nottinghamshire	Nottingham	38.0	3.4
Coventry/Warwickshire	Coventry	37.4	4.7
Wiltshire/Swindon	Swindon	29.7	6.6
Humber-side	Kingston upon Hull	25.0	6.9
Derbyshire	Derby	24.3	3.0
York and North Yorkshire	York	23.8	2.5
Cheshire/Warrington	Warrington	22.1	7.9
Cambridgeshire	Peterborough	22.0	9.8

The terms of reference for the present study include a definition of rurality suitable for the Connexions Service and an appropriate analysis to determine a 'cut-off' point between rural and urban. It is also appropriate that these definitions should be 'simply' constructed, avoiding the complex analytical procedures adopted for the User Guide.

3.2.2. SPARSITY

The Cumbria study¹¹ on travel costs, conducted by the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) at Newcastle University also embraces a definition of rurality. This is based on the notions of non-sparsity, sparsity and super-sparsity. National criteria for these categories are based on population density (non-sparse -- >400 persons per sq. km; sparse -- 50-400 persons per sq. km; super sparse -- <50 persons per sq. km). These criteria set population density limits and in effect, suggest cut-off points.

3.3. Defining rurality for the Connexions Service

For the Connexions Service, definitions of rurality focus on the 13 -19 year-old client base and its distribution across the urban-rural gradient. Based on the existing definitions discussed above, three indexes of rurality have been constructed:

1. Population density of 13-19 year-olds by Connexions Partnership and by constituent LEAs
2. Distance of households to secondary schools (using data from the CA Rural Services Survey)
3. Measures of sparsity based on the 13-19 year-old cohort (conversion of national formula to the 13-19 year-old age group, based on LEAs)

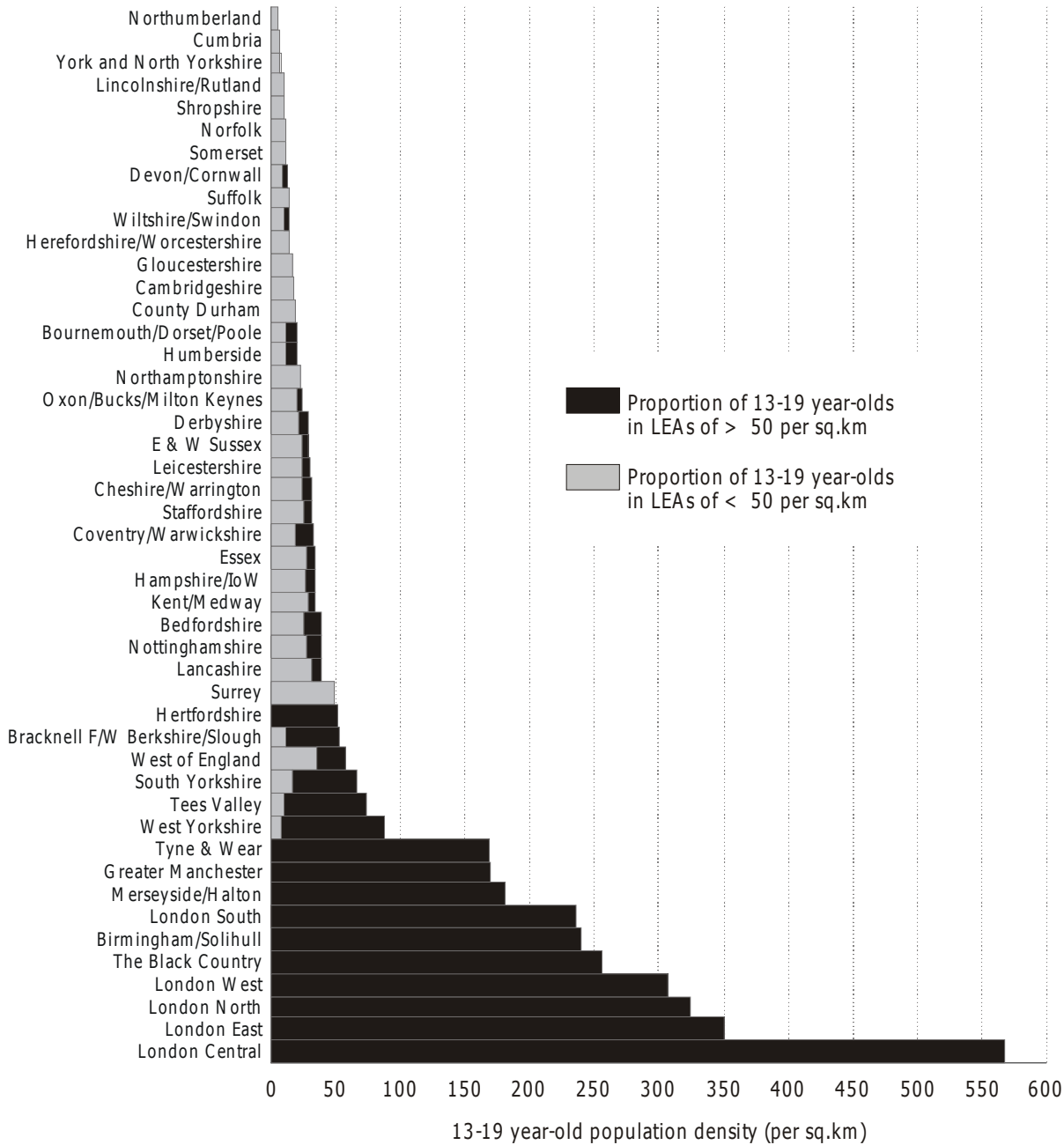
3.3.1. 13-19 YEAR-OLD POPULATION DENSITY

The first definition, based on 13-19 year-old population density, reveals a long gradient from remote rural through to the metropolitan Connexions Partnerships (Figure 3.1). In this chart, the width of the horizontal bars reflects the overall 13-19 year-old population density. Each bar represents a Connexions Partnership and is divided (where appropriate) into two components. The lighter shaded part indicates the proportion of the 13-19 year-olds in the whole Partnership area located in sparsely populated LEAs (< 50 13-19 year-olds per sq. km). In contrast, the darker shading indicates the proportion in more densely populated LEAs (>50 13-19 year-olds per sq. km). Within any given Connexions Partnership, LEAs with a 13-19 year-old population density of less than 50 per sq. km are regarded as rural. This corresponds approximately to the definition of 'sparse' under national usage.

Figure 3.1 reveals a rural extreme at the top, grading into a large set of Partnerships which contain an urban core and a rural hinterland, but which, overall, still show low population densities. There is no obvious cut-off point in this chart. The rural Partnerships, such as Northumberland and Cumbria, in which all constituent LEAs are sparsely populated, are not markedly more sparse overall than those which show a mix of urban and rural LEAs (e.g. Wiltshire/Swindon, Bournemouth/ Dorset/Poole and Humberside). The high population densities of the metropolitan Partnerships at the bottom are clearly evident. Although rural and urban extremes are evident, the lack of an obvious cut-off point makes it difficult to categorise the very large number of Connexions Partnerships with relatively low population densities and a mix of rural and urban LEAs that 'sit' just below the rural end point. In fact this large group effectively represents the 'norm'. The full set of data is shown in Appendix 2.

11 *"An Alternative Way for Measuring the Extra Costs of Delivering Services in Rural Areas: A Cumbrian View"* (Brf 98/19)

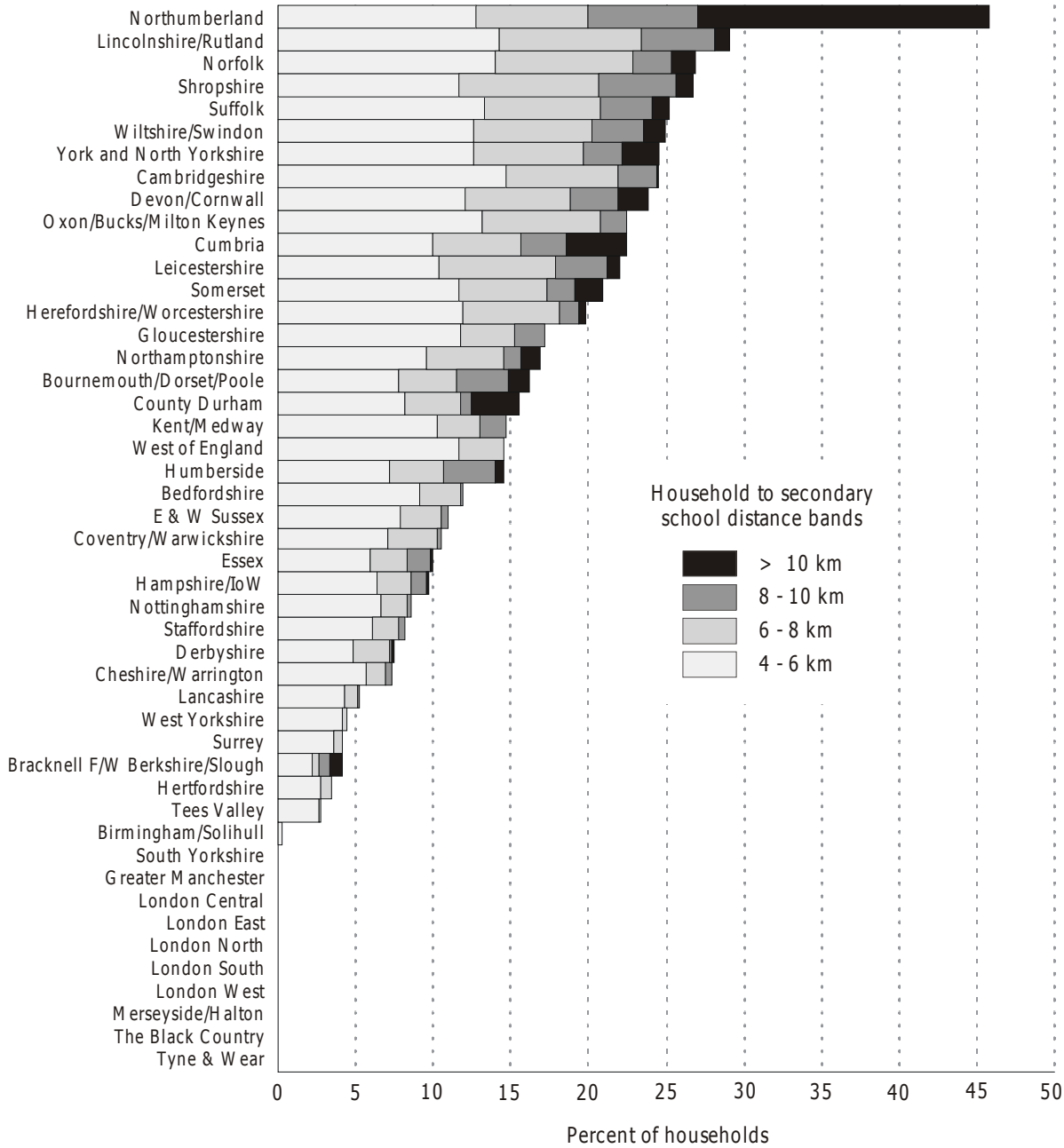
Figure 3.1 13-19 year-old population density by Connexions Partnership



3.3.2. DISTANCE TO SCHOOL

A second definition, derived from the Countryside Agency's rural services data, is based on household distance to secondary school. The relevance of this definition rests on the fact that young people who are further away from school (beyond reasonable walking or cycling distance) are less easily in contact with Connexions Service delivery (much of which is located at schools or educational establishments) than those who are close. Results are shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Partnerships ranked by secondary school distance bands



The chart shows the percentage of households more than 4 km distant from a secondary school. The 'within 4 km' data has been omitted from the chart. The wider the individual bar, the greater the proportion of households located further than 4 km from the school. Each bar is divided into segments of increasing darkness – indicating the more distant households. Four bands have been selected: 4 - 6 km, 6 - 8 km, 8 - 10 km and more than 10 km.

This definition also shows a long rural 'tail' and in its ranking of Partnerships, is close to the pattern revealed by the 13-19 year-old population density data. However, there are some notable differences. Whilst Northumberland is still the most 'rural', Cumbria and North Yorkshire have dropped down the list. Cambridgeshire and Oxford/Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes have gained higher ranks. With these exceptions – and apart from some minor re-ordering – the same Partnerships feature at the rural end of the spectrum.

3.3.3. SPARSITY

The third definition, based upon a translation of nationally-accepted sparsity measures, gives another set of ranks. The sparsity index (Figure 3.3) is based on the nationally-accepted categorisation and also uses population density as its primary data (Table 3.3):

Table 3.3 Sparsity limits

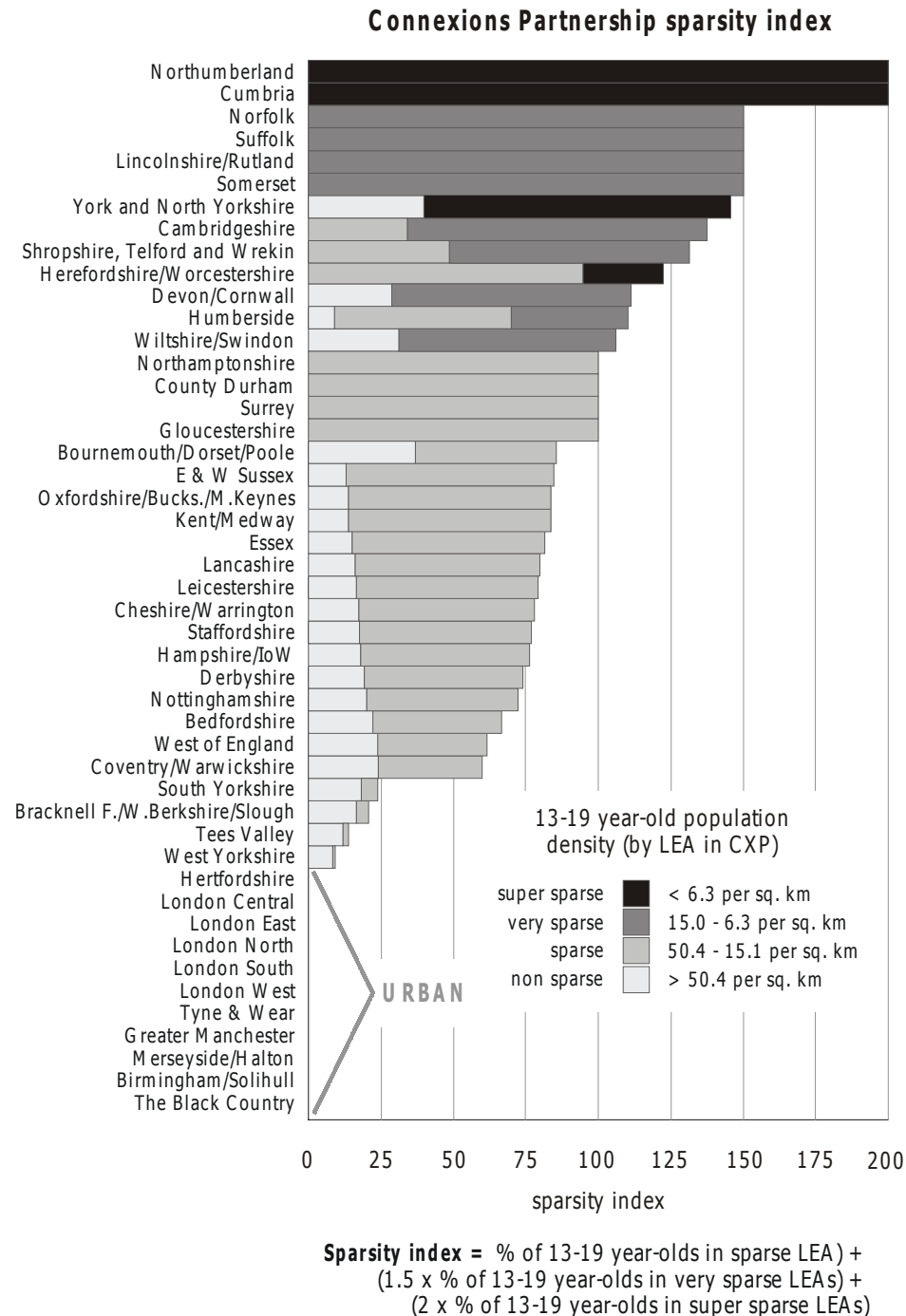
	all persons per sq. km	13-19 year-olds per sq. km
Non-sparse	>400	> 50.4
Sparse	50 - 400	15.1 - 50.4
<i>Very sparse</i>		<i>6.3 - 15.0</i>
Super sparse	< 50	< 6.3

These limits have been adapted to the 13-19 year-old cohort. 1999 population estimates were used to determine the 13-19 year-old population as a percentage of total population for all LEAs. The mean value for non-metropolitan LEAs was 12.6 percent. The sparsity limits for the total population have therefore been multiplied by 0.126 to generate 13-19 year-old equivalents. Each Partnership has been categorised according to the proportion of its 13-19 year-olds that is located in LEAs of different sparsity grades. An additional grade has been added here (very sparse) in order to capture a small number of Partnerships which lie just outside the 6.3 barrier, but fall some way short of the next limit – at 50.4. The results of this sparsity ranking are shown in Figure 3.3.

The chart shows a combined sparsity index, based on a weighted combination of the 4 grades. Ultimately, like the first index, it is based on population density at the LEA level. It is not surprising, therefore, that it closely mirrors the first. Differences between these two measures reflect the dominance or otherwise of urban centres in sparsely populated Partnerships. Both Connexions York and North Yorkshire and Connexions Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin drop down the list, because their principal urban centres have a dominating effect. Nevertheless, outside these towns, population density more closely parallels the more extremely rural Partnerships such as Northumberland and

Cumbria. Further discussion of urban dominance in otherwise rural Partnerships is located below in Section 3.4.

Figure 3.3 Connexions Partnerships by degrees of sparsity



3.4. Further considerations

Scale effects dominate all attempts to determine which Partnerships are rural. Partnerships at the urban end of the spectrum are more homogeneous in their population density and are clearly demarcated. The 47 Connexions Partnerships cover the whole of England and are therefore spatially large. Because of this size element, it is almost inevitable that most will include one or more large urban centres. At the same time, and again by virtue of their size, most will also incorporate parts of rural England. The User Guide to Urban and Rural Area Definitions comments on scale and the size of administrative units under consideration. Whilst the classification at Local Authority and Ward level is considered adequate, that at the County level is thought to be too coarse: "*A county level classification ... is recommended with the reservation that it should be used only where there is no other choice. At a high geographical level it is less meaningful to describe an area as urban or rural, ...*" (op. cit., p. 6).

Clearly then, there are difficulties in categorising all Connexions Partnership as either rural or urban. Small in area and more homogeneous in character, Partnerships such as the Birmingham, the London group, along with those centred on the major conurbations are obviously urban throughout. For the rest, a clearly recognisable cut-off point between rural and semi-rural/semi-urban cannot be reliably determined. What can be said is that at the remote 'rural' end of a long gradient, the overwhelmingly rural character of Northumberland and Cumbria is clear. A small number of other Partnerships would also seem to be predominantly rural in character. This group includes Lincolnshire/Rutland; North Yorkshire; Norfolk; Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin; Somerset; Suffolk and Devon/Cornwall. Within these seven Partnerships there is a pattern of relatively small urban centres and an extensive rural fringe. These urban centres and their 'impact' on the Partnership as a whole are shown in Table 3.4:

Table 3.4 Population and area characteristics of 7 near rural Partnerships

Connexions Partnership	Principal urban centres (population density > 500 per sq. km)	% of Connexions Partnership area in LAs/UAs >500 per sq. km	% of Connexions Partnership total population in LAs/UAs >500 per sq. km
Devon/Cornwall	Plymouth, Exeter, Torbay	0.01	30.6
Lincolnshire/Rutland	Lincoln	0.57	12.7
Norfolk	Norwich	0.73	15.2
York and North Yorkshire	York	3.27	24.1
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin	Telford and Wrekin	8.32	35.9

Somerset	None	0.00	0.0
Suffolk	Ipswich	1.03	17.3

To a lesser degree and further along the rural-urban gradient, many more Partnerships share this 'mixed' characteristic. The results of this analysis do not provide an incontrovertible means to determine which of these 'mixed' Partnerships could be considered rural and which urban. They all contain a rural zone of some sort. These mixed Partnerships constitute the majority of the 47. They are the norm, so that any changes to the funding formula that are based on some element of rurality will involve a large number of them. Whatever the effects of such a re-allocation might be, they will in all likelihood be dissipated across this large group. Effectively, little will change.

4. ISSUES AND OPINIONS RAISED DURING THE PHASE 1 AND 2 INTERVIEWS

An important aspect of this research has been the interview process. In this section we identify and describe the main issues raised during interviews with a variety of Partnership staff. The Phase 1 interviews aided the selection of cost measures for Phase 2. Furthermore the more structured and directed interviews of Phase 2 have enhanced our understanding of the chosen cost measures and other issues of cost in relation to urban and rural Connexions Service delivery. Much of the data produced by the interviews was anecdotal and unsubstantiated, either because quantitative data was unavailable or not provided. Nevertheless, it was regarded as worthy of inclusion to help guide further research and inform future funding arrangements. The issues raised in this section for which data was available and deemed relevant for the study are subsequently analysed within section 5. Individuals and groups have been interviewed from a range of Connexions Partnerships across the rural urban gradient, namely;

Black Country Connexions – Urban

Merseyside Connexions – Urban

Cheshire and Warrington – Urban Rural Mix

Coventry and Warwickshire – Urban Rural Mix

West of England Connexions – Urban Rural Mix

South Yorkshire Connexions – Urban Rural Mix

Connexions Humber – Urban Rural Mix

Wiltshire and Swindon – Urban Rural Mix

Devon and Cornwall Connexions – Urban Rural Mix (with large rural areas)

Lincolnshire and Rutland – Rural

Cumbria Connexions – Rural

Attendees of Rural Cost Workshop at Sheffield:

Mike Davey – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Connexions

Steve Jackson – Shropshire Telford and Wrekin Connexions

Rod Tait – Lincolnshire and Rutland Connexions

Abbey Pattison-Wake – Hereford and Worcester Connexions

John Edgar – Suffolk Connexions

The interviews produced a range of responses which have often been contrasting and contradictory. However, a number of common themes emerged which effect the costs of delivering the Connexions service in urban and rural Connexions Partnerships respectively.

4.1. Topics and issues raised during the Phase 1 and 2 interviews

The following issues were raised during this process:

- Travel costs
- The effects of differing population densities on service delivery
- External pressure affecting rural service delivery
- The availability of support services
- Training and employment, providers and opportunity
- The availability of supplementary funding
- Setting up and maintaining Partnerships
- Mobile phone costs
- Information communication technology
- One-stop-shops
- Connexions in schools
- Outreach work
- The proportional costs of non-service delivery related costs
- Connexions Service structure, centralised and fragmented
- Property costs
- Staff: recruitment, training and retention

4.1.1. TRAVEL COSTS

The issue of travel costs (in terms of both time and money) was raised repeatedly by both rural and urban Connexions Partnerships. Rural Partnerships emphasised the increased distances that delivery staff were required to travel in rural locations. More time was spent travelling in rural areas for several reasons. First, distances were greater (than in urban Partnerships) because many rural Partnerships cover large areas, leading to high mileage claims and fuel costs and much 'down' time. This problem was said to exacerbated by the fact that journeys on minor roads inevitably took more time than equivalent distances on motorways and dual carriageways. Second, sparse population distributions means that rural delivery staff have to travel long distances to service only individual or small groups

of clients in dispersed locations. Third, it was repeatedly emphasised that travel was duplicated in comparison to urban areas because of the fact that schools were small and dispersed in rural zones – with again a correspondingly smaller client base. Consequently, this extra travel results in more ‘dead staff time’, a problem further intensified where delivery staff have to double up for health and safety purposes.

The costs to the client accessing Connexions is also seen as important. Some Connexions Partnerships reimbursed clients' travel fares but this was often only under special circumstances. In urban areas it was considered inappropriate to cover the travel costs of young people for several reasons, including: sheer numbers, the widespread use of bus passes and also cheaper travel prices in urban centres. However, in rural areas such as Cumbria, where travel prices are high and services infrequent, clients' travel costs were often fully reimbursed.

Travelling for management purposes may also be affected by rurality. Spread over large regions, rural Partnerships often have a less centralised structure, through which staff and Partnership meetings lead to increased costs and time. The point was also made that many of the conferences and meetings concerning the Connexions Service were held in London, far distant from the more remote Partnerships. Management staff from Connexions Cumbria reported that they sometimes had to miss meetings they would have liked to attend because of the time lost and the cost of attendance. Another related non-service delivery aspect of travel was the lack of staff support services in some rural areas. This leads to increased travel costs (and even overnight accommodation) when staff have to travel long distances for training.

Travel time is also an issue for urban Partnerships. Some Partnerships operating in city locations suggested that even if absolute distances were less than in rural settings, congestion increased travelling time to such an extent that it equates with the travelling times experienced by rural counterparts. Additionally, in some areas delivery staff were actively encouraged to utilise public transport when visiting clients. This may be more cost efficient and environmentally aware, but results in longer journey times and more dead staff time. Another element of travel costs unique to the urban areas was the issue of parking and associated charges. Because city centre parking charges are so high in Bristol, Connexions West of England only reimburses the parking costs of staff on the days when they are absolutely required to use their cars.

4.1.2. DIFFERING POPULATION DENSITIES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The population densities within the Connexions Partnerships that were sampled varied considerably. Urban Connexions Partnerships and those which included significant urban centres raised a number of issues that they thought increased their costs and workloads. First, The Black Country Connexions

argued that urban areas have a greater intensity of need – in terms of client numbers and the range and complexity of their problems – but also including high crime rates, high levels of substance abuse, racism and other problems of community cohesion. It was suggested that economies of scale do not accrue when the numbers in need are so great. Thus it was argued that need often outstripped available provision under current funding levels. However, other urban and mixed Connexions Partnerships suggested that economies of scale did accrue, allowing urban delivery staff to service more clients on a one-to-one and group basis. Furthermore, several Partnerships argued that the higher densities of 13 - 19 year-olds in urban areas allowed a more centralised structure of service delivery where access to Connexions was easier for the client base. Thus the compactness and more developed transport infrastructures present in urban environments led to greater 'efficiency' (and hence lower unit costs) for urban Connexions Partnerships

Rural areas experienced a number of difficulties concerning population densities and distributions. Where significant population centres did exist within otherwise rural Partnerships, it was argued that a semi-centralised Connexions Service structure could be maintained – on the assumption that surrounding villages would be served by regular bus and train services. However, in the most sparsely populated areas of Cornwall and Cumbria, problems were clearly apparent as the client population was spread unevenly over large areas with a poor public transport infrastructure. In these areas, more outreach centres were needed and had to be staffed on both a full and part-time basis, inevitably leading to higher unit costs. Furthermore, even where greater numbers of rural outreach centres were provided it was still felt that service provision would be insufficient for the totality of the client base, especially when compared to a numerically equivalent, but much more concentrated, demand in urban centres.

A dispersed population results in further problems, particularly in terms of reduced school sizes and their wide distribution. Both urban and rural Partnerships argued that urban schools tend to be larger and situated in more centralised and accessible locations. In some cases this allowed schools to be allocated a single Personal Advisor, who was able to give an effective and efficient service. In rural areas school sizes are generally smaller and the schools more dispersed. Consequently, rural delivery staff often have to provide services to several schools, leading to increased time lost in travelling and a poorer relationship with clients and school staff.

4.1.3. EXTERNAL PRESSURES AFFECTING RURAL SERVICE DELIVERY

During several of the interviews at rural Partnerships the point was made that it was not possible to have a constant physical presence in all rural areas. Many outreach centres were therefore operated on a part-time or periodic basis, utilising venues such as village halls and youth club premises. This raises

questions of equity for the Connexions Service. Some Partnerships felt they were pressured (by the public and the local political community) into running what amounts to a cost-ineffective service in rural areas where a centre has to be open full-time. Much of this is concerned with the broader issue of deficits in rural services. As a result, it seems that some rural outreach centres remain open full-time, even when a more focused part-time system based on 'busy' periods (market days, immediately after school closure) or when public transport is available, would be more efficient.

4.1.4. THE AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Rural areas were said to lack the range of statutory and voluntary support services that are often available in towns and cities. Several Partnerships claimed that even when these types of services operate in rural areas they suffer from problems of access and funding. Due to this perceived lack of alternative support services for young people, rural Connexions Partnerships felt obliged to 'plug the gap', leading to increased costs. Urban Connexions Partnerships recognised that they often drew upon Partnership agencies for help with service delivery and cost sharing. In this context, Connexions delivery staff were often placed within other urban-based support schemes, allowing easy access to clients and reducing the cost burden. However, it was also disclosed that by working within partner organisations, delivery staff workloads were often increased, sometimes with individual cases that would not normally be expected to fall within the remit of the Connexions Service.

In remote rural areas where access to client groups is often difficult, it was argued that the Connexions Service relies heavily upon voluntary and community groups. Connexions Humber reported that they are developing a system whereby volunteers with minimal training would act as referral agents in rural locations, giving minimal guidance, but facilitating contact with more experienced delivery staff. Connexions Cumbria has drawn on the support of the 'Young Farmers Association' as a means of reaching young people from a farming background who would otherwise be unlikely to contact the Service.

Both rural and urban Connexions Partnerships explained how they allocate grants to voluntary and community groups to increase the sector's capacity. In rural areas it was suggested that alternative funding for these groups is minimal and irregular. As a result rural Partnerships felt the need to fund voluntary and community projects. This places both an increased financial strain and a sense of obligation on the Service. Furthermore, some rural Partnerships acknowledged that they have had to cut funding to voluntary agencies due to a lack of financial resources, thereby further debilitating the sector's already limited rural capacity.

4.1.5. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROVIDERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As with support services, it was generally considered that rural areas lack the range of employment and training opportunities that are available in urban areas. The lower population densities are unable to support training providers that might otherwise offer opportunities for young people. As a result young people rarely have a choice of training or education provider. This represents a problem for the Connexions Service in rural areas. For example, it was suggested that if a young person is excluded or ‘drops out’ from a training or employment placement there are few local alternatives. Consequently, the exclusion may represent a significant barrier to work or training, leading to repeated Connexions contact and possible long-term unemployment. This pattern of repeated contact increases the cost of delivering the Connexions Service in rural locations.

Further barriers to employment and learning in rural areas were again related to additional travelling, which was repeatedly suggested as the reason why many young people refuse to attend, or leave employment or training. Employment options were described as few and far between for young people, due to a perceived weakness and limited scope said to be present in many rural labour markets. Furthermore, many of the jobs available for rural young people are seasonal in nature, such as tourism, leisure and agriculture. These problems are compounded by the loss of the most able and educated young to universities and employment opportunities outside their rural homeland.

4.1.6. THE AVAILABILITY OF SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING

Funds additional to the Connexions Service National Unit allocation – from public and private sources – were widely perceived to be more easily secured in urban Connexions Partnerships. It was argued that many government and European initiatives favour urban areas (for example, Educational Maintenance Allowances, Youth Initiatives, New Deal for Communities, Single Regeneration Budget, Regeneration Zones). It was also argued that even when funds are not directly given to Connexions they may support other urban agencies which act to lessen the burden and thus cost for urban Connexions Partnerships. For example, many urban initiatives not funded by Connexions are often concerned with regeneration and capacity building. These may act to lessen the workload of urban Connexions Services or, alternatively, the Connexions Service can ‘piggy back’ on projects by donating staff while not incurring property and running costs. Therefore, because of the wider availability of these extra financial resources in urban areas, several Partnerships suggested that Connexions Partnerships should operate on a deficit model whereby rural areas would receive full funding to cover service delivery and urban areas would receive a percentage of service delivery costs making up the deficit from partners and other funding sources.

Where additional funding is available, rural Connexions Partnerships are able to establish Partnerships with other agencies. For example, Connexions Coventry and Warwick have linked to the Countryside Agency, and Connexions Cornwall and Devon are directing much of the money they receive from the European Structural Fund to rural issues. The issue of increasing a Partnership's ability to leverage extra private funding is one of concern for rural and urban Partnerships alike.

4.1.7. BUILDING AND MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPSS

The costs of setting up and maintaining Partnerships was one of the major issues to emerge from the Sheffield workshop. Rural Partnerships argued that the costs and time spent in Partnership meetings were significant. Because of the distances and times involved for all Partnership members, meetings were difficult and expensive to arrange. However, counter to this, urban Partnerships have suggested that because Partnership arrangements often involve many more agencies and people than rural ones, meetings can be protracted and therefore equally time-consuming.

4.1.8. MOBILE PHONE COSTS

The issue of mobile phone costs in rural areas was repeatedly raised. Rural Partnerships suggested that due to the increased travelling times and time spent out of the office conducting outreach work, all delivery staff needed to be equipped with mobile phones and to use them heavily. In consequence, it was argued that mobile phone costs were higher in rural locations. However, mobile phones are also in use in urban areas where delivery staff also conduct a significant amount of outreach work. Consequently, there is unlikely to be a significant cost difference between urban and rural Partnerships mobile phone costs.

4.1.9. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The use of ICT represented a significant cost to both rural and urban Connexions Partnerships. However, because ICT may be one, or a partial answer, to the problem of working with dispersed clients and outreach centres, it is argued that rural costs are higher. Many rural areas were using innovative service delivery techniques based around ICT, including web-based packages for schools and individual use, and remote access points in areas where a physical Connexions presence could not be afforded or justified. Delivery staff were also being equipped with lap-tops to aid their work and enabling them to input and access data whilst out of the office.

In order to reduce travel for delivery staff, video conferencing was being considered for use for contacting clients. Additionally, it was suggested that video conferencing could be used by management as a cost effective and more convenient alternative to travelling. Those who had

experience using video conferencing suggested that it was successful and cost effective. However, because ICT is utilised widely in both rural and urban areas, it is not clear that there is a significant cost differential.

4.1.10. ONE-STOP-SHOPS

One-stop-shops were not thought to be viable in many rural locations because the client base would be too small to justify the cost. Part-time centres operate in some rural areas, in situations where a number of different multi-agency services can operate out of the same premises on different days of the week. It was suggested that more multi-agency co-operation was needed in some areas to take advantages of the cost saving benefits. However, because many of these agencies were voluntary groups and of charitable status, they might not be able to meet legal and insurance requirements. The sustainability of these sorts of shared arrangements was also considered problematic.

In urban areas one-stop-shops are regarded as a successful service delivery tool. Because of the multi-agency dimension, costs are often shared and in several cases the only cost for Connexions is for staff. In some cases, urban one-stop-shops predate the Connexions Service (for example, services for young people such as family planning, welfare rights, and social services operating under one roof). Therefore, Connexions can often place delivery staff into an established one-stop-shop at minimal cost and often accrue benefits in kind.

4.1.11. CONNEXIONS IN SCHOOLS

Most Connexions Partnerships interviewed favoured a Connexions presence in all schools. As we have already noted, it was generally considered that in rural areas schools are often smaller and more widely spread. This feature leads to higher travel costs for delivery staff, higher refurbishment and re-branding costs for Connexions and, due to the inevitably reduced time spent at each school in comparison to urban delivery staff, a poorer relationship between delivery staff and school clients and staff.

In urban areas Connexions is faced with other problems. Although school sizes may be larger, the intensity and complexity of need was thought to be greater than in rural areas. Thus, more than one delivery staff per school might be required. In these cases schools were typically allocated an intensive support Personal Advisor several days a week, catering for clients requiring in-depth guidance and intensive support for multiple needs.

4.1.12. OUTREACH WORK

Outreach work is seen as an essential and effective element of both rural and urban service delivery. However, it is costly in terms of travelling and time. Rural outreach is necessary in order to contact individuals and groups unable to access static Connexions provision because of transport and other rural-based difficulties. In rural areas the outreach Personal Advisor may have to travel greater distances to see a smaller number of clients.

In urban areas travelling distance may be reduced but again the level of need may be higher, or more intense, with a greater proportion of clients requiring intensive support (although the funding formula should address this). Furthermore, although young people in urban settings have less distance to travel with more public transport available, many remain unwilling to travel, which makes individual home visits necessary. In both rural and urban areas 'doubling up' for health and safety reasons is often required. However, it was thought that the cost of doubling up in rural areas is higher and more problematic because of longer travelling times, sparsity of clients and lower staffing levels across large rural areas.

4.1.13. CORE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Many Partnerships in rural areas suggested that there are core administrative costs that remain essentially the same for every Connexions Partnership. Thus these core costs are reported to fall disproportionately on the smaller, often rural, Partnerships. This cost factor is not specifically accounted for in the current funding formula, which is based on demographic parameters rather than the costs of core responsibilities (other than service delivery) set down by Connexions Service National Unit. However, because Partnerships operate different delivery models and make different strategic decisions, a direct comparison of these administrative costs across all Partnerships is not possible at this time. However, a comparison between Partnership size and 'rurality' has been attempted. Further work would be needed to clarify the situation.

4.1.14. CONNEXIONS SERVICE STRUCTURE: CENTRALISED AND DISPERSED

In many Partnerships the Connexions Service has a 'centralised' structure, whereby the Connexions centre is located in an area of significant population which is serviced by regular public transport from outlying areas. The centralised structure is predominantly found in urban areas, which have a suitable infrastructure and high accessibility. The centralised structure is also apparent and effective in some rural areas, for example market towns which act as the service hub for other outlying rural towns and villages. However, in regions of low population density, towns and villages are more dispersed and it becomes harder to run a coherent centralised service delivery model. In these rural areas more

Connexions centres are required to offer access to clients. More outreach work is necessary to contact young people with no means of transport to visit Connexions offices. Thus the multiple provision of Connexions centres and the increased need for outreach work raises unit costs and gives the Connexions Service in rural areas a fragmented character.

For health and safety reasons, all Connexions centres require the presence of at least two members of staff. Thus even the quietest rural centre, servicing only a few clients, has to be staffed by two people. Furthermore, this also raises problems for outreach work, as delivery staff cannot leave the centre under-staffed.

A further dimension to the structure of Connexions Service delivery is the use of mobile Connexions outreach vehicles. These mobile centres can substitute for costly static rural offices. However, mobile units are expensive to run, both in terms of initial outlay and maintenance costs. Furthermore, a switch to mobile provision may be deemed undesirable, for in some cases it may reduce rather than facilitate access to services and opportunities. It seems mobile provision is best viewed as a supplement to rural Connexions offices, rather than as a substitute.

4.1.15. PROPERTY COSTS

The costs of acquiring and maintaining premises is felt by all Connexions Partnerships, but affects fragmented and centralised delivery structures in specific ways. An emerging problem in some of the rural Partnerships interviewed was that of rising property prices. Some mixed (urban and rural) Partnerships stated that rents and rates were higher in rural than in urban areas. For example, Connexions Cumbria was unable to maintain a presence in all areas of the Lake District because of high rents and budgets constraints. Where possible, individual Connexions Partnerships are experimenting with mobile provision, ICT access points, access within village halls and volunteer referral systems.

Furthermore, due to the fragmented nature of rural Connexions Services, more centres may be required to ensure equality of access, adding to the proportional costs of property in rural locations. This issue was illustrated by Connexions Cornwall and Devon and Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire, both of which have a disproportionate number of rural outreach centres when compared to the urban areas of their Partnerships. A partial solution to these problems was the sharing of office space with other agencies. However this was often difficult, particularly when these other agencies had existing properties which they were reluctant to abandon. There is also the problem of disruption – particularly significant when dealing with hard-to-reach clients.

4.1.16. STAFF RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND RETENTION

Staff retention was generally perceived to be better in rural regions. Rural populations tend to be relatively stable and often lack alternative employment opportunities. However, several rural Partnerships stated that because of funding constraints they are unable to secure the desired number of staff. Thus staff turnover has increased as a result of higher workloads. As a counter argument, urban Partnerships suggested that staff turnover was higher because of greater alternative employment opportunities and competition for staff. Urban Partnerships bear constant recruitment and training costs for new employees – more so than their rural counterparts.

Rural labour market dynamics also have consequences for Connexions Partnerships. Some of the rural Partnerships described problems of staff recruitment. This was put down to several causes, including high house prices, loss of suitable recruits to cities and an ageing population.

A widespread view was that rural delivery staff have to perform a more generic role than their urban counterparts. Thus it is suggested that rural delivery staff require more training and a broader range of skills. Representatives from Connexions Cornwall and Devon and Connexions Cumbria argue that their rural delivery staff need to be multi-skilled, because they have to deal with a range of issues that cannot be addressed by the types of specialist agency staff that can be found in urban centres. These specialist agencies simply do not exist in sparsely populated rural areas. Although financed by the Connexions Service National Unit, training is still more costly for extensive rural Partnerships, because staff have to travel long distances to access training and also occasionally need overnight accommodation.

Lastly, it was suggested that the Connexions Service was simpler to run in urban areas because of the smaller geographical space and availability of fast and reliable transport networks. Because of the sheer size of some rural Partnerships there is always the problem of positioning Connexions staff and centres. The argument is that in urban areas staff can be relatively easily redeployed around the city to tackle need or to take advantage of cheaper properties. In rural locations, because of travelling time, staff relocation is problematic and costly. Consequently it was argued, the flexibility of rural Connexions Services is often constrained.

Staff allocation

Given the widely held perceptions of increased rural costs, there is a risk that allocation decisions may, on some occasions at least, be based on or distorted by these perceptions – which may or may not be valid. It may well be that, given these perceptions of high rural costs, the rational decision would be to allocate proportionately more resources to urban centres, where cost efficiencies come into play. In other words, for the same allocation, more might be achieved in urban than in rural areas.

4.1.17. SUMMARY

Much of the information that we gained from interviews with key stakeholders reflected the concerns raised in the evaluation of the pilot Connexions and the Connexions funding consultation. The overriding view is that in rural Partnerships, travel is of major concern and represents a major cost factor. Isolation, the loss of economies of scale, difficulties of access, repeat provision and the difficulties of providing a service for very small numbers with multiple needs were all issues that featured strongly in the interviews. The issue of the under-capacity in the voluntary and community sector and the perceived shortfall in statutory services for young people are all held to conflate the problems and costs that rural Connexions Partnerships face.

From the urban perspective, Connexions Partnerships operating in town and city environments felt that they incurred costs not present in rural Partnerships. The key issue here seems to be the large numbers of young people with multiple needs who require more intensive assistance from delivery staff – the implicit claim here being that the funding formula does not fully account for the multiple and often profound and deeply embedded needs of some young people in at least some urban areas. Economies of scale may be apparent in some cases but often the scale of the problem was still too large to cope with. In terms of property costs, multiple service outlets were required in larger urban centres as well as dispersed rural locations.

Throughout the period of interviews, the perception was gained that Partnerships were able to articulate a convincing argument for the increased costs of rural service delivery. Gathering factual and quantitative data to verify these arguments has, however, proved difficult.

5. COST FACTORS : DATA, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter, each of the costs factors for which we obtained useable data is considered.

5.1. *Non-Connexions Service National Unit funding*

A group discussion with several of the more rural Connexions Partnerships highlighted a perceived greater opportunity for urban Connexions Partnerships to 'tap into' additional sources of finance (e.g. European Social Fund, etc.). We have only been able to access budget data to explore this theme. This data – on urban funding in particular – may well misrepresent the true situation. As it stands, budget data from a range of Connexions Partnerships does not seem to support the view that urban Partnerships are favoured (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Non-CSNU sources of income

Connexions Partnership	% non-CSNU finance	13–19 year-old population density (per sq. km)
London South	52.7	236
South Yorkshire	42.4	66
Cumbria	29.5	6
Cheshire & Warrington	24.4	31
<i>Cornwall/Devon</i>	<i>22.5</i>	<i>12</i>
West of England	17.2	58
Merseyside	15.7	181
<i>Lincolnshire/Rutland</i>	<i>8.1</i>	<i>10</i>
Suffolk	4.0	13
The Black Country	2.8	256
Oxon./Bucks/Milton Keynes	2.5	24
<i>Coventry & Warwick</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Humber</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>20</i>

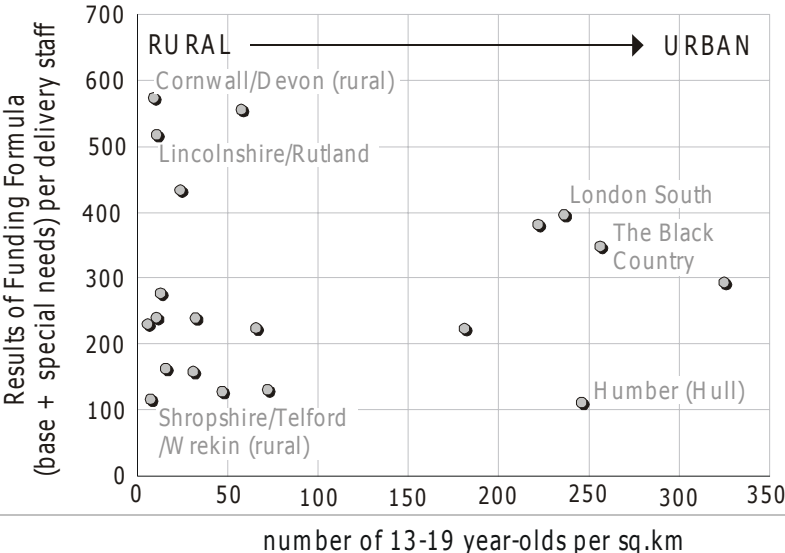
Both densely- populated and sparsely-populated Partnerships are included. They are ranked according to the percentage contribution to the total budget of non-Connexions Service National Unit sources. The top two (London South, South Yorkshire) are both urban, but third is one of the two most rural Partnerships. Cumbria receives almost 30 percent of its income from outside the funding formula. Some of the other more rural Partnerships (Cheshire and Warrington, Cornwall and Devon) do almost as well. In contrast, some other Partnerships (both urban and rural) seem to rely almost exclusively on

Connexions Service National Unit funding (The Black Country, Suffolk). All Partnerships in the sample became active in 2001 and although some were pilots (marked in bold, italics) and would have had a longer period of time to secure additional, alternative finances, this does not seem to have occurred. From the budgetary evidence alone, it does not appear that urban Partnerships are at an advantage in this respect.

5.2. Personal Advisor caseloads

We have accessed a range of data concerning Personal Advisor numbers and allocation, from a range of Partnerships. The following analysis is based on these data. However, some caveats are appropriate. Whilst some Personal Advisors are allocated to urban or rural areas, others have a more general brief. These distinctions are not always clear in the data we have accessed. In a similar vein, different categories of Personal Advisors are identified by some Partnerships, but not by others. Neither have we been able to determine how many and where non-Connexions-employed Advisors operate and how this affects allocation procedures. Despite these reservations, as a proxy measure, the number of delivery staff set against need (as measured by the results of the funding formula) should give an indication of potential case loads. Figure 5.1 shows this ratio for a number of urban, mixed and rural Partnerships and their constituent LEAs. The horizontal axis shows 13-19 year-old population density and moves from sparse (rural) on the left to dense (urban) on the right. The vertical axis indicates potential 'case load': high at the top, lower at the bottom. The supposition is that rural delivery is compromised because of cost. If rural travel is more cost/time-consuming than urban (see section 5.5) then delivery staff will have less time for contact with clients and will therefore see fewer compared to their urban counterparts. This could translate into higher allocation of delivery staff (on a per client basis) to compensate for lower 'efficiency'. In other words, we would expect lower potential 'case loads' for rural Partnerships.

Figure 5.1 Client numbers (as per funding formula) per delivery staff for urban and rural



Connexions Partnerships

This does not seem to be the case. Thus although some rural Partnership elements (rural Shropshire/Telford /Wrekin) show a 'lighter' load, others (Lincolnshire/Rutland and the rural part of Cornwall/Devon) reveal an opposite tendency. Whilst none of the more urban Partnershipss show potential case loads comparable with Cornwall and Devon, they can be significantly higher than the more 'lightly' loaded rural ones (for example, London South and The Black Country). This pattern would support the proposition. However, there are also some 'lightly' loaded urban Partnerships. Kingston upon Hull, as part of Connexions Humber, is a good example. Thus there is no consistent pattern from rural to urban situations across the chart.

Connexions Humber is divided into four local management areas, corresponding to the LEAs. Two of these (East Riding and North Lincolnshire) are rural, two (Hull and North East Lincolnshire) are urban. The delivery staff:client ratios for these four LEAs are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Connexions Humber: delivery staff : client ratios by constituent LEAs

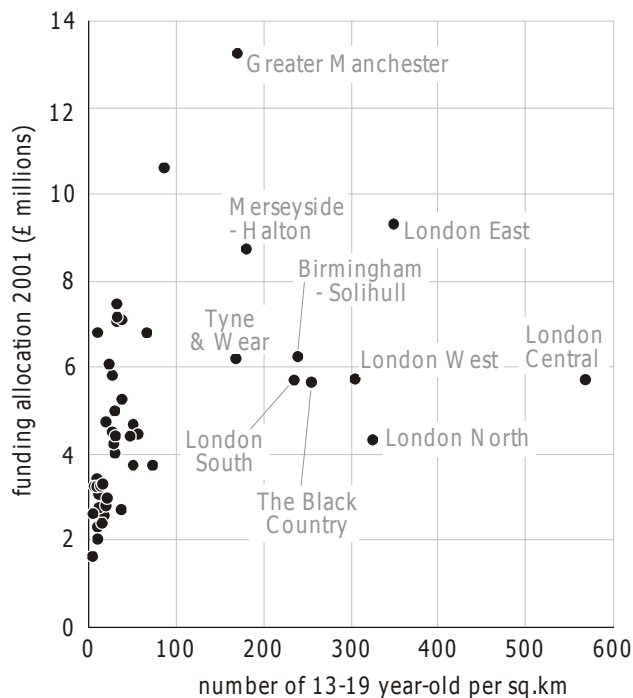
	number of delivery staff	total number of 13–19 year-olds (exc. FF weighting for particular needs)	delivery staff : client ratio	13–19 year-old population density (per sq. km)
East Riding	56	25,726	459	10.7
North Lincs.	42	12,965	309	15.5
North East Lincs.	57	13,821	242	72.1
Hull	87	17,543	202	246.0

In this case the pattern is clear and shows a greater allocation of resources to the urban sector. Data elsewhere (travel costs, results from diaries/logbooks, interventions) suggest that rural delivery staff have lower contact rates than urban, presumably because of lost time in travel. It has been suggested by several Partnerships, that in addition to travel time, there is also a time penalty in making appointments and in bringing collaborative staff and clients together over distance. Much of this type of commentary is anecdotal in nature and we have been unable to find quantifiable and consistent data to verify it (but see section 5.6 for some limited data on interventions).

5.3. Connexions Partnership 'size'

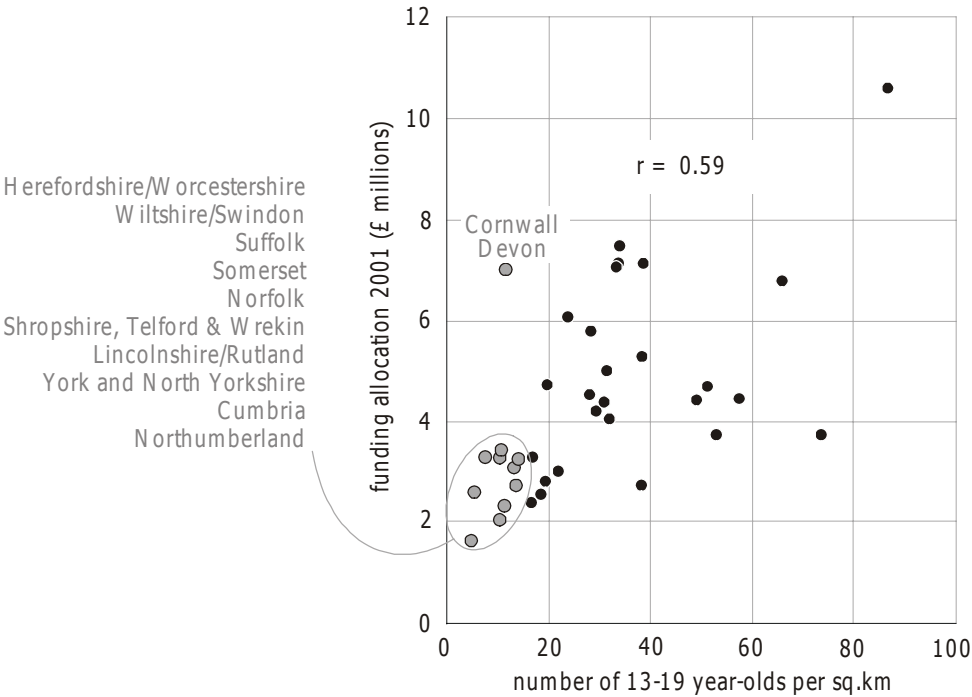
It has been argued that each Partnership, regardless of its size, has more-or-less the same fixed administrative costs (costs of headquarters, management information system, mapping, etc.) and that this cost disproportionately impacts on smaller Partnerships (i.e. those with a correspondingly lower level of funding). It is not possible to measure administrative costs directly at this stage, as each Partnership accounts for these costs in a different and locally appropriate way. Instead, for the sake of the analysis, we have accepted the assumption that these costs are essentially the same for each Partnership, regardless of size. Size, here, means the funding base calculations (total number of 13-19 year-olds plus weightings for low GCSE achievement, unemployment, social security claimants, NETs, etc.). To test this suggestion, Connexions Partnership size is plotted against population density, to determine if rural Partnerships are smaller than urban ones. These data are shown in Figures 5.2a and 5.2b.

Figure 5.2a Connexions Partnership size by population density



The metropolitan Partnerships have been identified on the chart. The data suggests a trend that supports the argument. If the metropolitan Partnerships are set aside, the pattern suggests that there is an increase in funding as population density increases. This is shown more clearly in Figure 5.2b.

Figure 5.2b Connexions Partnership size by population density (metropolitan Partnerships excluded)



The pattern is clearer. The correlation coefficient of 0.59 shows a reasonably strong relationship. If core administrative costs are more-or-less the same for all Partnerships, regardless of their individual sizes, then for the more rural ones these costs will take up a higher proportion of the total budget.

It has not been possible to verify this by examining the individual budgets of each Partnership. The various items that comprise this administrative cost are not always recorded in a consistent or standardised manner. As a result the cost of administering the tracking system, or the costs of HQ premises, etc. cannot always be safely identified.

5.4. School size

Economies of scale come into play in several other arenas of Connexions Service delivery. Beyond the subject of management costs, the size/cost and intensity of use of outreach and other delivery centres may affect efficiency. Service delivery often takes place in schools or other educational establishments. Information from the Education Funding Review¹² has suggested that rural schools (although in this case, primary schools) are smaller and thus more expensive to manage (in terms of unit costs) than urban equivalents. The same may be true for secondary schools and post-16 educational establishments and this view has been supported by a number of rural Connexions Partnerships. They argue that duplication of effort is needed in rural sectors because of this small school size. Figure 1a shows the pattern of mean secondary school size (student enrolment in FTEs) by LEA for all Connexions Partnership areas.

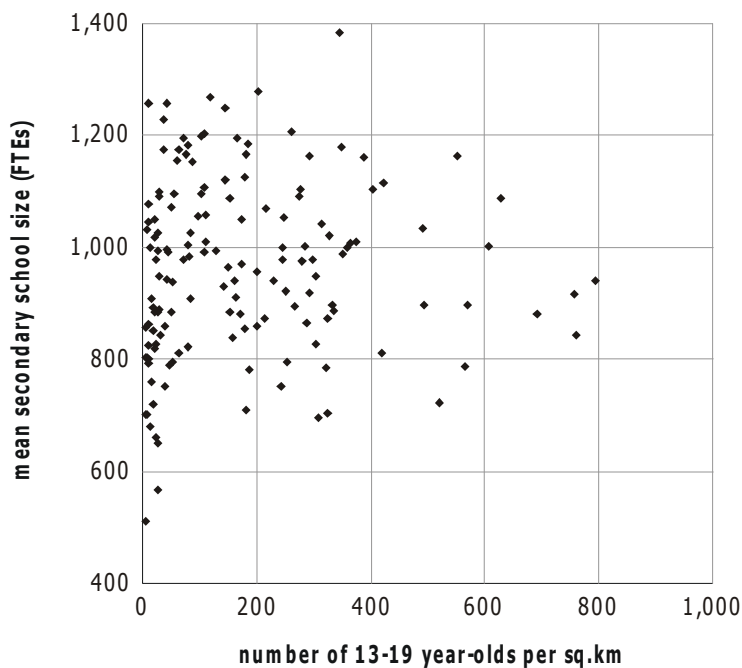


Figure 5.3a Secondary school size (by LEA) by population density.

The chart shows no relationship between school size and rurality. A second analysis, examining post-16 educational establishments also fails to reveal a relationship between rurality and size. In Figure 5.3b, data is again presented by LEA (mean establishment size according to student enrolment) for all Connexions Partnership areas.

12 CCN report for Education Funding Review - Sparsity (EFSG 34), DfES

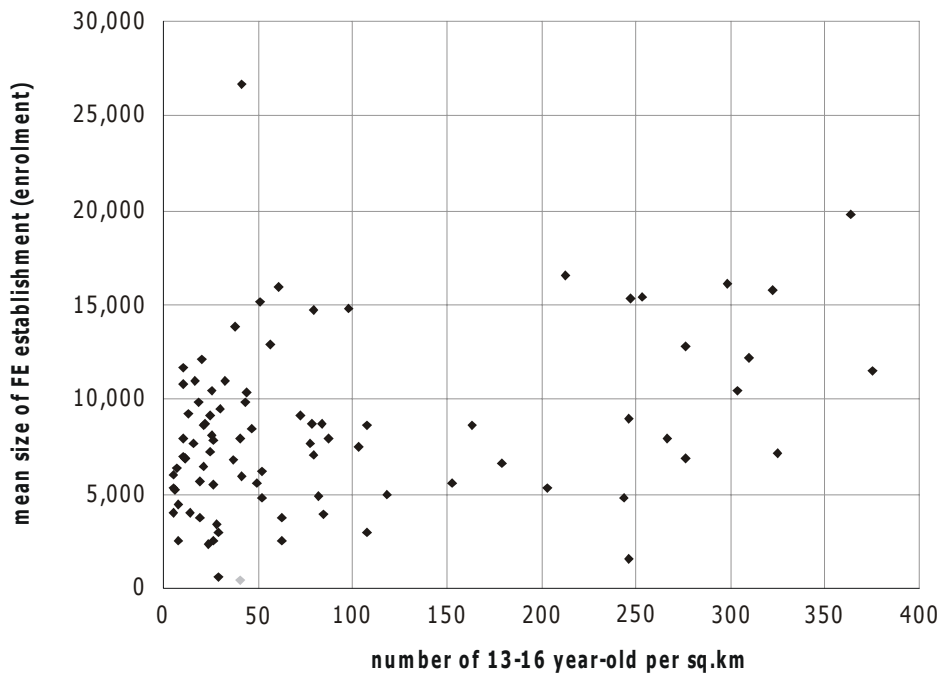


Figure 5.3b Post-16 educational establishment size (by LEA) by population density.

5.5. Travel costs/time

Travel costs data is only available from a few Partnerships. Comparisons across Partnerships are difficult because of a lack of consistency in the way records are collated and presented. In particular it is not always possible to separate delivery staff from others. Furthermore, and for several Partnerships, data is only available as a gross figure, preventing a separation into urban and rural components. However, in some cases, it has been possible and these data are presented below (Tables 5.3 and 5.4).

Table 5.3 Travel data for selected Partnerships

	Connexions Partnership	monthly travel cost per PA (£s)	monthly travel distance per PA (miles)	travel costs as % of CSNU allocation
	Coventry and Warwick (urban)			1.3
	Coventry and Warwick (rural)			0.4
	Coventry and Warwick (total)			1.7
	Suffolk			2.6
	Cumbria			3.2
Rural	Lincolnshire and Rutland (rural)	237	594	4.4
	Suffolk (rural)	165	443	
	Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin (rural)	79	204	
	Hereford and Worcester (rural)	81	203	
Mixed	Suffolk (mixed)	120	300	
Urban	Merseyside/Halton (urban)	197	493	
	Suffolk (urban)	52	129	
	Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin (urban)	39	111	
	Hereford and Worcester (urban)	27	67	

At the Partnership level, the data suggest that rural costs are higher, as would be expected, but Connexions Merseyside/Halton seems to show distances and costs similar to rural Partnerships. Only a few examples provide ratios between urban and rural travel costs within a single Partnership. These give some scope for comparison and are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Travel cost ratios for three Connexions Partnerships

Connexions Partnership	urban	mixed	rural
Suffolk	1.0	2.3	3.2
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin	1.0		2.0
Hereford and Worcester	1.0		3.0

In the three Partnerships from which we have been able to obtain data for Table 5.4, the cost of travel – as a percentage of the total Connexions Service National Unit allocation – is small. Nevertheless, when expressed in absolute terms, these travel costs amount to a considerable sum.

5.6. Interventions

Data on contacts or interventions with clients is provided by the tracking system. As yet, however, a universal standard for this monitoring process has not been fully implemented. As a result different Partnerships collect and store data in different ways. This makes cross-Partnership comparisons difficult. In addition, Partnerships which are following a sub-contracting model may not have necessary data assembled. Several Partnerships have, however, provided useful data, from which a rural - urban comparison is possible.

There is no intention here to question the internal allocation decisions of any Connexions Service – which will, of course, be based on specific local circumstances. Nor are we commenting on 'quality' of service. Both of these aspects are outside the scope of our remit and are not therefore the purpose of this study. All we are doing here is to present scenarios – through the following analysis – to illustrate what might be the 'hidden' costs in delivering the service to rural regions.

Data from Connexions Cornwall and Devon are instructive. In 2001, from April to December, 37,356 walk-ins to contact centres were recorded. Of these, 15 percent were in the Torbay sub-region, 19 percent in Plymouth, 21 percent in rural Cornwall and the remaining 45 percent in rural Devon. These data are expressed according to a number of measurement criteria in Table 5.5a:

Table 5.5a Relevant statistics for contacts in 2001 (April to December, Connexions Cornwall and Devon)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	number of walk-ins April-Dec 2001-2002	13-19 year-old population	walk-ins as % of 13-19 year-old population (A:B)	nominal resource allocation (% of total funding according to funding formula)	ratio of % walk-ins to % funding base (C:D)	number of delivery staff	contacts per delivery staff
Torbay (urban)	5,445	9,630	57	7.9	7.14	9.8	556
Plymouth (urban)	7,265	21,879	33	18.1	1.83	33.8	215
Cornwall (rural)	7,965	37,888	21	31.1	0.68	48.8	163
Devon (rural)	16,681	52,321	32	42.9	0.74	34.9	478

Source : data from Connexions Cornwall and Devon

Column C expresses the number of walk-ins as a percent of the total potential (i.e. the number of 13-19 year olds in the relevant sub-region). Column D is a simple splitting of the total funding into the sub-regions according to the criteria of the funding formula (number of 13-19 year-olds plus various needs weightings). Column E compares these two and attempts to show how higher success rates (as measured by percentage walk-ins) in the urban sub-regions relate to the nominal allocation of resources. The rural sub-regions, particularly Cornwall, show a lower 'yield'. Columns F and G provide data on staff allocation (F) and contacts per staff (G). Again, the urban weighting of Torbay is shown. Rural Devon fares better, but both urban (Plymouth) and rural Cornwall show a lower contact ratio. Table 5.5b extends this analysis and shows the contact 'shortfall'. Again, rural Cornwall appears to be disadvantaged – presumably because of its dispersed client base and the travel time/costs of service delivery. Rural Devon also has a dispersed client base (column C), but is served by more delivery staff at the outset and has a higher walk-in contact rate (Table 5.5a, column C). As far as levels of need are concerned (measured here through the funding formula which gives an extra weight to young people with poor GCSE achievement, who are not in education or training, who are unemployed and who are social security claimants) Table 5.5b, column D shows the pattern across the four sub-regions. There is no clear difference here across the rural - urban divide.

Table 5.5b Sub-regional comparison (Connexions Cornwall and Devon)

	A	B	C	D
	current contacts	expected contacts if at same rate as Torbay	13-19 year-old population density (per sq. km)	% of funding formula from special needs weighting
Torbay (urban)	5,445	5,445	153.0	4.9
Plymouth (urban)	7,265	12,371	276.8	5.3
Cornwall (rural)	7,965	21,423	10.7	5.0
Devon (rural)	16,681	29,583	8.0	4.9

A second set of data from Connexions Humber and Connexions West of England provides equivalent information. In this example, the analysis is confined to only those young people requiring intensive and sustained support (Priorities 1 and 2). Intervention data is for one-to-one contacts. These data are shown in Tables 5.6a and 5.6.b.

Table 5.6a Relevant statistics for intensive and sustained support interventions in Connexions Humber (April to June, 2002) and Connexions West of England (April to September, 2002)

	number of P1+P2 interventions	number of 13-19 year-olds	P1+P2 interventions as % of population (A:B)	nominal resource allocation (% of total funding according to funding formula)	ratio of % P1+P2 interventions to % funding base (C:D)	number of delivery staff	interventions per delivery staff
Hull (urban)	11,745	17,543	66.9	25.8	2.59	77.1	152.3
N.E. Lincs. (urban)	3,512	13,821	25.4	19.8	1.28	46.7	75.2
North Lincs.(rural)	4,233	12,965	32.7	18.4	1.78	36.2	116.9
East Riding (rural)	3,526	25,726	13.7	36.0	0.38	53.5	65.9
W. of E. (urban)	11,725	29,454	39.8	69.2	1.03	63.5	184.6
W. of E. (rural)	1,890	47,084	4.0	7.0	0.07	9.0	210.0

Table 5.6b Sub-regional comparisons (Connexions Humber and West of England)

	A	B	C	D
	current interventions	expected interventions if at same rate as Hull/W.o.E. (urban)	13-19 year-old population density (per sq. km)	% of funding formula from special needs weighting
Hull (urban)	11,745	11,745	246.0	9.4
N.E. Lincs. (urban)	3,512	9,253	72.1	4.8
North Lincs. (rural)	4,233	8,680	15.5	6.8
East Riding (rural)	3,526	17,224	10.7	6.0
W. of E. (urban)	11,725	11,725	266.7	5.8
W. of E. (rural)	1,890	18,743	38.6	4.6

The picture that emerges is similar to that of Connexions Cornwall and Devon. Rural sub-regions have relatively fewer delivery staff and relatively fewer per capita interventions (Connexions West of England particularly so). The lower the 13-19 year-old population density (i.e. the more rural), the more this trend is evident. There are differences, however, in the distribution of extra needs (again, measured in the same way as Connexions Cornwall and Devon), shown in Table 5.6b Column D. Hull has a greater extra needs requirement (9.4 percent), almost double that of North East Lincolnshire (4.8 percent). The two rural sub-regions lie in between (6.8 and 6.0 percent). For Connexions West of England extra needs are also greater in the urban than the rural sub-region (5.8 to 4.6 percent), though the difference is less marked.

There is no way of knowing if the pattern shown here would be repeated across the country. We have been unable to obtain the data necessary to determine if these three examples are exceptional or typical.

5.7. Key Findings

- There is no evidence that rural Partnerships have less opportunity to access additional funding sources.
- The study found no consistent differences in Personal Advisor Caseloads between rural and urban areas.
- There is evidence that smaller Partnerships – which tend to be rural – are disadvantaged by the essentially fixed costs associated with core administrative functions.
- There is no significant evidence that school sizes and post-16 educational establishments are smaller in rural areas.
- There are indications that, on balance, travel costs tend to be higher in rural areas than in urban locations.
- From a limited sample, there is a suggestion that, as a proxy measure of 'cost', intervention rates are lower in rural settings.

6. PERSONAL ADVISOR LOGBOOKS : CASE STUDIES

In order to gain a qualitative insight into the differing aspects of service delivery in rural and urban areas, and to enable us to interpret better the quantitative data collected, a series of workshops with delivery staff, plus some limited logbook-based case studies were undertaken. These took place within Connexions Cumbria, Coventry and Warwickshire, and The Black Country. The choice was partly based on the willingness of the respective Partnerships to co-operate, but also to ensure coverage of rural, mixed and urban situations.

The purpose of this element was not therefore to cover a large sample of Personal Advisors and produce representative quantitative data. It was more to gain an insight into the daily working patterns of delivery staff that is otherwise not accessible through tracking system data and other numerical indices. Logbook work (and subsequent analysis) encountered several methodological problems, due to its scale and the differences in the operational regimes of the three Connexions Partnerships. Not all Connexions Partnerships distinguish between different types of delivery staff (Intensive Support Personal Advisor, Educational Personal Advisor, etc.). Usually there are generic Personal Advisors who deal with a range of clients through a number of institutional arrangements. The mix of delivery staff roles and of agency linkages made the comparison of logbooks problematic. This is further complicated by the number of delivery staff currently undergoing training and hence, not working to a full caseload. Thus, the data produced by this section of the study cannot be accurately generalised to a larger scale. Lastly, it must be noted that there were some variations in the quality of data provided by delivery staff. In filling out logbooks, delivery staff were asked to focus on the following themes (Table 6.1):

Table 6.1 Themes and rationale of logbooks

Theme	Purpose
Numbers of interventions	To determine if rurality has an impact upon the number of clients a personal advisor can service.
Number of visits	To establish if repeated/multiple visits – as interventions are more a feature of rural service delivery.
Client attendance rates	Staff 'down' time is increased when clients fail to attend interviews. Lost travel time is doubly wasted.
Duration of interventions	To examine if intervention times differ between urban and rural situations.
Duration of pre/post-interview work	To examine if other aspects of the Personal Advisors' work intervention work differ between urban and rural situations.
Referrals	To gain some insight into the view that urban referral rates are higher than rural ones simply because more near-to-hand

	specialist resources are available.
Deferred costs	To indicate where, if and why costs are 'passed' on to clients during Connexions work.
Travel time / distance	This data was collected to enrich our understanding of travel issues.

Appendix 2 shows a sample blank copy of the logbook

6.1. Findings from Personal Advisor Logbooks

6.1.1. CONNEXIONS CUMBRIA

The delivery staff for the Cumbria Connexions logbook study came from a range of service delivery backgrounds and locations. Several were located in the more urban areas of Carlisle and Barrow, in what is otherwise a predominantly rural Partnership. Others were based in rural areas, including some centred on Penrith and Kendal. The final group of Personal Advisors played a role in both rural and urban service delivery. Cumbria was included in the sample as it represents a markedly rural Connexions Partnership with many zones classified as remotely rural. Population densities are extremely low. Table 6.2 shows a summary of the results gained from the Cumbrian logbooks.

Table 6.2 Results from Connexions Cumbria logbooks

Delivery staff location	Average weekly mileage per PA (miles)	Average weekly travel time per PA (mins.)	Average weekly number of one-to-one interventions	Average number of visits per client	Average number of weekly referrals
Rural	120	315	12.7	3	3.5
Rural and Urban	173	308	17.7	2	1.3
Urban	121	220	9.5	1	6.0

Travel distance data indicates that rural and urban delivery staff cover similar distances. However, closer investigation of the data reveals that for all delivery staff, travel distances are inflated by attendance at distant training sessions and other non-service delivery staff meetings. In terms of travelling times rural delivery staff spent longest in their vehicles. This is possibly related to the presence of slow minor roads in rural areas. Travelling times in urban areas were lower, suggesting that urban roads are less congested in Cumbria than other areas of the country, and that longer journeys for non-service delivery purposes were made on major roads and motorways.

Although the number of one-to-one interventions is higher for rural delivery staff, an analysis of the 'other activities' sheets reveals that this is because the urban-based delivery staff often engaged in group work with young people. This is not always possible in rural areas because of low client densities. The number of times the clients had contact with their designated delivery staff varied greatly from 1 to 11. Generally, Priority groups 1 and 2 have more sustained contact with delivery staff, reflecting greater levels of need. However, in rural areas there was a greater number of repeated visits which potentially indicates problems of access to Connexions centres, or the fact that fewer training/employment opportunities exist in rural areas.

In rural Cumbria most contact was initiated through or by schools, or self-referrals within schools. Very few were referred by other agencies. This raises the issues of access to the Connexions services by young people not attending schools in these rural areas. In the more urban areas schools were the most common referral route, but in several cases other agencies (such as Educational Welfare, YOT, Job Centres and Social Services) were also involved.

6.1.2. CONNEXIONS COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE

Coventry and Warwickshire represents an example of a mixed rural-urban Connexions Partnership and hence represents the norm for England. Delivery staff who participated were based in Coventry and in the rural parts of Warwickshire. Table 6.3 displays a summary of the results.

Table 6.3 Results from Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire logbooks

Delivery staff location	Average weekly mileage per PA (miles)	Average weekly travel time per PA (mins.)	Average weekly number of one-to-one interventions	Average number of visits per client	Average number of weekly referrals
Rural	124	310	15.0	3.75	1.0
Urban	45	175	18.0	1.0	2.0

Travelling distances were higher for rural delivery staff. This reflected differing working practices, as urban delivery staff tended to be based within Connexions centres for the majority of their working time, servicing clients *in situ*. In the rural areas of Warwickshire, delivery staff tended to be less static, spending only a short amount of time within Connexions centres. The rest of their time was spent conducting outreach work and visiting rural schools. Travel times are proportionally higher for

delivery staff within the urban area of Coventry, with a journey of eight miles taking at most one hour, compared to 20 minutes for the equivalent journey in rural Warwickshire.

Referrals by the Connexions Service to other agencies were twice as common in urban areas, perhaps reflecting easier access to, and availability of, specialist agencies, training providers and employers. If this is true in the general case, it supports the generally-held view that these types of services are more readily available in towns. Repeat visits were more common in rural situations, possibly reflecting (as in Cumbria) the lack of opportunity (for employment training or other specialists referral services) for young people in rural areas. Again, in rural areas, young people were most likely to make contact with Connexions through schools rather than on their own initiative or through other agencies. In the urban areas young people often dropped in to ‘one-stop-shops’ and were referred by schools and training providers. Lastly, in terms of client attendance rates, the data showed that only two out of eight clients turned up for one urban personal advisor, whereas all clients attended their meetings with rural delivery staff. This highlights the differing problems faced across regions within the same Connexions Partnership.

6.1.3. THE BLACK COUNTRY CONNEXIONS

The Black Country Connexions Service covers a large urban section of the West Midlands, including Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall. A summary of the results can be seen in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Results from The Black Country Connexions logbooks

Delivery staff location	Average weekly mileage per PA (miles)	Average weekly travel time per PA (mins.)	Average weekly number of one-to-one interventions	Average number of visits per client	Average number of weekly referrals
Urban	47.5	445	10.0	3.0	3.0

The average weekly mileage for delivery staff was relatively low in The Black Country. However, in comparison to distance, travelling times were the highest out of all the Connexions Partnerships. This reflected several factors mentioned in the logbooks and in the workshops. Firstly, the area suffers badly from congestion. For example, one journey of seven miles took one hour. Thus although mileage is reduced, staff down time is comparable, if not higher, than for their rural counterparts. Additionally, because local roads are congested, delivery staff are often encouraged to use public

transport. Thus travelling time may again be increased due to multiple bus changes and waiting for connections.

In comparison to the other Connexions Partnerships, the average number of visits per client was high for an urban location. This may reflect different working practices or different client needs requiring repeated visits. Referrals to other agencies were also frequent, indicating that within the urban environment specialist agencies, employers and training providers are available and accessible to young people, or that cases where young people have multiple or profound needs are more prevalent. The average one-to-one intervention rate was quite low in the Black Country. However, this can again be explained by data found on the 'other activities' sheet which indicated that a proportion of most urban personal advisors' week is taken up by group working and training. Contact with the The Black Country Connexions was initiated by a wide range of institutions, including Schools, FE Colleges, other training providers, parents and also specialist agencies dealing with clients excluded from schools. However, the majority of contacts were made by young people calling into Connexions 'one-stop-shops'.

6.2. Logbook summary and conclusions

The results from the logbooks indicate a number of differing service delivery issues which are likely to have differential cost implications. The conclusions below have been drawn from the Tables 6.2 to 6.4, and supplemented by the more detailed and descriptive accounts within the diary sheets:

Travel costs and time

- Delivery staff working in rural Partnerships (including rural areas of mixed Partnerships) often have to travel longer distances for training and professional meetings.
- Rural delivery staff have to travel further to see clients in schools and outreach centres.
- Data within the logbooks reveals that in some cases travelling times for urban delivery staff can be increased through congestion, walking and the use of public transport.
- Rural delivery staff travel to multiple schools and deal with all types of clients.
- Staff time lost due to travelling is intensified in both rural and urban areas when clients do not attend meetings.

Referrals

- Referrals to other agencies by Connexions Partnerships are more frequent in urban areas – possibly reflecting the greater concentration of employment, training and specialist support agencies there.

- Referrals from other agencies to Connexions are frequent in both rural and urban locations. However, a greater range of agencies are involved in urban areas.
- Young people were more likely to make self-referral contact with Connexions themselves in urban areas.

Other

- Minimal direct costs are passed onto clients whilst delivering the Connexions Service in both rural and urban areas.
- Data from the diary sheets indicate that group work is more common for urban-based delivery staff. Thus the urban environment can give economies of scale that reduce costs in comparison to rural areas.

7. CONNEXIONS PARTNERSHIPS PROFILES : SERVICE DELIVERY AND COST

In order to observe the actual and proxy cost factors in context, profiles of three Connexions Partnerships are presented. Connexions Cornwall and Devon, Humber and The Black Country have been chosen as they represent rural, mixed rural and urban, and solely urban service delivery respectively. It is recognised that the cost factors associated with each of the profiles will not be representative of all Connexions Partnerships operating in rural and urban locations, due to variations in Partnership structure, service delivery decisions, population densities and distributions, and the local socio-economic environment. Rather, the profiles illustrate how service delivery and costs can differ among Connexions Partnerships operating across the rural-urban gradient.

For each profile, information was drawn from business plans, mapping tool data, in-house reports, Partnership websites, data collated at the Connexions Service National Unit, and also data collected during the phase two interviewing process and Personal Advisor workshops. These profiles combine qualitative and quantitative data in a synthetic format, so as to illustrate costs in rural, mixed and urban service delivery locations. Thus each profile includes:

- A discussion of the local economy and demographics.
- A review of the types of organisational structure in operation (Sub Contracting/Direct Delivery/Lead body).
- An exploration of how the Connexions Service delivery is structured throughout the different regions of the Connexions Partnerships.
- Specific descriptive and anecdotal data obtained from interviews and workshops.
- A discussion of costs, including premises, staffing, administration, ICT, and travel, and how these costs are embedded into the working structure of the Connexions Services.

7.1. *Connexions Cornwall and Devon: a profile of rural and urban cost difference*

7.1.2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Connexions Cornwall and Devon is geographically the largest Partnership in England, covering an area of 1,028,279 ha, with a total 13 to 19 year-old population of 121,869 (see Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1 for population density information). The Partnership contains a range of urban, semi-urban, rural and remotely rural sub-regions. Consequently, it has an interest in both urban and rural service delivery issues and costs. The counties of Devon and Cornwall are largely rural but contain several urban centres (Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter). In this profile two areas of a contrasting nature have been chosen to demonstrate the cost differentials between rural and urban situations. These are Plymouth and Cornwall respectively. This profile is the outcome of face-to-face interviews with Connexions Cornwall and Devon staff and information provided from their Business Plan, Delivery Plan, Mapping Tool Data, MI data, as well as information from the pilot evaluation document. Below is a brief outline of the issues faced within the two areas.

Figure 7.1 Population density in Cornwall and Devon (by Local Authority/Unitary Authority)

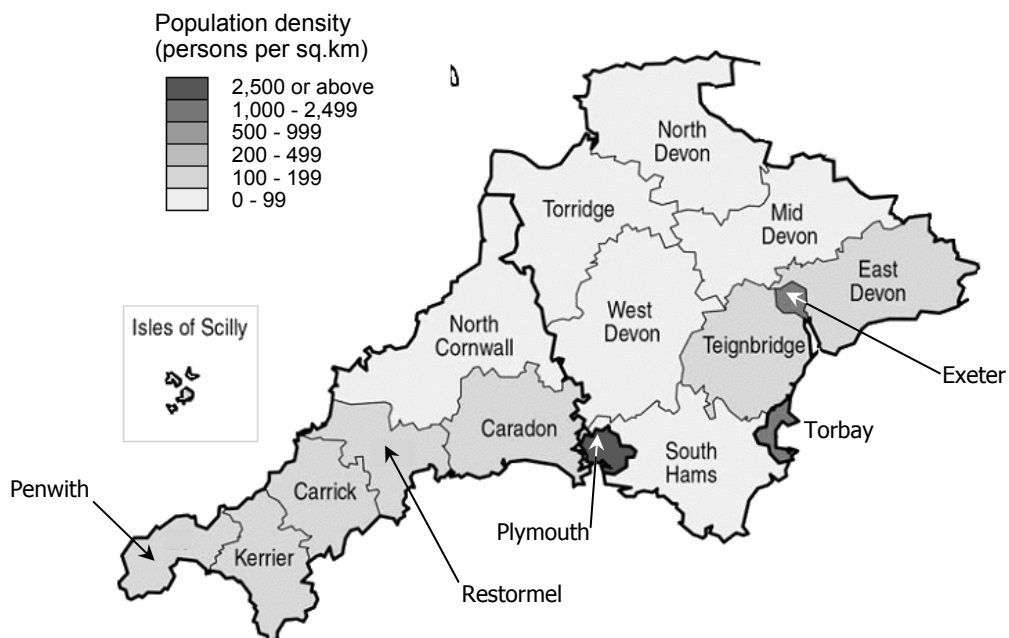


Table 7.1 Population densities for Cornwall Local Authorities and Plymouth Unitary Authority

	Area (sq. km)	Population (000s)	Population density (per sq. km)
Penwith LA	304	59	195
Kerrier LA	473	91	91
Carrick LA	461	85	185
Restormel LA	452	91	202
North Cornwall LA	1,190	81	68
Caradon LA	664	81	122
Plymouth UA	80	253	3,162

7.1.2. CORNWALL

The Cornwall Local Management Committee area covers 3,544 sq. km and has the longest stretch of coastline of any county in the country. This feature has implications for the delivery of services, for it leaves Cornwall physically isolated and unable to draw upon service resources from other regions. The total population is estimated to be 494,655 (1999, ONS) including a 13 to 19 year old cohort of 42,494. Population density is approximately 140 persons per sq. km, but the county is a mixture of very rural areas and more densely populated small towns (see Figure 7.1). In North Cornwall LA there are only 67 persons per sq. km compared with 202 for Restormel LA.

The local economy is based on a high percentage of micro and small businesses, with a high percentage of self-employed (23.3% of the workforce are self employed compared with 12.1% in England as a whole). The service sector offers most employment, with nearly one fifth of the workforce in wholesale/retail. The tourist industry is important and over one in ten workers are employed in hotels and restaurants. However, much of this employment is seasonal. Manufacturing is less important in Cornwall than nationally, although there have been increases in employment within this sector in the last five years. Average incomes in Cornwall in 1999 were the lowest in the country.

The economy is generally improving but some industries are affected by skill shortages and have difficulty recruiting young people. Currently there are limited local opportunities to participate in higher education, and a 'brain drain' of young people from the area continues. Difficulties experienced by young people wanting to enter the labour market are compounded by the number of small and micro businesses who can be less willing or less able to offer training. This has obvious implications for the Connexions Partnership as repeated visits tend to be required for young people with few opportunities, particularly if other barriers are also present.

Access to services is a major problem, particularly for young people living in the more remote parts of the county and without access to their own transport. Whilst public transport is reportedly better than in other parts of the country, it is still very difficult to reach facilities and to work in places other than one's home town, without personal motorised transport. Many towns do not have their own Further Education College or Training Organisation, and whilst colleges and some approved trainers do offer transport, the distances and time involved in travelling can deter some young people from engaging, particularly those who may have additional personal barriers. Thus for Connexions to work effectively it has to ensure access, either through repeated small scale provision of drop-in centres, or increased outreach work by delivery staff. Both options lead to increased costs (Information Courtesy of Connexions Cornwall and Devon Mapping Tool, 2001).

7.1.3. PLYMOUTH

Plymouth covers an area of 80 sq. km and, after Bristol, is the second largest urban area in the South West of England. Its population is 253,182 (1999, ONS), which includes 23,989 13-19 year olds within the unitary area. The area is the most densely populated in Cornwall and Devon with 3,162 people per sq. km. In common with other urban areas, Plymouth has a higher percentage of young people than other areas in Cornwall and Devon. Population growth has been limited in the last ten years and it is predicted that in the near future urban areas will see lower population expansion than rural zones.

Plymouth has a higher percentage of large employers than any other area in Cornwall and Devon. It is the main manufacturing centre for the two counties. Public administration and defence employ one in ten of the total workforce, reflecting the dominance of the Royal Naval facilities in the city. In the past year, employment in call centres has increased considerably. However, average wages in Plymouth are below the national average.

In August 2000 the unemployment rate for Plymouth was 2.8% (4,726 claimants) compared with 3.0% in England. There were 54 under 18 claimants registered at this time. Cornwall and Devon Careers

worked with 1,051 unemployed 16 and 17 year olds in Plymouth between 1.9.2000 and 31.8.2001 (Information Courtesy of Connexions Cornwall and Devon Mapping Tool, 2001).

7.1.4. DELIVERY STRUCTURE, PROPERTY AND RUNNING COSTS

The projected budget costs for premises in Connexions Cornwall and Devon (not including running costs) is £718,000 (2002/3). The property and running costs of centres in Plymouth and Cornwall differ greatly although they are not directly comparable because of their different sizes. The cost for property in Cornwall is £515,000 compared with £176,000 in Plymouth – approximately three times more, not including staffing and travel. These costs are heightened because rural Cornwall covers a large area but has a low population density. Consequently, a number of small part-time centres are required to service the dispersed population. In Plymouth, Connexions is able to operate a more centralised delivery structure with a single premise. These data are shown in Table 7.2

Table 7.2 Costs of premises in Cornwall and Plymouth

	Premises Costs only(£s)	Premises and Running Costs (£s)
Cornwall	256,000	515,000
Plymouth	72,000	176,000

The most prominent difference between the Connexions Service in Plymouth and Cornwall is the structure of delivery. In Plymouth there is one centrally located Connexions office to service the population of 23,989 13 to 19 year olds. In contrast, Cornwall has thirteen widely dispersed offices catering for a population of 42,494 13 to 19 year olds. This has clear implications for the cost and nature of service delivery in the two sub-regions. Although Cornwall has a larger and more dispersed presence of Connexions offices, concerns about equality of access were still raised. This was illustrated by an analysis of the number of callers (walk-ins) to the different centres. In Cornwall the total number of walk-in callers was 7,965, whereas Plymouth’s one office alone received 7,119 visitors (April 2001 to March 2002). These figures suggest that access to Connexions remains an issue even when multiple service outlets are provided. Furthermore, due to low population densities, most of the centres located in rural areas are only staffed part-time. Although this enables Connexions to have a presence in more areas – allowing access to more young people – each office is only open on a restricted basis.

Data concerning one-to-one contacts with Priority 1 and 2 clients reveals an interesting pattern (see Table 7.3). In both cases personal advisors in Cornwall see more clients on a one-to-one basis. There

are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, due to low client densities, group work is virtually impossible in remote rural regions. Secondly, the increased number of one-to-one visits may indicate that more out-reach work is required to contact potential clients in isolated rural areas. Both of these reasons will have inflationary cost implications for the implementation of the Connexions Service in rural areas. Lastly, it is also noted that proportionally more clients are seen in Plymouth than Cornwall (according to the total population of 13-19 year-olds present in each area).

Table 7.3 Priority 1 – Intensive Support; Priority 2 – Sustained Support

		total one-to-one contacts	total number of delivery staff (FTE)	contacts per delivery staff
Priority 1	Cornwall	3426	24.5	140
	Plymouth	1841	22.3	83
Priority 2	Cornwall	1599	11.4	140
	Plymouth	953	11.5	83

Source, MI Tracking System April - September 2002

7.1.5. TRANSPORT

Travel represented a major concern for Connexions Cornwall and Devon for two reasons, namely, costs and accessibility to transport, for both clients and delivery staff working in rural areas. In a response made to the Social Exclusion Unit Consultation on Transport and Social Exclusion, Cornwall and Devon argued that within isolated rural communities there were issues of access to education, training, work, personal development and social opportunities. Connexions have offered a number of solutions to their clients' access problems, including the use of shared premises, outreach points, peripatetic delivery staff and ICT.

The travel costs for delivery staff working across rural Cornwall were higher than in the urban centre of Plymouth (£83,000 in Cornwall compared to £34,000 in Plymouth). Connexions staff maintained that the higher costs resulted from the outreach work that was necessary to access clients in isolated rural locations, as well as travelling to scattered rural schools. Furthermore, they suggested that management travel costs were also increased for travel within the Partnership area due to its size. This factor also related to staff training within the Partnership. Management travel costs were also said to be significant for meetings outside the Partnership (for example, at the DfES offices in London and Sheffield).

7.1.6. PARTNER AGENCIES

The number of delivery and support organisations for young people, other than the Connexions Service, also changes from urban Plymouth to rural Cornwall. Below are the numbers of other delivery and support organisations held on Devon and Cornwall's database of providers (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Partner agencies, numbers of 13–19 year-olds and area for Cornwall LMC and Plymouth

	Cornwall	Plymouth
Number of partner agencies	219	179
Number of 13-19 year-olds	42,494	23,989
Area (sq. km)	3,544	80

Although, the figures themselves do not reveal the types of service, numbers catered for and opening hours, they again offer an insight into the depth of rural and urban service provision. Plymouth is better provided for in terms of services per 13 to 19 year-old. When the number of service providers per square kilometre is taken into account the differences become even more stark. This problem of the availability and accessibility of other services for young people was mentioned during the interviews. The lack of alternative support services in rural areas obliged the Connexions Service to provide more skilled delivery staff, who would be able to deal directly with different levels and types of need. This factor also necessitates repeated visits to clients who had few opportunities open to them.

Data concerning the total numbers of referrals also reflects the problems that result from this support agency deficit. In the period April to September, 2002, there were 77 referrals in Cornwall (out of a base of 42,494), compared to 78 for Plymouth (with a cohort population base of 23,989). Low client population densities means that there may not be enough demand (in terms of numbers) to support specialist support agencies such as drug teams and support for asylum seekers. Mapping tool data supports this claim. For some isolated rural areas, the very small number of clients requiring specific support means that it would be cost ineffective to put a full or even part-time service in operation. For example, in October 2001 within the whole of Cornwall only two asylum seekers were recorded within the Connexions age group. Similarly there were only 88 young people for whom English is an additional language.

7.1.7. NON-CONNEXIONS SERVICE NATIONAL UNIT FUNDING

Cornwall and Devon have been successful in securing outside funding. Their business plan indicates receipt of a total of £2,231,000 from sources other than the Connexions Service National Unit allocation, including grants from the European Structural Fund (ESF), other government funds and from non-governmental sources. This may reflect the fact that Cornwall has Objective 1 status within the EU, and is thus currently in receipt of extra funding. However, Cornwall and Devon also give a large number of grants to voluntary and community projects with the aim of increasing the sector's capacity. Data from their 2002/3 budget projection suggests that they will grant £300,000 to a wide range of voluntary and community groups.

7.1.8. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Connexions Cornwall and Devon believe that ICT has a major role to play in delivering its services to clients in remote rural regions, though staff also recognise that personal contact is also necessary. Its website is geared to help young people with a variety of problems and enquiries. It is highly developed and offers a considerable source of information to young people, parents, practitioners and partners. Young people gain instant access to in-depth information and links about careers, money, housing, health and recreation, with many other topics covered in less detail.

7.2. The Black Country Connexions : an urban Partnership

7.2.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Black Country Connexions Service operates within a predominantly urban area of the West Midlands, including Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The area covers 35,730 ha and has a population of 91,363 13 to 19 year-olds. The Black Country Connexions operates under the sub-contracting model of service delivery.

Within the region, 15 percent of clients are rated as Priority 1, 59 percent as Priority 2 and 26 percent as Priority 3. Additionally, reflecting urban population densities, levels of need are high overall within the region (Table 7.5). The high proportion of young people classified as Priorities 1 and 2 and their associated levels of need add to the costs and problems faced by the Partnership, as the majority of young people require in-depth guidance and support from delivery staff.

Table 7.5 Demographic characteristics for The Black Country Connexions

	Area (sq. km)	Population (000s)	Population density (per sq. km)
Wolverhampton	69	242	3502
Sandwell	86	291	3378
Dudley	98	311	3178
Walsall	106	261	2464

7.2.2. RESOURCES FROM PARTNERS

According to budget data The Black Country Connexions will receive £322,000 from sources other than the Connexions Service National Unit allocation (2002/3). Although this amount may seem small for such a large urban Connexions Partnership, the Black Country Partnership also receives a

significant number of ‘contributions in kind’. Additionally, an extensive range of voluntary and community sector projects provide innovative support for young people in a wide variety of locations across the Partnership. Delivery staff often work in multi-agency teams, where the partner’s contribution to Connexions includes the rent of premises, rates and running costs. For example, the new premises for Connexions in Sandwell will be partially funded by the Youth Service. According to the 2002/3 business plan, additional resources have been utilised for the following activities and areas of work delivered by Black Country Connexions: the summer activities programme, Black Country Drugs Prevention and Regeneration Partnership, enhancing pastoral support in colleges and contract holder for the Diploma for Personal Advisers training programme on behalf of the AWMCS¹³.

7.2.3. TRAVEL

Discussions with management and delivery staff revealed that although the distances travelled by staff are usually shorter than might be the case for rural Partnerships, journey times are often longer. This is due to several factors directly related to the nature of the urban environment, including traffic congestion and the use of alternative modes of transport (walking and public transport). This was supported by logbook data, where, for example, a seven mile journey within Wolverhampton resulted in one hour of lost staff time. These problems are intensified when staff are required to double up for health and safety reasons. Together, they compound the cost of ‘dead staff time’. These costs are not unique to the Black Country and have been confirmed by other urban Partnerships within our sample (Connexions Merseyside/Halton, and staff operating within the urban centres of Connexions Humber).

7.2.4. STRUCTURE OF DELIVERY

To cope with the amount and complexity of problems encountered by urban young people, The Black Country Connexions has had to deploy staff in several locations. Staff are located in all schools to deliver the universal service. Alongside this, intensive support delivery staff also operate within schools to offer more in-depth guidance for those with special requirements. However, the challenge for The Black Country Connexions is accessing the large numbers of young people – also in need of intensive sustained support – who do not attend school, training or employment. A variety of service delivery methods are undertaken to offer support to these groups which are often costly and time-consuming, without necessarily fulfilling officially recognised targets.

It is suggested that these problems are exacerbated by the urban setting, where factors such as crime, drug abuse and racism act as barriers to young people seeking support, as well as for delivery staff

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trying to reach young people in need. The Black Country Connexions supports these groups by operating out of a variety of locations such as youth clubs and by supplying teams of delivery staff who go out in groups to engage individuals on the street.

7.2.5. PREMISES

The costs of premises is projected to be £407,000 for 2002/3. The business plan suggests that the Partnership will have seven centres in each borough by 2005. At the present time, eight centres are spread throughout the conurbation and run by Prospects. Additionally, staff are located in several multi-agency one-stop-shops, schools, FE colleges and other service delivery outlets. This point was illustrated by a Personal Advisor who attended the workshop in the Black Country. She was based at a one-stop-shop called 'The Palace', a youth-based project dealing with 11-25 year-olds in central Wolverhampton. The centre offered multi-agency working in an accessible and non-intimidating manner. Agencies present included Connexions delivery staff, health workers, counsellors, life skills workers, and mental health workers. The project is funded by the 'Community Association'. Connexions gave some one-off funding for equipment, and pays for the delivery staff based there. Consequently, rents and rates, alongside many of the day-to-day costs of the delivery staff (stationary, phone calls, etc.) are received as benefits in kind. However, it was also argued that although benefits were gained through this way of working, the workload of the delivery staff was often increased as clients visiting the centres needed intensive help for multiple problems.

7.2.6. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The Black Country Provision Database and Helpdesk Service represents a web-based application to allow delivery staff more freedom to access clients in different locations. Website developments are also taking place for clients in the area, with 'Prospects' (the Partnership's major sub-contractor) initiating a new Website and an on-line careers club as part of the Connexions Service.

7.2.7. URBAN SPECIFIC COSTS

Discussions with The Black Country Connexions management and delivery staff raised a number of issues which they felt led to increased costs in urban areas. The point was specifically made that because there were so many young people with multiple needs, resources were out-stripped. The weighting part of the formula was not seen to cover these costs. It was suggested that some young people's problems are so profound that many repeated interventions are needed to help them. The delivery staff often found it problematic to meet formal targets during outreach work with Priority 1 clients. They suggested that many individual subjective targets were met, but that these were not measured by official targets recorded. Delivery staff argued that it was an issue of personal

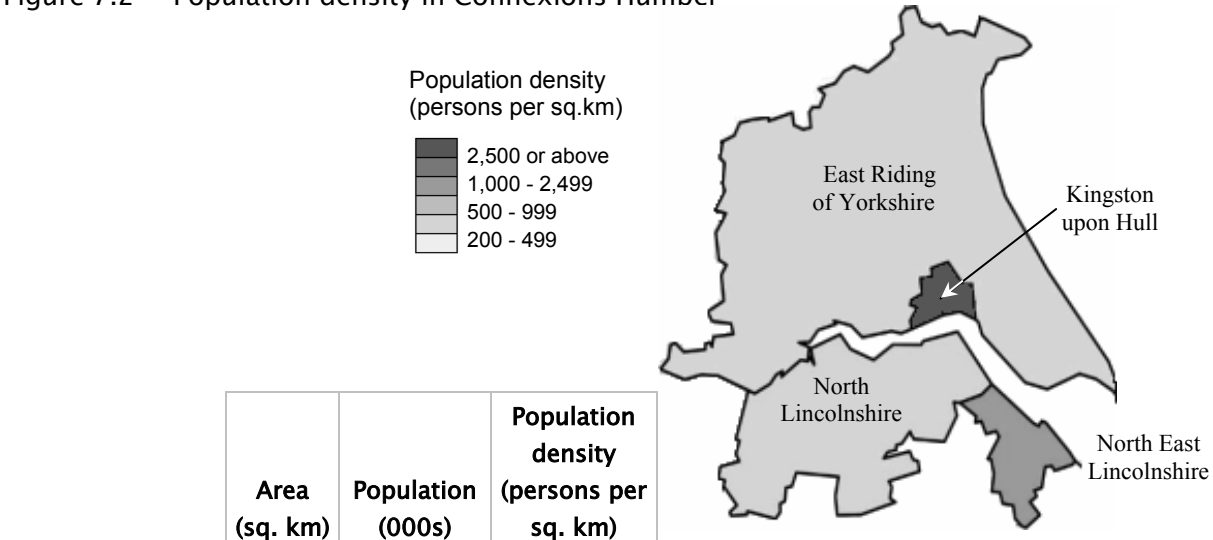
‘inchstones’ rather than ‘milestones’, which needed to be met before more formal goals could be addressed in terms of training and employment, a view also supported by delivery staff working within Hull. The delivery staff present at the workshop illustrated this by explaining that they often conducted intensive outreach work in areas of deprivation. They worked in groups of three, meeting young people in their own environment. Time was needed to build up a rapport with clients before formal interventions could be initiated. This kind of intensive outreach work is costly in terms of travelling, staffing and time, but is required in areas suffering from severe urban deprivation and its associated effects and consequences. These costs and problems were further magnified by the fact that many of the target client population were resistant to support, lacked aspiration and were part of a rejectionist sub-culture.

7.3. Connexions Humber : a mixed rural urban Partnership

7.3.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Connexions Humber covers a diverse area encompassing both profoundly rural and urban regions. The area is split into four Local Management Committees including Hull (Urban), North East Lincolnshire (Urban), the East Riding (Rural) and North Lincolnshire (Rural). The area has a combined size of 351,067 ha and a population of 72,500 13-19 year olds, who are unevenly distributed throughout (Figure 7.2). In terms of need, 12 percent of 13-19 year-olds require Priority 1 support, 46 percent Priority 2 and 42 percent Priority 3. Consequently, the high numbers of Priority 1 and 2 clients add to the costs of delivering the Connexions Service, with more intensive work required from delivery staff. However, it is unlikely that the proportionate breakdown into the different priority groups is replicated across the region.

Figure 7.2 Population density in Connexions Humber



East Riding	2,415	313	130
North Lincs.	833	152	183
N.E. Lincs.	192	156	814
Hull	38	147	3,877

7.3.2. NEEDS PRIORITIES

Utilising the 'deprivation index'¹⁴ as well as mapping tool data, an understanding can be gained concerning the distribution of differing levels of social exclusion and need (index of deprivation ranks out of all 354 English local authorities where 1 is the most deprived). For example, Kingston upon Hull has the highest population density in the region and is ranked 26th on the deprivation index (Table 7.6), and accordingly has a high proportion of Priority 1 and 2 clients. East Riding is essentially rural, but also has a number of significant centres of population as well as a number of smaller market towns. East Riding is ranked 275th on the index of deprivation and has lower levels of identified needs as defined by the Connexions service. The consequence of these local differences will be reflected in the number of delivery staff required to service clients in these areas, and the type of service that Connexions offers.

Table 7.6 Demographic characteristics and deprivation in Connexions Humber

	number of 13-19 year-olds	% of total	Index of Deprivation Rank
Hull (Urban)	21,000	29	26
NE Lincolnshire (Urban)	15,000	21	73
N Lincolnshire (Rural)	13,500	19	111
East Riding (Rural)	23,000	32	275

Source: Connexions Humber

7.3.3. STRUCTURE OF DELIVERY

Humber Connexions has 6 sub-contractors that deliver the Service across the region. Within the urban areas of Hull, Beverley, Grimsby, Goole and Scunthorpe, Connexions Service offers a centralised system whereby young people within the locality are able to access the Service with relative ease. However, in the more rural areas of East Riding and North Lincolnshire, it is more difficult and less

14 "1998 Index of Deprivation: Research Summary No.15", Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, December 2000

cost efficient to run a service based around a full-time centrally-located centre. Rural areas are therefore serviced by a number of part-time centres and peripatetic delivery staff.

Humber Connexions is one of the initial Connexions pilots. During the evaluation of the pilots, the ‘one-stop-shop’ of Hull’s Young People’s Support Service (YPSS) was identified as a good practice case study. YPPS was chosen for several reasons, including its success in multi-agency working and the successful engagement of young people in the development and implementation of the services provided. Delivery staff from Connexions Humber suggested that the multi-agency service delivery in Hull and other urban areas predates Connexions and works more effectively and efficiently because of this. It was further suggested that costs could be reduced for the Connexions Service, particularly within rural areas (but also urban areas), when multi-agency working becomes the norm. Under multi-agency working conditions, the costs of premises, staff and maintenance could all be shared, with net benefits for all.

In the rural areas of Connexions Humber, out-reach centres act as a base for delivery staff who would otherwise spend much of their time working elsewhere. Through these centres, they can conduct outreach work in the community, schools and colleges. These delivery staff have a generic role and deal with a variety of clients with different levels and types of need. To ensure that knowledge and expertise is kept up-to-date, specialist agencies work through centres of excellence, where Connexions delivery staff can access the knowledge and take it with them to the point of need. When a Personal Advisor has a client in need of more specialist help he/she can be referred to the appropriate agency. However, in rural areas, delivery staff have noted the scarcity of specialist support agencies. This can result in extra travelling and associated costs. In effect it acts as a barrier to the young person’s further support. This view was frequently expressed across the rural Connexions Partnerships sampled.

Connexions Humber is currently building Connexions Information Points in all the schools, youth centres and colleges they work in. This resource helps young people access information and find answers to their own personal and educational questions. Connexions Humber plans to extend these information points to other voluntary organisations within the region. This represents an initial cost but may eventually increase the number of self-referrals, thus reducing the workload of delivery staff and associated costs.

7.3.4. TRAVEL

Discussions during the Humber workshops suggested that delivery staff in rural areas were more likely to make lengthy journeys than their urban equivalents. However, once again it was recognised that travel time was increased for urban delivery staff due to congestion and the greater use of public rather than private car-based transport. Alternatively, rural delivery staff expressed the opinion that

travelling took as long, if not longer, on rural roads. In both situations, delivery staff are not allowed to carry clients in their own cars. This has cost and time implications, for in urban areas delivery staff are often able to use buses, but in rural areas taxis (at a higher cost) are the only realistic alternative.

7.3.5. PREMISES

Connexions Humber operates out of a number of premises across the region. However, accessing data on this proved difficult because of the sub-contracting delivery model. Table 7.7 shows where delivery staff are located throughout Connexions Humber. The Partnership operates out of a number of differing premises in Hull. It is difficult to determine the costs involved because of the sharing of premises (and associated costs), or costs contributed in kind from partner agencies.

Table 7.7 The Distribution of Connexions Humber outlets.

Location	Subcontractor	Location of Centres	Serving Rural or Urban Population
Hull	The Humberside Partnership (THP) Hull City Council The Warren	City Centre Bransholme City Centre Bransholme	Urban
North East Lincolnshire	THP North East Lincolnshire Council	City Centre Grimsby Part-time Immingham Grimsby	Urban
East Riding	THP	Beverley Bridlington Goole Hessle Part-time Pocklington	Rural
North Lincolnshire	THP	Scunthorpe Part-time Barton Part-time Brigg	Rural

Source Connexions Humber

In fact property costs are high in both urban and rural areas. Urban Hull requires five outlets to deal with the levels and range of problems related to the higher population densities and levels of social exclusion. However, in rural North Lincolnshire and East Riding, costs are increased because of repeated small scale service provision.

7.3.6. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

It is the view of Connexions Humber management and delivery staff that young people in rural areas have less access to a range of support services. This is born out by the list of services published in local directories of support for young people (‘*Youth Fax: A Rough Guide For Living 2002*’, ‘*Hull and East Riding Options*’ (HEROS) and other data from East Riding Council. There is a wider range and a greater number of accessible support services for young people located within the city of Hull. Support services were available for the young people of East Riding, but these were predominantly limited to the two urban centres of Beverley and Bridlington. Gaps in support in rural areas were also recognised by Connexions Humber. These rural gaps included housing services for young homeless in Beverley, a lack of services for pupils excluded from school and poverty drugs-related support services (no rehabilitation and detox services)¹⁵. Apart from Connexions, then, there is a general lack of specialist service provision in the rural areas of Connexions Humber. This puts an extra burden on Connexions delivery staff, with clear cost implications of repeated visits.

These issues also relate to training providers and employment opportunities. This was highlighted in the following extract taken from the workshop conducted with delivery staff from across the Humber region:

“In rural areas problems and costs rise if individuals are excluded. This is because there are few schools or other training alternatives in the area. Consequently, the costs of support fall on Connexions for a longer period of time. This problem may be emphasised by the lack of different subjects and specialist services offered by rural training providers (this is particularly a problem in the East Riding). Additionally, in rural areas, there is often no option of after-school activities due to the pupil’s/client’s reliance on infrequent and sparse public transport, or lifts from parents” (Comment during the workshop of Connexions Humber Personal Advisors, 19/08/02).

7.3.7. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Connexions Humber uses ICT for all areas of service delivery. Some delivery staff are currently equipped with laptops to allow more flexible and efficient working practices. Computers are also being installed in a limited number of schools to allow educational delivery staff to input data at the school rather than at the office after a long return journey. Connexions Humber is also experimenting with video conferencing techniques in the East Riding, through the infrastructure of ‘East Riding Citizen Link’. This may reduce costs if successful, but face-to-face contact will still be required to

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some extent. A website has also been constructed to aid the delivery and access of the Connexions service.

7.4. Profile Summary and Conclusions

The three profiles above succinctly illustrate some of the major differences between Connexions service delivery in rural and urban areas. The profiles reveal the difficulty of separating cost and quality issues. This is because costs often arise because of strategic decisions which impact upon the effectiveness of the service in both urban and rural areas. Service delivery in the larger urban centres requires a number of service outlets, which cater for a range of clients with multiple needs. Outreach work is also required to help young people with multiple needs, and due to the greater intensity and complexity of problems in urban areas this leads to greater costs. Smaller urban centres can usually be served by one Connexions centre which will often cater for a larger surrounding area, through public transport links and out-reach work. Rural areas, which are isolated from urban centres by sheer distance and a lack of public transport links, rely upon a number of smaller centres, which are often staffed on a part-time basis. Rural service delivery also requires more intensive out-reach work to service additional clients with problems but without access to a Connexions centre. All of these factors will have cost implications for the delivery of the Connexions Service.

Connexions Cornwall and Devon have demonstrated a more developed approach to ICT as a means of delivering advice and learning, which is emphasised by the quality of their new and improved website. It is likely that this increased emphasis is in part a response to accessibility problems in the Partnership’s remote rural zones. This emphasis will have cost implications due to website data collection, development and maintenance costs.

Statistically, Cornwall and Devon and The Black Country have many similarities (Tables 7.8 and 7.9). However, although they are similar in cohort population size and the number of delivery staff, they are very different in terms of geographical size and associated population density. It is clear that urban Partnerships face difficulties and added costs due to the nature of the urban environment, but the data present here does suggest that predominantly rural Partnerships such as Cornwall and Devon face very real difficulties and extra costs in terms of repeated small scale provision, and for travel.

Table 7.8 Comparative statistics for Connexions Cornwall and Devon, Black Country and Humber

Number of 13-19 year-olds	Number of delivery staff	Ratio of delivery staff to 13-19 year-olds	Size (ha)	Number of 13-19 year olds per sq. km
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Cornwall and Devon	121,869	176.4	690.9 : 1	1,028,279	12
The Black Country	91,363	140.6	649.8 : 1	35,730	256
Humber	72,500	187.0	387.7 : 1	351,067	20

Table 7.9 Baseline statistics for 3 Connexions Partnerships

	The Black Country	Cornwall and Devon	Humber
Number of 13–19 year olds	91,363	121,869	70,054
Number with 5 or more GCSE A*–C	5,350	9,243	4,496
Number with <5 GCSE 5A*–C	8,133	8,612	6,680
Number with 1–4 GCSE A*–G but no passes in English and Mathematics	281	193	234
Number with less than 5 A*–G GCSEs (inc. English & Maths)	1,122	1,003	971
Number with no GCSE passes	841	810	737
NETs 16–17 years	7,056	7,047	4,501
NETs 16–17 years as % of total 13–19 year-olds	2.66	2.66	1.70
Unemployed 6 months+ 18–24 years	1,345	585	790
Income support claimants 18–24 years	7,021	6,487	5,199
CSNU allocation (£s)	11,063,000	11,625,000	8,377,951
Special needs weighting as % of CSNU allocation	6.6	5.0	6.6

8. COST FACTORS : SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

We have already noted that the data collected in the course of this study is fragmentary. Universal baseline data on population, administrative units, the funding formula and the funding allocation itself, have been collected, but we have only been able to retrieve and collate limited information on the number and allocation of delivery staff, interventions and referrals, travel distances and costs, the cost of premises, and the size of secondary schools and post 16 educational establishments; along with some further data on support agencies and learning providers. We have focussed on quantitative data, but where this has not been available, we have used qualitative information. These two forms of data have been combined particularly in the profiles. All of this data is partial in its coverage of the Connexions network. Cumulatively, these data enable us to take snapshots of particular situations and make small-sample comparisons, but within the scope of the study it has not been possible to generate a set of comparators, consistent across a fully representative range of Partnerships.

This lack of consistency results partly from the different ways in which data is held in the different Partnerships. In some cases rapid and easy retrieval of key information is possible. In others, the data cannot easily be identified and extracted. These differences are due in part to the different models of implementation adopted by the different Partnerships, particularly in the case of sub-contracting systems. A second constraint relates to the fact that the standardised tracking and monitoring system is not yet fully implemented. Once this is achieved, these data will be more easily accessible. To a certain extent these limitation result from the fact that the Connexions Service has only been operational for a short time. Indeed, there are still some Partnerships which have not yet become active. Whilst we have received very constructive co-operation from the Partnerships we have contacted and visited, the fact remains that at this point in time, many are too pressed to devote the necessary time to extract the data that we have requested. Furthermore, as we have observed, in many cases, it is simply not available in a form that can be retrieved without excessive effort.

The results from the cost factors survey have been presented thematically; each cost factor being considered in turn. The three Connexions Partnership profiles draw these different cost themes together within the context of individual region. It is apparent from these profiles and from the returns of the logbooks, that the individual costs factors we have examined affect the service in a compound manner. The dispersed nature of rural clients requires prolonged travel over great distances at high costs if they are to be reached. Public transport services are often poor. At the same time, the relative lack of support or referral services and the dearth of training providers tends to necessitate repeat visits; and the small and part-time operation of outreach centres means much duplication of effort. In urban settings, travel is constrained by congestion and the need to use public services. Feelings of social exclusion in some poor urban housing estates, coupled with high rates of unemployment, poor

school attendance and a host of other social problems mean that delivery staff tend to have to devote extensive time and effort just to establish contact with young people. Many respondents argue that these factors are not fully covered by the funding formula.

Where possible, we have attempted to draw these different elements together by expressing them as ratios (for example, by comparing the client base to the number of delivery staff, to the number of interventions, or by expressing travel costs on a per contact or per delivery staff ratio). Whilst these indices are helpful in the way they can highlight urban and rural differences, we stress again that they are founded on small samples and should be extrapolated with caution.

The subject of deferred costs has been considered. It has been suggested (by the Countryside Agency, for example) that the costs of accessing the Connexions Service are disproportionately high in rural areas and that these costs are largely born by the client rather than the service. In this sense, what may be significantly higher costs in rural areas are hidden from view. We have not attempted to assess these deferred or hidden costs directly, but to an extent it is possible to gauge their magnitude by comparing the pattern of availability of key services in urban and rural settings. Thus, it is clear that training providers are much more concentrated in cities than in the countryside, that specialist support agencies are concentrated in urban areas and relatively few and far between in rural sub-regions. If subsidies (in the form of school bus services or travel grants) are not available, rural clients who need to reach these services must bear the travel costs themselves. However, we have found no evidence that young people in rural areas are in any practical sense excluded from engaging with the Connexions Service. Certainly all of the Partnerships studied have strategies specifically designed to deliver the service in rural localities.

As we have indicated in section 5.6, we have tried throughout to separate our examination of cost factors from issues concerned with the quality or equity of service provision, or the strategic choices that Connexions Partnerships make. The previous example is a case in point. Whilst the problem of high travel costs for rural clients (to training providers or to specialist services) is not strictly part of the cost structure of the Connexions Service *per se*, it is nevertheless part and parcel of the broad pattern of rural service provision. A more searching analysis of rural travel costs is needed, of both clients and staff, if the role and position of the Connexions Service – within the broader problem of rural service deprivation – is to be determined. Whilst there is much circumstantial evidence and some limited quantitative data which pinpoints rural transport difficulties, quality data that might better inform the Connexions Service is still lacking. As and when the picture becomes clearer, rural transport considerations can be better integrated into the strategic thinking that determines Connexions resource allocation choices. In a similar vein, the decision whether to locate delivery staff on a per capita basis, or instead to concentrate them where clients are more easily accessible, will have an

effect on the cost ratios that we have attempted to construct. Yet these are strategic decisions related to quality and effectiveness. They lie outside the remit of this study. It may be desirable to consider further the difficulty of separating the examination of rural-urban cost differentials from these issues of quality, effectiveness and allocation decisions. A clearer picture of cost differentials would emerge if it could be standardised against a measure of effectiveness of delivery (perhaps to become available once the final tracking system is installed).

This study has been designed to identify and quantify cost differentials between urban and rural delivery of the Connexions Service. Data has been obtained from two principal sources:

1. Central databases and documents from the Connexions Service National Unit, from DEFRA, the CA and other government agencies.
2. Specially collated data sets, a mix of data from individual Connexions Partnerships, including tracking database extracts, interview data, log books and diaries, travel cost claims, etc.

As we have already noted, a national standardised data tracking system has not yet been fully implemented, though guidelines have been circulated to all Partnerships. Until this universal system is installed, each Partnership has used or developed its own system to try and respond to the specifications that will underpin the universal system. The result is that some data are not easily extracted in the same format from different Partnerships. This is particularly the case for the numbers and types of interventions and referrals, a breakdown of administrative/management costs and, in the case of mixed urban-rural Partnerships, a separate set of data for each of the two sectors. This has meant that direct comparison across different Partnerships has been problematic. Where possible, individual Partnerships have taken the time and effort to extract data for us, but it has not been possible to collate a consistent set of data, for any index, across the full set of Partnerships.

To a large extent, we have therefore been constrained by data which is fragmentary and which suffers from inconsistencies in the way that the different 'cost' factors have been measured. Thus, for example, some Partnerships have been able to furnish specific intervention data on Priority 1 and Priority 2 clients; others have been able to provide data on total interventions only. Travel data has been provided as distance travelled, as costs reclaimed, or as a budget item. This data has, in some cases, been tied to individual delivery staff, with status and rural-urban location clearly identified. In other cases, we have been presented with gross data for the whole Partnership. These and other data issues have been discussed in the results section, but the net result is that it has only been possible to piece together an overall 'cost picture' which relies on cumulative authority rather than on the singular strength of individual elements.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1. *Rurality*

Of the three measures of rurality that have been constructed, we favour the simplest, based on cohort population density. The two other measures (distance to schools and sparsity) are more complex to construct and offer no clear advantage. Results across the three are closely comparable. It is not possible to identify a clear cut-off point between urban and rural Partnerships. Whichever measure is deployed, the result is a long shallow gradient from rural to urban. However, a case could be made for Cumbria and Northumberland being distinctly rural. In the sense that they are partly surrounded by coasts and incorporate mountainous regions with difficult road communications, they are also remote. The same could be said of Connexions Cornwall and Devon, but the statistical measure is biased by the Torbay and Plymouth Unitary Authorities.

These more remote rural Partnerships are succeeded by a group with client population densities of between 5 and 15 per sq. km (York and North Yorkshire; Lincolnshire/Rutland; Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin; Norfolk; Somerset; Suffolk; Wiltshire/Swindon and Herefordshire/Worcestershire).

There are many Partnerships which, as a whole, have a 'median' client population density, but which contain within them more sparsely populated rural sub-regions. Connexions Humber is a good example. Several others share this characteristic. In fact, the majority of Partnerships fall within this category. We would suggest that this type of Partnership in fact represents the norm – which *ipso facto* is already addressed by the current funding formula. In other words, if a readjustment of the funding formula was to be made, its effect would be minimised by the fact that most Partnerships would be included in any new dispensation.

9.2. *Cost factors examined*

A large number of potential costs factors were identified during Phase 1. Those for which data was unavailable, or which were considered relatively insignificant, were subsequently discarded. The following costs factors received greater attention: non-Connexions Service National Unit funding sources, Personal Advisor caseloads, Connexions Partnership size and the significance of core administrative costs, school size (in the context of economies of scale), travel costs/time, premises costs and, as a proxy measure, intervention ratios.

9.3. *Delivery Staff, Caseloads and Interventions*

Evidence from delivery staff caseloads (section 5.2) and intervention ratios (section 5.6) strongly suggests that clients in rural Partnerships and rural sub-regions within mixed Partnerships are less

intensively served than their urban counterparts. In general, and on a per capita or per need basis, fewer personal advisors are assigned to rural areas and contact rates are lower than in urban settings. This may be because costs are higher, efficiencies are lower and that more 'cost-effective' service can be delivered where clients are concentrated (i.e. in towns or cities where economies of scale operate). The internal resource allocation decisions of the Connexions Partnerships may well be influenced by this perception of efficiency. As we have already stated, we are not here questioning resource allocation procedures. We merely observe the difference between urban and rural situations. Under existing regimes – and again on a per capita basis – service delivery to rural clients is more expensive than to urban ones.

9.4. Travel and Premises Costs

Although the quantitative data that we have obtained is partial, it is supported by qualitative information, by the logbook information and by budget data. All point to extra costs for rural delivery of the service. In the Partnerships for which we have comparable data from rural and urban sectors, rural costs are clearly higher than urban costs. But we note that as a proportion of the total Connexions Service National Unit funding, travel costs generally constitute between 1.7 and 4.4 percent of the total allocation.

Although data on the costs of premises is very limited, we believe that economies of scale benefit urban situations, even if the costs per square metre are higher than in rural areas. The 'efficiency' of use of rural outreach centres is likely to be lower, particularly where part-time opening is the norm. In these circumstances, 'unit' costs are higher. Commentary from the logbook survey also supports this observation.

For both these items (travel and premises), further investigation would be needed to verify these tentative conclusions. This would depend on a clear separation of cost items in Partnership level accounting systems.

9.5. Core Administrative Costs

Whilst we have been unable to obtain reliable and direct data on core administrative costs, and in particular on the costs of tracking, monitoring and other data gathering processes, we have acknowledged arguments, that regardless of the size of Connexions Partnerships elements of these costs remain in large part fixed and the same for every Partnership. In other words smaller Partnerships bear a disproportionate cost in meeting these requirements. We have examined this view in Section 5.3. The evidence suggests that this factor might be significant for the rural Partnerships (highlighted in Figures 5.2a and 5.2b) and might warrant closer attention in the next funding formula

review. It may also be the case that fixed costs associated with the general administration of Connexions Service are similarly constant across small and large, rural and urban Partnerships

9.6. Final Observations

We consider the use of 13-19 year-old population density, analysed at the LEA level to be a useful and robust indicator of rurality, but reaffirm the nature of a long rural-urban gradient and the absence of a clear cut-off point.

As far as cost factors are concerned, the conclusions we draw here are, of necessity tentative, simply because of the fragmentary and partial nature of the data that we have been able to access. Whilst the quantitative analysis therefore presents an incomplete picture, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that rural service delivery bears disproportionate costs for management information and travel and can be considered less 'cost-effective' (compared to urban Partnerships) in the area of the intervention activity of delivery staff. In order of significance, we would prioritise these differences as follows: (a) fixed administrative costs affect rural Partnerships disproportionately; (b) travel costs are higher in rural Partnerships; and (c) intervention rates are likely to be lower in rural Partnerships because of the reduced cost efficiency associated with a dispersed client base.

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Appendix 1 : List of contacts and meetings

ORGANISATION	MEETING	DATE	PURPOSE
DfES Moorfoot Sheffield	Bob Williams, Simon Bateman, Time Shiles, Ian Drummond	Late June /early July	Initial briefing
CA/DEFRA	Jean Scott, James Vause	11/7/02	Update on CA/DEFRA rural work
DfES Moorfoot	Briefing Group	18/7/02	Discussion of methods and questions to be asked in Phase 1 of research.
Connexions Humber	John Papworth Chief Executive	22/7/02	Discuss methods of service delivery and associated costs in Humber Connexions region
CNSU Moorfoot	Arranged in conjunction with Bob Williams	25/7/02	To analyse the business plans of possible Phase 1 and focus group Connexions Partnerships
CFL, Hull University	Sally Pryderi, Expert Panel	29/7/02	To brief Sally on the progress.
Connexions Humber	Seven Personal Advisors from a range of service delivery backgrounds	16/8/02	Purpose to discuss the differing methods and costs associated with a mix of rural and urban service delivery. Organising logbook based case study of costs.
Connexions Humber	Gill Brown	31/7/02	To discuss data available from tracking systems/ Arrange PA focus group.
Multiple Connexions Partnerships	Representatives from 7 Connexions Partnerships	1/8/02	Initial fact finding meeting to discover the issues of cost relating to rural and urban delivery of the Connexions service.
The Black Country Connexions	John Roberts Chief Executive	21/8/02	Targeted Phase 1 Connexions Partnership with the aim of discussing cost issues of delivering the Connexions service in an urban location.
Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire	Alison Neal Finance Manager	21/8/02	Discussion concerning Coventry and Warwickshire's internal funding formula.
Connexions Cheshire and Warrington	Anthony Fosbrook Finance Manager	22/8/02	Discussion of the costs associated with rural service delivery, and methods of quantifying costs.
Connexions Cumbria	Sian Rees Chief Executive	30//8/02	To discuss the issues of cost in a predominantly rural area. Discuss the possibility of conducting PA workshop and case study.
DfES Moorfoot	Steering Group 2	5/9/02	Discussion of progress so far and methods and samples for phase two of the research
Connexions Merseyside	David Barlow	10/9/02	Phase Two Visit
Newcastle	Peter Beven		Expert Panel
Connexions Devon and Cornwall	Jenny Rudge, Chris Owen, Elaine Colegate, John Reed, Richard Hartley	11/10/02	Phase Two Visit
The Black Country Connexions	Steve Lilley, Kevin Stelfox, PAs from differing service delivery backgrounds	17/10/02	Phase Two Visit PA Workshop
Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire	Steve Stewart	18/10/02	Phase Two Visit
Hull University	Peter Beven, Sally Pryderi	4/11/02	Expert Panel
West of England	Jane Case	5/11/02	Phase Two Visit
Wiltshire and Swindon	Suzanne McDonald	5/11/02	Phase Two Visit
South Yorkshire	Joyce Thacker	5/11/02	Phase Two Visit
Moorfoot	Steering Group 3	14/11/02	To discuss major findings and set the structure/contents of the Draft Final Report.

Appendix 2 :Population density (13-19 year-olds only) of Connexions Partnerships

Connexions Partnership	number of 13-19 year-olds	area (ha)	number of 13-19 year-olds per sq. km	% 13-19 year-olds in LEAs <50 per sq. km	% 13-19 year-olds in LEAs >50 per sq. km
Northumberland	25,476	501,239	5.1	100	0
Cumbria	38,535	686,336	5.6	100	0
North Yorkshire	63,961	828,470	7.7	73	27
Lincolnshire/Rutland	65,556	629,936	10.4	100	0
Shropshire	36,240	347,664	10.4	100	0
Norfolk	58,914	537,607	11.0	100	0
Somerset	39,790	344,494	11.6	100	0
Devon/Cornwall	121,869	1,028,279	11.9	74	26
Suffolk	51,380	382,673	13.4	100	0
Wiltshire/Swindon	47,638	346,690	13.7	71	29
Herefordshire/Worcestershire	55,612	391,187	14.2	100	0
Gloucestershire	44,954	269,724	16.7	100	0
Cambridgeshire	57,429	338,926	16.9	100	0
County Durham	41,536	222,401	18.7	100	0
Bournemouth/Dorset/Poole	52,175	265,888	19.6	57	43
Humberside	70,054	351,067	20.0	55	45
Northamptonshire	51,597	235,960	21.9	100	0
Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire/Milton Keynes	106,442	446,994	23.8	84	16
Derbyshire	74,164	262,049	28.3	74	26
E & W Sussex	108,325	378,781	28.6	85	15
Leicestershire	63,066	215,025	29.3	79	21
Cheshire/Warrington	69,598	224,855	31.0	78	22
Staffordshire	85,777	270,709	31.7	77	23
Coventry/Warwickshire	66,239	206,884	32.0	60	40
Essex	123,003	367,125	33.5	82	18
Hampshire/loW	140,600	417,101	33.7	76	24
Kent/Medway	127,431	372,870	34.2	84	16
Bedfordshire	47,099	123,121	38.3	67	33
Nottinghamshire	82,841	215,494	38.4	72	28
Lancashire	118,676	306,813	38.7	80	20
Surrey	82,273	167,203	49.2	100	0
Hertfordshire	83,798	163,385	51.3	0	100
Bracknell F/W Berkshire/Slough	66,390	125,493	52.9	21	79
West of England	76,538	133,015	57.5	62	38
South Yorkshire	102,551	155,477	66.0	24	76
Tees Valley	58,743	79,578	73.8	14	86
West Yorkshire	175,839	202,753	86.7	9	91
Tyne & Wear	92,176	54,636	168.7	0	100
Greater Manchester	217,835	128,156	170.0	0	100
Merseyside/Halton	131,782	72,671	181.3	0	100
London South	97,499	41,279	236.2	0	100
Birmingham/Solihull	106,216	44,280	239.9	0	100
The Black Country	91,363	35,730	255.7	0	100
London West	103,034	33,574	306.9	0	100
London North	77,773	23,961	324.6	0	100
London East	155,292	44,380	349.9	0	100
London Central	92,845	16,346	568.0	0	100

Appendix 3 : Sample of blank logbook

Name:	
Connexions Partnership Name:	
Job Title:	
Work Address:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Date Case Study Undertaken:	
Please state whether you work predominantly in a rural, urban or mixed area:	

Personal Advisor Cost Diary Sheet

Date:

Activity	Time	Cost (£s)	Details
Type of Visit and PAs role			
Type of Client			(Priority 1)(Priority 2)(Priority 3)
Number of Visit			
Did client turn up			(YES) (NO)
How was initial contact between Connexions and the client made?			
Duration of intervention			
Time spent preparing and post intervention			
Was client referred on to other agency/ training/employer?			(YES) (NO) If yes which agency/training/employer?
Costs passed on to the client			(YES) (NO) If yes what were costs?
Costs passed on to the PA			(YES) (NO) If yes what were costs for?
Extra costs incurred by Connexions			(YES) (NO) If yes what were costs for?
Other			

Travel Sheet

Date	Journey	Total Travelling Time	Total Mileage

Other Activities Sheet

Date	Activity	Time	Cost

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DfES Publications
P.O. Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham
NG15 0DJ

Tel: 0845 60 222 60
Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Minicom: 0845 60 555 60

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