



Arsyllfa **Wledig** Cymru
Wales **Rural** Observatory

The Experiences and Aspirations of Young People in Rural Wales

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Section 1: Introduction and Methods

Introduction

This is a report on a multi-method project to examine the experiences and aspirations of young people aged between 15 and 24 years in rural Wales, which has been undertaken by the Wales Rural Observatory [WRO] on behalf of the Welsh Government during the 2012-2013 work programme period. The study aimed to provide an in-depth examination of contemporary rural youth migration patterns and trends in rural Wales, by focussing specifically on the experiences and perceptions of young people aged between 15 to 24 years living in six rural communities in Wales. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, it reviewed recent trends in youth migration for rural Wales, in terms of the origins and destinations of the flows of rural youth and reports on the perceptions held by young people and young families of their local rural communities, the key factors influencing migration decisions and the effects of out-migration on rural communities.

Background to the research

The demographic profile of rural Wales, compared to the rest of Wales is older, shows a continuing trend towards an ageing population, and has an under-representation of individuals in the younger age categories. Much of the reason for this demographic imbalance has been attributed to the growing trend amongst young people at the start of their working lives to leave their rural home communities in search of wider education, employment and social opportunities elsewhere in Wales and further afield (Clope, Goodwin and Milbourne, 1997). Research undertaken in rural areas

across the UK have found that the 'loss' of young people from rural areas is tied to structural factors such as housing and wages, and educational and employment opportunities, as well as non-economic motivations, for example those relating to quality of life (Stockdale, 2004; 2006; Storey and Brannen, 2000). The subsequent loss of young educated talent from rural areas, coupled with the net in-migration of older people to rural areas - two processes that have become prominent features in rural areas across Wales over the past half a century - have prompted widespread concerns over the future economic, cultural and social sustainability of rural communities in Wales. Addressing these concerns has therefore become a key priority for the Welsh Government.

Research Objectives

Specifically, the research focused on the following objectives:

- To examine spatial patterns of youth migration for rural Wales and provide evidence of key trends in recent years;
- To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions held by young people and young families of their local rural communities;
- To explore the processes influencing young people's decisions about whether to remain in the place where they grew up or to move away, with a particular emphasis on issues relating to education, employment, transport and housing;
- To explore the future intentions of young people and young families

living in specific areas of rural Wales, focusing on transitions from school to work, parental home to independent household, education to employment and family formation.

Methodology

The research employed a mixed-methods approach to investigating the nature and extent of migration, both to and from rural areas of Wales, drawing on detailed analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. The study involved three main stages:

- (i) Literature and policy review;
- (ii) Temporal and spatial analyses of statistical data; and
- (iii) Local-level research in six case study areas.

The following sections provide a brief overview of the key tasks that were undertaken under each stage of the research.

Stage (i) - (ii): Literature and policy review / geographical and time-related analyses of data

A detailed review of policy and academic literatures identified key themes and informed the design of the research study. Alongside this, the research team carried out spatial and temporal analyses of relevant data from various data sources to provide a detailed picture of contemporary migration patterns within Wales, with a particular emphasis on the movement of young people in the 15 to 24 age cohort. Data was made available from the Office

for National Statistics and the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services.

Stage (iii) - Local-level research

The third stage of the research was focused on the local spatial scale to enable a more detailed examination of the emerging themes at a community level and to allow these to be grounded in the overlapping social, cultural, economic, political and environmental settings that structure young people's lives. A key aim of the research was to provide different regional perspectives and to ensure sufficient variation in order to provide an insight into how living in different parts of rural Wales shapes the lives, experiences and perceptions of young people.

Accordingly, the study returned to six case study communities previously used in a study on Age Balanced Communities undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Government in 2004 (Newidiem, 2004). These included Bodedern on Anglesey; Botwnnog on the Llŷn Peninsula; Crickhowell; Fishguard; Pwll Glas near Ruthin; and Talybont in Ceredigion. The study areas ranged from clusters of small villages to market towns and were selected to reflect the diverse range of issues facing young people in areas dependent on agriculture and/or tourism; in communities where the Welsh language remains prominent; areas where access to larger labour markets and more job opportunities are relatively high compared with other part of rural Wales; and vice versa. The characteristics of the study areas are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 - Characteristics of the study areas

Characteristics →	Agricultural	Tourism	High proportion of Welsh speakers	Proximity to urban labour markets	Remoteness from labour markets
↓ Settlement type					
Large market town	Fishguard	Fishguard	Fishguard		
Small market town	Crickhowell	Crickhowell		Crickhowell	
Large village	Talybont Pwll Glas		Talybont Pwll Glas	Pwll Glas	
Cluster of small villages	Botwnnog Bodedern	Botwnnog	Botwnnog Bodedern		Botwnnog Bodedern

Source: Newidiem (2004, p.29)

Within each community, the local stage of the research involved three key phases. First, contextual material was gathered on the socio-economic profile of each area drawing on spatial and temporal analyses of relevant data sources, including the latest data from the 2011 Census, and information gathered from interviews with Community Council representatives in each area.

Second, a series of focused group discussions were held with various groups in each study area, which aimed to capture young people and individuals falling within particular age categories or at different stages in their lives. This included the following:

- students in their last two years of compulsory school education (Years 10 and 11), who were at the stage of deciding whether to continue with their education, and which path to follow;
- students attending further education college, whose ages varied between 16 and 21;
- young people aged between 15 and 24 years who were members of local clubs and societies; and
- parents of pre-school children drawn from local parent and toddler or nursery groups to explore what

factors may have influenced their decisions to either remain in their local area, move back to their home community following a period living away, or move into the area from elsewhere.

The discussions were based around key themes highlighted in the stakeholder interviews and drawn from the academic and policy literature, and included issues relating to local educational opportunities, employment, housing and transport, leisure and social opportunities, social networks, and participation in local decision-making.

Individual discussion guides were prepared for each group, thus taking into account their differing contexts. A set of standard questions was also used within each group to ensure consistency of the survey output and results. These questions sought information on a range of key issues including how long they had lived in the area, whether they lived in a village, on the outskirts or in a remote area, and whether they had any family members living nearby.. In total, 18 focus groups were carried out, which ranged in size from four to 18 participants and a total of 137 young people and parents participated in this stage of the research.

All the discussion groups were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Third, interviews were undertaken with Careers Advisors based in the schools and colleges that had agreed to participate in the research, in order to explore the career aspirations of young people and to seek their views on wider issues raised during the local research. The interviews took the form of a semi-

structured discussion guided by a number of key themes identified by the WRO research team.

Outputs from each of these phases were subsequently fed into the final report.

Appendix 1 provides a brief overview of each of the six study areas. These include a description of their location and the surrounding landscape, as well as a statistical profile of each community.

Section 2: Time related and geographical analysis of official data

Introduction

This section draws on various data sources on different aspects of population change in Wales and the rest of the UK, focusing specifically on changing patterns of migration and population redistribution. The predominant focus is on the movement of young people aged between 15 and 24 years.

The information presented draws on data made available by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services ('Statistics for Wales'). The geographical units of analysis used include the United Kingdom (UK); Wales, comprising its 22 local authorities; and four local authority classifications that are used to describe the different types of local authorities in Wales. These definitions and classifications are explained in greater detail below.

The remainder of this section is organised as follows. The next sub-section outlines the approach to rural classification adopted in this report. This is followed by a contextualisation of the current population structure of Wales and rural Wales. Sub-section three identifies and summarises contemporary migration patterns in the UK, and more specifically within Wales, through a discussion of key headline statistics available for the UK. This data provides the context for a more detailed analysis of current indicative data sources related to rural Wales.

Classifying Rural Wales

In order to analyse the data in this report, the most commonly used classification of rural Wales has been adopted, which is based on population density and

organised around local authority boundaries. Accordingly, all areas with a population density of fewer than 150 residents per square kilometre (a definition specified by the OECD) are classified as 'rural'. A total of nine unitary authorities in Wales fall under this category and are therefore taken to represent 'rural' Wales. These include: the Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, and Monmouthshire. This definition of rural Wales is the one currently used by the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services.

The population of Wales

(i) Population growth: Wales

In 2011, the population of Wales was just over 3.06 million, the largest population ever recorded. The population grew by 153,000 in the 10 years since the last census, rising from 2.9 million residents in 2001, an increase of 5.3 per cent. This growth in the population number was the largest in a 10 year period between censuses since 1921.

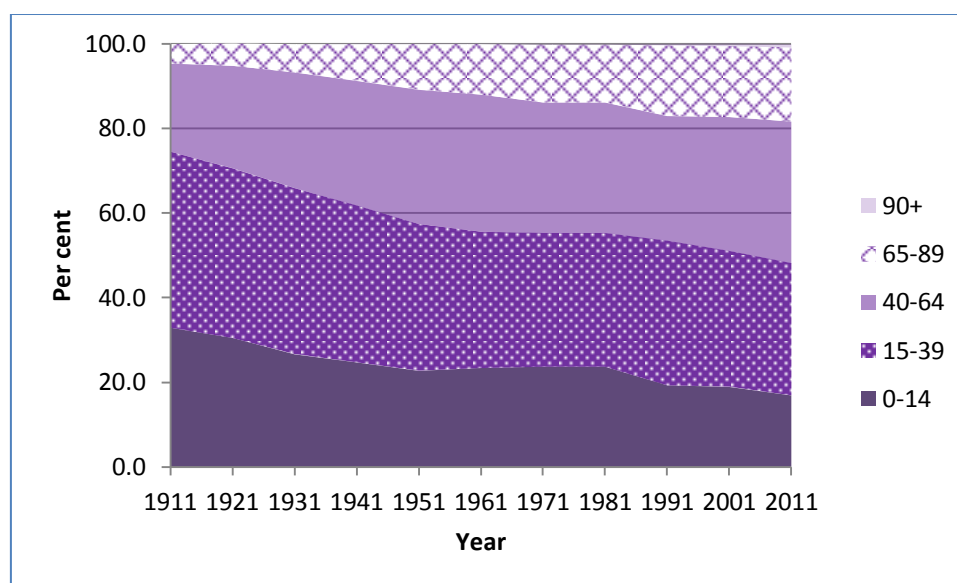
Changes in population are due to differences between the numbers of births and deaths, as well as migration. Data on births and deaths show that between 2010 and 2011 there were 332,700 births and 320,900 deaths in Wales, leading to an increase of around 11,900 residents. This accounts for eight per cent of the total population increase, and reflects a steady increase in fertility rates in Wales since 2001, with the remainder of the population growth due to migration.

(ii) Population structure and ageing

The results from the 2011 Census reveal that people in Wales are now living longer than they did a century ago. This can be seen in Figure 2.1, which shows the proportion of the population aged under 15 is decreasing, while the proportion

aged 65 and over is increasing. The percentage of residents aged 65 and over was the highest seen in any census at 18.4 per cent, which points to a marked growth in the proportion of older people in Wales (ONS, 2012a).

Figure 2.1: Population in Wales by broad age groups between 1911 and 2011^{1,2,3}



1 There was no census in 1941, due to the Second World War.

2 Early censuses recorded population present, rather than usual residents.

3 Comparison with 2001 and 1991 is based on mid-year population estimates for those years, comparison with 1981 and earlier is based on census results.

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

This change in the broad composition of the population from younger to older can be seen across Wales. Table 2.1 shows the population changes between 2001 and 2011 for all unitary authorities in Wales and for the four local authority classifications. In general, Wales has a similar age structure to the rest of the UK (and England), although the proportion of residents in the 24 to 44 age category is slightly less at just under a quarter (24.7 per cent) compared to 27.3 per cent for the UK. Wales also has a slightly higher proportion of residents of retirement age

(65 and over), at 18.4 per cent compared to 16.5 per cent for the UK.

Within Wales, the rural authorities have a larger share of residents in the retirement age category (65 and over) compared to the rest of Wales, with just over a fifth (21.7 per cent) of the rural population aged 65 or over compared to 18.5 per cent for the whole of Wales. The proportion of the rural population in the 15 to 24 age category (12.4 per cent) is slightly below the Welsh average of 13.4 per cent.

Table 2.1: Population change between 2001 and 2011 for Local Authorities in Wales and for the four Local Authority classifications

Unitary authority	2001 population (number)	2011 population (number)	Change since 2001 (%)
Carmarthenshire	173,700	183,800	5.8
Ceredigion	75,400	75,900	0.7
Conwy	109,700	115,200	5
Denbighshire	93,100	93,700	0.6
Gwynedd	116,800	121,900	4.4
Isle of Anglesey	67,800	69,700	2.8
Monmouthshire	85,000	91,300	7.4
Pembrokeshire	113,100	122,400	8.2
Powys	126,400	133,000	5.2
Flintshire	148,600	152,500	2.6
The Vale of Glamorgan	119,300	126,300	5.9
Wrexham	128,500	134,800	4.9
Blaenau Gwent	70,000	69,800	-0.3
Bridgend	128,700	139,200	8.2
Caerphilly	169,500	178,800	5.5
Merthyr Tydfil	56,200	58,800	4.6
Neath Port Talbot	134,400	139,800	4
Rhondda Cynon Taff	231,900	234,400	1.1
Torfaen	90,900	91,100	0.2
Cardiff	310,100	346,100	11.6
Newport	137,600	145,700	5.9
Swansea	223,500	239,000	6.9
Rural	961,000	1,006,900	4.8
Semi-rural	396,400	413,600	4.3
Valley	881,600	911,900	3.4
Urban	671,200	730,800	8.9
Wales	2,910,200	3,063,500	5.3
England	49,451,100	53,012,500	7.2

Migration and demographic change

This section provides an analysis of the migration patterns into and out of Wales. It includes analysis of internal migration (defined as moves between Wales and other parts of the UK) and of migration patterns between the different parts of Wales.

(i) Defining migration

There is a great deal of interest in migration statistics within Wales, across

the UK and internationally, in order to understand how population movements impact on society and the economy. With an ageing population and only slightly more births than deaths annually in Wales, migration has been the main reason for continued population growth in recent years. Unlike many other countries, the UK does not have a comprehensive system for recording migrants. This means that migration is more difficult to measure than other components of population change, namely births and

deaths (Welsh Government, 2013). Accordingly, internal migration estimates must be derived from proxy sources. Administrative data sources are used, namely the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR), the Patient Register Data System (PRDS) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

The NHSCR provides a comprehensive system to assist with NHS patient administration in England and Wales and covers a range of services, including recording the transfer of patients between health authorities. Each Health Board maintains an accurate list of all persons registered with a doctor in general practice (GPs). Although this source of data has a specific administrative purpose and is not designed to measure the population, it is thought to be one of the largest data sources containing information on virtually everyone in England and Wales (ONS, 2012c). Each time a patient transfers to a new NHS doctor in a different health board area, the NHSCR is notified and the patient is considered to have made a migrant move. Combining each patient register in England and Wales and comparing with the register for the previous year identifies people whose postcode has changed (Welsh Government, 2013).

Despite some limitations¹, research has shown that there is no one other available source that has as good coverage and quality as the combination of the NHSCR

¹ Overall, the accuracy of NHS-based data depends on patients re-registering with a new GP when they change residence or informing their current GP of any change of residential address. It is known that re-registration rates vary by sex and age group (ONS, 2012b). A number of studies (Devis and Mills, 1986; Boden et al., 1987) have also shown that considerable discrepancies exist between the migration patterns suggested by NHSCR data compared with the Census of Population.

and PRDS data sources, as they ensure that the majority of moves are covered for England and Wales (ONS, 2012b). As part of the programme by ONS to improve population and migration estimates, HESA data on students' term-time addresses has been used to improve estimation of student migration within England and Wales since 2010 (Welsh Government, 2013).

(ii) Net internal migration flows for Wales (2010-2011)

Net migration is the difference between the numbers of people moving in and moving out of an area. It measures the overall gain or loss of population due to migration. Population change in an area is determined partly by the level of natural increase or decrease and partly by the level of net migration. The following section considers the net internal migration flows between Wales and the rest of the UK.

Levels of internal migration by age group

Figure 2.3 shows the age distribution of total internal migration flows by local authority area for the year ending June 2011 as a proportion of the 2011 population. It can be seen that, consistent with previous years, young adults were the most likely to migrate. Nearly one in five (18.8 per cent) of those living in Wales aged between 15 to 24 had moved to a different local authority during the previous year; this constitutes just over a third (35.3 per cent) of all migration moves in mid-2011.

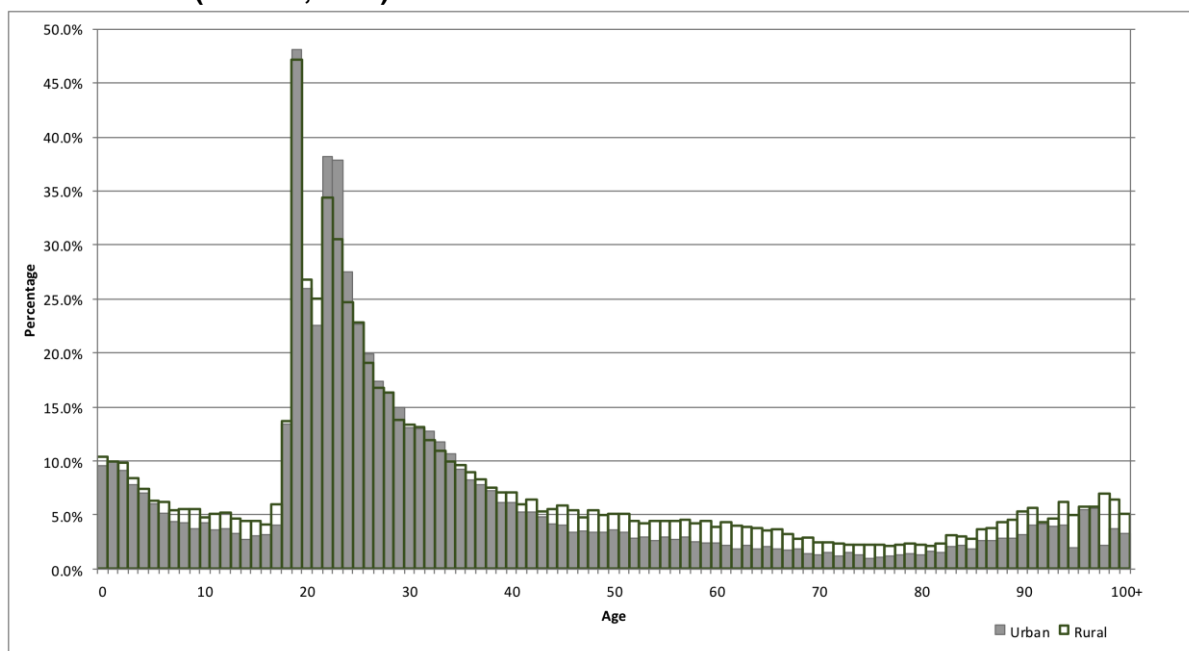
The largest movement within the 15 to 24 age group was in the urban authorities, with a quarter moving to a different authority within the UK, while the equivalent figure for the rural authorities

was slightly less at just over a fifth (21.7 per cent). The peaks within these age groups, as shown in Figure 2.3, can largely be explained by moves to and from University or other higher education institutions. Almost half of those living in urban (48.1 per cent) and rural (47.2 per cent) authorities in Wales aged 19 had moved during the previous year. Another peak can be seen in those aged 22 years (University leavers), with 38.2 per cent of the urban population and 34.4 per cent of the rural population aged 22 years moving

to a different authority in the UK between July 2010 and June 2011.

In rural areas, there was also a higher rate of movement in the upper age categories compared to the rest of Wales. For example, seven per cent of those aged between 35 and 44 years had moved to a different authority in the UK during the previous year. The equivalent figure for Wales was slightly lower at six per cent. The same can be said for the '45 to 64' and 'over 65' age categories.

Figure 2.3: The proportion of the rural and urban population in Wales, by age, who moved to a different authority within the UK, for the year ending June 2011 (NHSCR, 2011)



Migration with England, by Age

Movements to and from England account for the majority of cross-border migration to and from Wales. Between July 2010 and July 2011, just under three-quarters (74 per cent) of all migration flows in Wales were with England. This included both movement out of Wales to England and movement into Wales from England. The remaining quarter is made up of internal migration flows within Wales. Migration flows with England were relatively consistent across all age groups,

with the exception of the 15-24 age group, in which nearly 80 per cent of all migration flows were with England.

Looking in greater detail at the share of migration inflows and outflows with England by local authority classification, as shown in Table 2.4, it can be seen that 77 per cent of all flows, both into and out of rural and semi-rural authorities were with England, while the equivalent figure for urban authorities was 76 per cent. These figures were slightly higher than the

overall figure of 75 per cent for the whole of Wales. Within rural authorities, the vast majority of flows (80 per cent) in both the '45 to 64' and 'over 65' age groups were with England, while 78 per cent of all migration flows in the 15 to 24 age categories were with England.

At individual local authority level there appeared to be a clear pattern of migration flows, with local authorities close to the English border, including Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham,

Newport and Monmouthshire all recording a high proportion of migration flows with England. The share of all flows with England for these authorities ranged from 78 per cent to 82 per cent. Local authorities containing large Universities, including Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Cardiff and Swansea also ranked highly in terms of migration flows with England. This pattern of flows was particularly noticeable for the 15 to 24 age group.

Table 2.4: Share of cross-border inflows and outflows for Wales with England by local authority area and local authority classification (NHSCR, 2011)

Local Authority classification	Age group						
	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+	All ages
Rural	75%	78%	76%	77%	80%	80%	77%
Semi-rural	75%	79%	78%	78%	76%	74%	77%
Valley	62%	67%	65%	64%	65%	64%	64%
Urban	68%	83%	76%	70%	67%	68%	76%
Wales	70%	78%	74%	72%	74%	74%	74%

Table 2.5 shows the annual inflows and outflows, including the net and total migration figures for Wales with England for the year ending June 2011. It also shows migration turnover rates broken down by age group. Turnover rates are a measure of the relative frequency of migration events within a population and are defined as total flow or total migration (inflow plus outflow) as a percentage of the population. In other words, this shows

the propensity of individuals in that particular age group to migrate.

Inflows and outflows were highest for the 15 to 24 and 25 to 34 age groups, and net migration was also highest for both these age groups, with nearly 18,000 more people aged between 15 and 24 moving into Wales from England than moving out to England in the year between July 2010 and June 2011, and over 10,000 persons aged between 25 and 34 years.

Table 2.5: Cross-border inflows, outflows net and total migration for Wales with England, and turnover rates by age group, for the year ending June 2011 (NHSCR, 2011)

Age category	Population 2011	Inflow from England	Outflow to England	Net flow	Total flow (with England)	Total flow (for age group)	Share of all flows	Turnover rate %
0-14	519,128	14,971	5,891	9,081	20,862	29,803	70%	4.0%
15-24	411,044	39,028	21,239	17,789	60,267	77,077	78%	14.7%
25-34	360,422	22,783	12,017	10,766	34,800	47,198	74%	9.7%
35-44	396,200	12,094	4,927	7,167	17,022	23,646	72%	4.3%
45-64	814,118	15,054	5,558	9,496	20,611	28,008	74%	2.5%
65+	562,544	6,071	2,989	3,082	9,060	12,259	74%	1.6%
All ages	3,063,456	108,446	52,620	55,825	161,066	218,034	74%	5.3%

Once again, it can be seen that young adults in the 15 to 24 age group were most likely to migrate, with nearly 15 per cent of people in this age group either moving to England from Wales, or vice versa, which was higher than the figure of 9.7 per cent for the 25 to 34 age group, and nearly three times the overall turnover rate. The disproportionate level of migration among the 15 to 24 age group is to be expected as it included the majority of full-time University students and recent graduates, who tend to move to study or pursue careers. The equivalent figure for the over 65 age group was much lower in comparison, indicating that this age group

is less likely to migrate than other age groups.

Table 2.6 shows the equivalent figures for rural Wales. A similar pattern can be seen, with the highest inflow and outflow rates to be seen in both the '15 to 24' and '25 to 34' age groups. Nevertheless, net migration was highest for the 25 to 34 age group, with nearly 11,000 more people in this age group moving into Wales than moving out of England between July 2010 and July 2011. This was nearly double the figure for the 15 to 24 age group (5,029 persons). There was also a considerable net flow of just over 7,000 persons aged between 35 and 44 years.

Table 2.6: Cross-border inflows, outflows net and total migration for rural Wales with England and turnover rates for the year ending June 2011 (NHSCR, 2011)

Age category	Population 2011	Inflow from England	Outflow to England	Net flow	Total flow (with England)	Total flow (for age group)	Share of all flows	Turnover rate %
0-14	162,110	5,605	2,411	3,194	8,017	10,668	75%	4.9%
15-24	124,831	13,136	8,107	5,029	21,242	27,149	78%	17.0%
25-34	360,422	22,783	12,017	10,766	34,800	47,198	74%	9.7%
35-44	396,200	12,094	4,927	7,167	17,022	23,646	72%	4.3%
45-64	283,706	7,530	2,800	4,730	10,329	12,969	80%	3.6%
65+	218,501	3,126	1,787	1,339	4,913	6,178	80%	2.2%
All Ages	1,007,024	40,315	21,034	19,281	61,349	79,889	77%	6.1%

Once again, the turnover rate was highest for the 15-24 age group, which at 17 per

cent was notably higher than the figure for the whole of Wales for this age group.

This indicates that the rural population aged between 15 and 24 was more likely to migrate than other age groups, and also compared to persons of the same age in the rest of Wales. The turnover rate for the over 65 age group was also slightly higher in rural areas (2.2 per cent) compared to the equivalent figure for the whole of Wales.

Migration flows within Wales

Tables 2.7 and 2.8 summarise the migration inflows and outflows for rural Wales and provides an indication of patterns of migration flows, both within Wales and further afield. It is important to note that these figures do not take into account migration flows within individual local authorities, only between local authorities.

The figures reveal that half of all outflows from rural authorities were to England, while 48 per cent of all persons leaving a rural authority were moving to another local authority in Wales. Of this latter figure, just over a fifth (21 per cent) were moving to a different rural authority in Wales. In terms of inward migration flows, a large proportion (57 per cent) of all inflows into rural authorities in Wales were, once again, from England, while 42 per cent of all persons moving into a rural authority had moved from another local authority in Wales. Of this latter figure, just over a fifth (22 per cent) had moved from another rural authority, while the proportion of migrants moving into rural authorities from valley and urban authorities were seven per cent and nine per cent respectively.

Tables 2.7 and 2.8: Migration flows between Local Authority classifications in Wales (NHSCR, 2011)

	Outward migration as a share of all outflows									
	0-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-64	65+	All ages
Rural	4%	2%	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	4%	2%	21%
Semi-rural	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	5%
Valley	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	11%
Urban	1%	3%	3%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	11%
Wales	6%	6%	9%	5%	3%	3%	2%	6%	3%	48%
England	6%	7%	14%	6%	4%	3%	2%	7%	5%	50%
Elsewhere	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Total	13%	13%	23%	12%	7%	5%	5%	14%	8%	

	Inward migration as a share of all inflows									
	0-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-64	65+	All ages
Rural	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	4%	2%	22%
Semi-rural	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	5%
Valley	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	7%
Urban	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	9%
Wales	7%	4%	8%	4%	3%	2%	2%	7%	3%	42%
England	7%	8%	11%	5%	4%	3%	3%	11%	4%	57%
Elsewhere	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Total	14%	12%	20%	10%	7%	6%	5%	18%	8%	

Summary and Headline Statistics

- All four categories of local authorities in Wales (Rural, Semi-rural, Valley and Urban) experienced population growth between 2001 and 2011, with the highest increases among the urban population (8.9 per cent) and the rural population;
- In 2011, the rural population in Wales had increased to just over one million;
- Latest figures from the 2011 Census reveal a change in the broad composition of the Welsh population from younger to older, with nearly a fifth of the population aged 65 and over. This was the highest proportion within this age category seen in any census since 1911;
- The rural authorities in Wales had a larger share of residents of retirement age compared to the rest of Wales, while the urban authorities have a higher proportion in the younger age categories (particularly the 15 to 24 age group);
- With an ageing population, and only slightly more births than deaths annually in Wales, migration has been the main reason for continued population growth in recent years;
- The rural authorities had the largest positive net population gain due to migration, with an estimated 2,150 more migrant arriving than leaving (representing around 0.2 per cent of their 2011 population);
- The large student populations in several of the Welsh local authorities, including Cardiff, Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Ceredigion, Gwynedd and Newport have a major impact on levels of internal migration;
- Young adults were the most likely to migrate, with nearly one in five of the Welsh population aged between 15 and 24 years moving to a different local authority between July 2010 and June 2011. This can largely be explained by moves to and from University or other higher education establishments, and for employment;
- The rural population aged between 15 and 24 years were more likely than other age groups to migrate, and also compared to persons of the same age in the rest of Wales;
- Movement to and from England account for the majority of cross-border migration to and from Wales;
- Half of all migration flows from rural authorities in Wales were to England, while nearly three out of every five persons moving into rural Wales between July 2010 and June 2011 were from England.

Section 3: Delivering careers advice and guidance in rural Wales

Introduction

The provision and availability of good quality, independent careers advice for young people whilst in compulsory and post-16 education or training is crucial to enabling them to make sound choices about their futures. A series of interviews was undertaken with Careers Advisors based in the schools and Further Education colleges that had participated in the research. The aim of the interviews was to explore the range of advice and guidance services offered to young people aged between 15 to 24 years within the study areas and their role in influencing the future priorities and aspirations of these individuals.

Careers advice and guidance in rural Wales

Careers Wales Gyrfu Cymru was the main provider of all bilingual careers information and advice guidance services in Wales. Until April 2013, these services were delivered through six regionally based Careers Wales companies; however, following re-organisation in the 2012-13 period there was a single national contract with 'Career Choices Dewis Gyrfu' - an umbrella organisation trading as Careers Wales. Its new remit reflected a new approach to the provision of careers information and advice guidance services across Wales. Rather than continuing to pursue the traditional, but often criticised, one-size-fits-all model of a single face-to-face guidance interview, the new approach involved focusing on delivering a more personalised, differentiated service, which combined a range of universal services delivered

via online and telephone-based routes with more focused engagement, including face-to-face guidance sessions, where such services were seen to add the greatest value.

The importance of these services in rural areas was emphasised in the interviews, especially in the remoter rural areas on the Llŷn peninsula and on Anglesey, where individuals might have had difficulty accessing face-to-face and office based services:

'If you live in Llanddeusant or somewhere like that where buses don't run that often, then having access to something like an instant messaging service is really important.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Bodedern, Bodedern study area)

Under the new system, a number of priority groups continued to be offered a face-to-face interview, including young people with special educational needs, those in danger of becoming disengaged or classified as 'NEET' ('not in education, employment or training')² and older workers facing redundancy. Within the school environment there were formal structures in place to help identify young people in need of guidance and

² The Welsh Government's NEET strategy (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009) outlined a broad categorisation of young people not in education, employment or training along the lines of a continuum. It ranged from "core" NEETs – those with social and behavioural problems or other more complex needs; to "floating" or "at risk" NEETs – young people who tend to have spells of being NEET and have most of the problems of the core group but are more willing to engage with support; to "transition" or "gap year" NEETs – where the young people are only not in education, employment or training for a short term and who do not require government intervention (National Assembly for Wales, 2010).

assistance and which aimed to prevent these young people from becoming classified as 'NEET'. The north Wales schools which participated in the study delivered much of this work through the 'Potensial' initiative - a £15 million scheme funded by the Welsh Government through the European Union's European Social Fund, which targeted 11 to 19 year olds who were classified as 'NEET' or were at risk of falling out of school or further education. The scheme was led by Gwynedd Council in collaboration with Anglesey, Denbighshire and Conwy Councils along with the two Further Education colleges in north-west Wales. The project employed specialist staff to work with young people aged 16 to 18 in north-west Wales to enable them to achieve their next step into education, employment or training.

As an example, in one of the north Wales schools, young people from Years 9 and 10 who fell within this category were given an opportunity to take part in the 'Seren' programme - a three day course which aimed to encourage individuals to remain in school, by building self-confidence and providing opportunities for team-working. Anecdotal evidence provided by the Careers Advisors suggested that this programme had been highly effective to date in reducing the number of young people on the long-term unemployed lists, as this quote indicates:

'I've seen a lot of success stories following on from this course where the young people have maybe had a boost in their confidence or they suddenly realise that their attitude is holding them back, and it's given them some inspiration to move on with their education.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Bodedern, Bodedern study area)

Careers Wales also regularly carried out destination surveys, which recorded information on the destination of all Year 11 students and enabled Careers Wales to track whether they had stayed on at school for sixth-form, gone to further education college, or if they had left formal education altogether and were in danger of becoming 'NEET'. There were dedicated staff based in the local area offices who worked with young people classified as 'NEET' and those who were excluded or had disengaged from formal education, and also young people with mental illnesses.

Whilst this increased emphasis on tackling key priority groups was viewed as a more efficient use of Careers Wales resources compared to the previous system, there were some concerns that the new model of delivery would place a much greater degree of autonomy and responsibility on the learners, leading to the possibility that not all individuals would make use of the system. For example, it was argued that individuals who were clear as to their career path or with an idea of the area in which they wanted to work, would benefit from the new system. However, for those who were perhaps more uncertain, it was unclear how this service would deliver effective guidance and advice. In addition, it was emphasised that it was not just young people who had particular special needs who were in of need of very detailed guidance; sometimes, the best students could be uncertain in the choices that they made, and they would also want that one-to-one guidance.

It was therefore emphasised that it was crucial to ensure that one-to-one personal guidance continued to be made available to young people under

the new system, if they requested it, and that individuals had sufficient access to the appropriate facilities and services in order to take full advantage of the system.

Key factors influencing successful transitions from education to the world of work

The careers advisors identified a number of key factors influencing successful youth transitions from education to the world of work. These are discussed in turn in the following sub-sections.

Raising awareness of local, regional and national labour markets

The interviews revealed that Careers Advisors had a key role to play in empowering young people with information and knowledge to make important decisions about their future. This role was considered crucial in rural areas, where young people had to make difficult decisions about whether to remain in, or move away from, their home communities to pursue education and employment opportunities. For many, a key consideration when making these decisions was whether they would be in a position to return to their home communities at some point in the future, should they wish to do so.

Within this context, a key aim of the careers advice and guidance provided within schools was to ensure that young people had an accurate understanding of the nature of their local labour markets and the employment opportunities available. Labour Market Information (LMI) sessions were therefore regularly held within the schools that participated in the research to ensure that young

people were in an informed position when making career path choices. These sessions provided information on the nature of local employment, in terms of where the jobs were located, the structure of the labour market and the skills and qualifications needed to secure employment; the types of people who made up the local labour force, in terms of their gender and ethnic mix, age profile, disability profile, skills and qualifications, travel-to-work patterns and the numbers employed within specific sectors; and the key factors affecting the local labour market, such as economic changes. The following quotations demonstrated the importance of these sessions within the school environment:

'If you asked a lot of young people about their future, the majority would just say that they want to get away from here, move from the Llŷn and just say that there's nothing for them here, but very often that attitude is just down to a lack of understanding about the opportunities available in the area.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

'We have a definite role to provide advice and guidance for young people who wish to stay in their local area. And we should endeavour in any way we can to help young people to find jobs locally or create jobs in the area if that's what they wish to do.' (Careers Advisor: Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

'Some people go off to do vocational courses like nursing and midwifery with a view to getting employment back in this area at a local hospital.' (Careers Advisor: Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

Several of the careers advisors, however, pointed to the challenges of providing careers guidance, practical

help and signposting to young people who wished to stay in their local area, given the relatively narrow structure of rural labour markets and, in turn, the limited range of opportunities and careers paths available to young people to consider.

‘Do you tailor the guidance according to what the young person or the potential student wants, or according to what jobs are available locally? Take hairdressing and beauty as examples - courses that are always very popular in this area – well, it’s very likely that the number of people training in this field far outnumber the actual number of jobs available in this area.’ (Careers Advisor: Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

‘A lot of the careers that young people choose to go in to - things like hairdressing, childcare, construction, well there are jobs in those fields, but not for the numbers who want to do it. So, we try to encourage young people to gain skills that would also open up other opportunities.’ (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Bro Gwaun, Fishguard study area)

Developing entrepreneurship and business skills

The interviews also revealed a strong emphasis on promoting entrepreneurship and business creation as a real option for young people. It was argued that young people needed to be encouraged and stimulated to create their own career paths and to develop the skills needed to take up the challenge of setting up their own business. This was considered a key priority, both now and in the future, particularly given that small businesses were viewed as a key source of jobs and innovation, and were the main drivers of local rural economies. It was argued that young people living in the study areas were

predisposed to a strong entrepreneurship culture due the high rates of self-employment within local labour markets and possibly their exposure to, and experience of, small family businesses – as these quotations emphasise:

‘Young people from this school who are successful in getting on to an apprenticeship scheme usually do extremely well and often go on to establish their own businesses and then employ their own apprentices years down the line. Working for yourself and on your own terms has a very strong appeal for many young people in this area. I think that’s influenced a lot by the high rates of self-employment here on the Llŷn.’ (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

Accordingly, a great deal of work was being done within the schools to promote and stimulate an entrepreneurship culture amongst young people. As an example, the Careers Advisors based on the Llŷn peninsula and on Anglesey referred to the importance of the ‘Llwyddo’n Lleol’ scheme – a project funded by the Welsh Government under the European Union’s Convergence European Social Fund. The key aims of the project were threefold: to increase awareness among young people regarding the growth sectors in their areas, and the opportunities for employment and self-employment that those sectors offered; encourage young people to see self-employment and venture creation as a viable, exciting career choice; and more generally to develop enterprise skills amongst young people. One of the key activities provided through the project was the opportunity for young people to set-up and trial their own enterprise. As part of this exercise, advice and support was available to identify and

develop business ideas, and a bursary of up to £1,000 was available at the end of the process to turn ideas into reality.

Several of the careers advisors also made regular use of 'Dynamo Role Models'³ – a network of 300 business owners working to support and promote effective enterprise education delivery across Wales, with a view to inspiring and motivating young people with the 'entrepreneurial message'. The work of the 'Role Models' included delivering sessions with pupils and students (including classroom activities, enterprise clubs and summer schools), supporting the continuous professional development (CPD) of educational staff, acting as 'policy sounding boards' to Welsh Government and mentoring businesses.

Work experience opportunities

The careers advisors all emphasised the importance of work experience - for raising aspirations, encouraging the discipline of work, and emphasising the importance of so-called key skills, such as team working, problem-solving, and improving learning, performance and communication. Work experience opportunities for young people of school age were mainly delivered through the Careers and the World of Work framework, which provided young people with both insights into, and direct experience of, working environments, and enabled them to generate ideas and aspirations regarding their future

working lives, as this quotation emphasises:

'If you've got an excellent World of Work programme, it prepares individuals for successful transitioning – they then know exactly what to expect and how to prepare. And I think bringing employers into schools and giving pupils opportunities for work experience makes a difference in terms of maturity and helping them to know what to expect.' (Careers Wales: Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

Overall, there appeared to be a wide range of activities and support in place, which introduced young people to a wide range of work-related opportunities. Jobs Growth Wales, a Welsh Government programme partly funded under the European Social Fund which provides unemployed young people aged 16 to 24 years with a paid job opportunity for a six-month period, was highlighted as one such example. Interviewees were highly complimentary about the opportunities offered through this scheme and the fact that it provided a way in which to engage with a wide range of local and national employers. There were, however, some concerns about the quality and range of work experience placements being provided in some areas, in particular where work experience was not directly linked with the course of learning being followed and with an individual's chosen career path. This highlighted the need for more consistency in the provision of valid work experience for young people.

³ The 'Dynamo Role Models' programme was initially funded through the ERDF-funded Enterprise Network Project. When the project closed, the activity transferred to the New Business Start-Up Project, which is also funded with ERDF.

The importance of personal and family networks was also highlighted as a key factor influencing the success of work experience. It was widely acknowledged that young people from

more disadvantaged backgrounds often lacked parental networks and were therefore more likely to be miss out on the opportunities offered by work experience, as they were not always aware of the options and opportunities available. It was widely perceived, therefore, that there were still difficulties encountered in the work experience programme, because it was those young people who had strong networks of parents who were in reasonably well-paid jobs who seemed to have the better options available to them.

The situation of rural youth

The interviews with Careers Advisors suggested that a number of factors, both positive and negative, could have an impact on the experiences, aspirations and future choices of young people in rural areas. These ranged from structural factors such as educational and employment opportunities and transport, to more cultural and personal factors such as individual work ethic and social skills.

In educational terms, it was suggested that a number of factors contributed to a lack of choice for young people - particularly those who wished to leave compulsory education after Year 11 to pursue vocational courses or to secure training or apprenticeship opportunities. These factors included long distances between education and training providers, and a lack of convenient and accessible public transport services that allowed access to learning and employment opportunities. These were highlighted as key issues in nearly all of the study areas, as these quotations illustrate:

'Accessibility is a big problem for young people living in rural areas. For some, you're talking about six bus journeys in

a day to get to college, so the logistics are a bit of a nightmare.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Bro Gwaun, Fishguard study area)

'I'd say young people in rural areas are at a definite disadvantage when it comes to choosing future options, because, for example if you leave school at 16 then you might be totally reliant on public transport to get to College, and you might even have trouble reaching the main road to catch the bus. And that's an issue that affects young people in this area and indeed across Ceredigion.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Penweddig, Talybont study area)

'There are job opportunities available and there are plenty of people to fill the vacancies, but sometimes it's very problematic because of the transport situation. And what we tend to see is that young people in the south of the county stay in the south and the ones living in the north of the county stay in that part. This is a big problem, and I know of a number of students who have chosen not to go to college for that reason.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Penweddig, Talybont study area)

The careers advisors also considered employment opportunities to be fairly poor and cited the limited range of sectors in the study areas, and in rural areas more generally, as their reasons for this view. The limited range of occupations and large industries in rural areas was seen to constrain the opportunities available to young people. For example, although there were some key employers in the study areas, such as the public sector, interviewees in all six areas noted that there was a lack of large employers and industries. This meant that these rural areas were unable to retain skilled young people within the local labour markets, and attract those individuals who had moved away to pursue higher education, but wished to

return to their home communities to work. It was acknowledged that this would inevitably lead some young people to move away from their home communities and to never return:

'I'd say that young people in this area are at a disadvantage when it comes to education and work options because the range of opportunities available to them are much more limited, and so they have to travel further to take advantage of wider options. And that's why so many have to leave the area.' (Careers Advisor: Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

'Most of the work in this area is in the public sector - either working for the County Council, in the hospital or the University - they're the main employers. There's also a lot of seasonal work in Ceredigion, especially in the summer months. So the opportunities for young people are very limited, compared to students living in Swansea or Cardiff.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Penweddig, Talybont study area)

However, despite these constraints, there was consensus among interviewees regarding the strong work ethic displayed by young people in the study areas. Several of the interviewees observed that rural youth were more likely to have a strong work ethic having been brought up in a culture where hard work was valued – such as those individuals from a farming background, or those whose parents were self-employed or ran family businesses, as these quotations demonstrate:

'I'd say that the work ethic shown by young people in this area is extremely impressive – you'll find that most have a weekend or summer job, and I'm sure that contributes to the fact that the number of young people classified as NEET is very low.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

'What I find is that young people in rural areas tend to be members of clubs and societies, which make them very sociable. Traditionally establishments such as the chapel, the Urdd and Young Farmers' Clubs have been strong in this area, and still remain so. I can usually tell straight away who's a member of the YFC from the moment they walk into the room and communicate, and just from the way they convey themselves. They have a different type of confidence.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Penweddig, Talybont study area)

'What we tend to see here is that if parents are people who work in practical, trade jobs such as plumbers and electricians, then the student has a much better idea about how hard it is out there, because they've probably seen their parents struggle to find work, and find it difficult to keep the work going.' (Careers Advisor: Ysgol Penweddig, Talybont study area)

Moreover, some interviewees suggested that young people from rural areas were perhaps more determined or independently-minded compared to their urban counterparts as they had to overcome more barriers to education and employment in their day-to-day lives, such as transport and accessibility limitations, in order fulfil their ambitions:

'I find that young people in a rural school have a good work ethic, because if they don't go and learn to drive or actively get on the bus, then that's the only way they will get out and socialise and have fun. So, you find that they're going to young farmers and so on at a younger age, and they'll actively jump on a bus to access these other things.' (Careers Advisor: Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

'I think they're [rural youth] more resilient and they're more independent in that they know that unless they do

drive then they have to rely on their parents or make their own way around, whether that's by bike, on foot or by bus.' (Careers Advisor: Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

Summary

Overall, the views of the careers advisors showed that there were particular constraints that impacted on young people's experiences, aspirations and future decisions. The extent to which young people in the study areas were able to take advantage of a wide range of educational and employment opportunities was constrained by the lack of a full range of options locally. The situation was made even more complex by an absence of accessible and affordable transport enabling young people to access the opportunities available to them. Employment opportunities were also perceived to be less varied than in more urban areas, with large industries and employers under-represented in local labour markets. However, on the positive side, young people were perceived to be strongly influenced by, and benefited from a strong attachment to their local areas and to their local communities and their associated cultures, and a strong work ethic.

Section 4: Discussions with young people and young families

Introduction

A key aim of this study was to provide an in-depth examination of the experiences and aspirations of young people in six rural communities in Wales in order to better understand their motivations for either staying in, leaving, returning or moving into rural areas.

In order to gather the evidence required to investigate these key areas of concern, in-depth discussions were held with four specific groups within each study area, as discussed in Section 1. The discussions were based around key themes drawn from the academic literature, and covered issues relating to local educational opportunities, employment, housing and transport, leisure and social opportunities, social networks, and participation in local decision-making.

This section presents the key findings from the group discussions in each of the six study areas. It begins by exploring the idea that perceptions of rural places are important in shaping the migration trends of rural young people. In doing so, it draws on and examines young people's own viewpoints and their feelings about their home communities and the 'rural' more generally, particularly in respect of lifestyle and employment opportunities. The section then turns attention to participants' future intentions with regard to specific transitions from school to work, parental home to independent household, education to employment and family formation.

Perceptions of rural areas / place

Community and local social relations / social interaction

Those who participated in the group discussions – both young people in school or at college and young parents, consistently saw their rural communities as a good place 'to grow up in' or 'to raise your kids', and in particular, as 'safe' and 'quiet'. These were recurrent themes in positive representations of rural life across all study areas – as the following quotations emphasise:

'It's a nice community ... it's very safe, not busy, just quiet and safe and I can't say anything bad about the place really. I really like living here.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

'Beautiful, nice scenery, quiet. And there's very little trouble here.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'Everybody knows everyone around here. So, if anything would happen you'd know that somebody was looking out for your children, so you feel safe.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

As such, and as the following quotations show, any changes which might result in many new people moving into the community, such as a plan to build new houses in the village of Pwllglas, were viewed in negative terms as a threat to community character:

'They're talking about building more houses next to the playing field. I don't know if I'd like that to be honest, because it's only a small village. The whole point of living here is that it's quiet, you know everyone and it's a nice community, but then if loads more people moved in, then it'd be just like living in town then, wouldn't it?' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

Others highlighted additional positive attributes, for example, by relating their area to a 'sense of community'. There was

a perception that the study areas were 'tightly-knit', place-based communities characterised by frequent and highly localised social interactions that created a sense of familiarity and strong bonds between local residents. A common observation was that the communities were small enough that everyone knew each other well and could give each other support when they needed it:

'...everyone knows each other here and you socialise a lot together.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

'There's quite a good community air here and everybody knows everybody... And people will say hello to you straight away. You don't get that everywhere.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'You can walk down the street and everyone will say hello to you. It's a very friendly village.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'Everyone knows each other and everyone looks out for one another.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

In several of the study areas, most notably Talybont, Botwnnog, Bodedern and Pwllglas, Welsh was the main community language and several respondents emphasised that this contributed to a strong sense of community and to their area's unique heritage and culture:

'It feels like the community is much closer and tight-knit here, and it's definitely more Welsh compared to where I lived before. I'm sure the number of Welsh speakers is about the same, but there's certainly more of a Welsh quality to the area and there are plenty of Welsh societies and groups that you can get involved in.'

And the local Primary school is bilingual. The children can all speak Welsh because they were born in the area, and so you get a lot of Welsh-speaking families in the

area.' (Cylch Meithrin Pwllglas, Pwllglas study area)

'It's a very strong Welsh speaking community, and it's remained so despite changes we've seen from people moving in. And there's a distinctive culture in the area too' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

Positive perceptions of community life were also shared by families who were new to the study areas:

'I've only been here since October and I know so many people in the village already, just from going to the shop and the garage. Everyone's actually stops to chat and you can walk down the street and everyone will say hello to you. It's a very friendly village.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'It's pretty ideal here at the moment. Of all the places I've lived, this is by far the best and I can't imagine a better place to raise my daughter.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

It was also interesting to note one young person's perception of the level of community spirit and engagement within his home community of Pwllglas, in which he referred to the shared characteristics and interests of community members, most notably in terms of residents' socio-economic welfare. The small rural community was seen to be made up of a population of working- and middle-class persons with a degree of stability in income and tenure and a strong interest in their community – key factors which made the area a pleasant place to live in:

'I like living in Pwllglas and I'd definitely come back here to live. Part of what makes it so nice and so friendly is that you don't have really rich people and snobs living here and nobody really stands out for being poor either. There are some council houses, but I'd say everyone is sort of working-class, so there isn't a lot of difference between people who live here,

or the houses in the village.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

It was also clear from the discussions that young people had a distinct sense of place based on a strong sense of distinctiveness and difference from others, and in particular between the rural and the urban. Perceptions of larger population centres and more built-up areas were often used by young people as a negative reference point in their accounts of rural life, and they frequently referred to the notion of the rural community as 'close-knit' and again as 'caring' and 'safe':

'It's quiet here. I like that though. I quite like going to the city for a little break and then coming back to the peace and quiet. I wouldn't want to live in an area where it was noisy all the time.' (Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

'I think it's a nice area, because you're not going to get like knife crime or gang crime or like gangs around here. It's a safe area ... No knives and lots of trees, and that's how I like it!' (Crickhowell DofE, Crickhowell study area)

'I like living here – it's much better than living in a town. It's nice to live close to town because we can go there when we like, but I wouldn't like to live there because it's just too busy. Because everyone knows each other here children have more freedom from their parents to wander around because it's so safe around here. And if anything happens then someone usually says something straight away. Everyone looks out for each other here.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

'Pwllglas is a really tidy and attractive village so nobody wants to spoil it in a way. In town you have people writing graffiti and vandalising things, but nobody does anything like that here.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

Similarly, this contrast between urban and rural life was also evident in the narratives

of some of the young families who had moved into the study areas, with several expressing high levels of satisfaction with their adopted communities as a place to live, referring to a slower pace of life, safety, friendly and welcoming neighbours and residents, and in general a better quality of life than was possible in an urban area:

'I find that other people look out for your kids here and pick them up if they fall over. ... It's actually a community rather than everyone just living by themselves.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'I remember when we moved down, we got a van from the garage and as we're unloading the van the woman come out from the shop and gave us a couple of loaves of bread and some milk to take home. We then went to the shop and they gave us a free beer because we'd just moved into the village. You just wouldn't get that in a city. It's really great here. People want to know you, people want to chat to you. They want you to be part of their lives if they can.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'I couldn't go back to where I lived now. I wouldn't have the same trust that I've got round here.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

Infrastructure and service provision

Rural service provision remains a highly contentious and challenging area of policy and practice, which has become an even more prominent issue within the context of recent cuts in public expenditure and the ever increasing demands being placed on services by the ageing rural population. Concerns over the closure of rural services such as post offices and primary schools, the declining quality of health and social care provision and limited transport services are well documented in the media and in the academic and policy literature.

An enduring theme throughout the four WRO services surveys of 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013, and in other WRO work such as the Deep Rural Localities study (WRO, 2009) has been the decline in the provision of services, particularly those that were seen to act as a 'hub' in a community. Post offices were the prime example and they had suffered a steep decline in provision; a decline that had been state and institutionally driven. Other examples included public houses, general stores, schools and school halls, church halls and community centres. The locations for these community 'hub' services often have the potential to act as multiple-purpose venues, meaning that their demise might trigger the loss of more than one service. Arguably, their decline subsequently threatens the sustainability of rural communities, thus ensuring that rural communities are provided with good services remains of key concern

Discussions held with young people in the six study areas around this theme highlight the continuing difficulties experienced by particular groups of rural residents in accessing essential services and facilities, especially in the remoter rural villages of Talybont, Botwnnog and Bodedern. Within these areas, everyday life was perceived to be made more difficult and less enjoyable by a lack of transport options, limited access to goods and services, poor leisure and social facilities, and an acute lack of affordable housing. Whilst the majority of participants accepted that the shortage of services and facilities were to some degree an inherent part of rural life, poor accessibility to those that were available was highlighted as particularly problematic for a small minority of local residents, in particular those without access to a car.

Leisure and social opportunities

Perceptions of, and satisfaction with, leisure and social opportunities varied across study areas and between the different groups that participated in the research. On the whole, older respondents were generally more satisfied with the social and leisure opportunities available within their local communities compared with the younger respondents. As an example, in Botwnnog, a number of the female participants in the Nursery group discussion were active members of the local branch of Merched y Wawr (an organisation aimed at women, similar to the Women's Institute but its activities are conducted through the medium of Welsh), which was seen to play an important role in community life and they regularly socialised with other members, as well as with other parents and guardians who attended the Nursery group. As families, many also noted that they made regular use of the wide variety of sports clubs located in the surrounding area, including the football club in Botwnnog, and the local rugby club, sailing club and leisure centre, all located in Pwllheli.

Similarly, in Pwllglas, discussion group participants emphasised the popularity of the local Merched y Wawr branch and Nursery group among local residents and families, and several noted the importance of the local village hall in providing opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in a wide range of social activities, such as zumba, choral singing, whist drive and other community events. Residents in Talybont also appeared to be actively involved in their community, through membership of local groups and societies, participation in sports activities and through the local chapels and church, as this quotation demonstrates:

'There are a lot of societies you can get involved with and there's something on in

the hall every evening. You've got the Young Farmers' club, Merched y Wawr, there's a Clwb Gwawr⁴, WI, yoga. We used to have a badminton club. There's a massive football club and line dancing. ... There are two chapels and a Church, and Sunday school. So there's a lot going on.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

Young people - Lack of facilities and activities / 'nothing to do'

In comparison, young people claimed that there was nothing to do, irrespective of whether they lived out in the country, in smaller villages or close to rural towns. A large number of respondents commented on the social opportunities that they perceived were available, or indeed were lacking in their area. To a large extent, comments on social opportunities appeared to dominate young people's responses within the discussion groups. This suggests that perceptions of leisure and social opportunities, or deficiencies, were prominent in young people's minds when thinking about their home community and were, therefore, likely to be key factors influencing their decisions to move.

Respondents also suggested that their communities were socially isolating and offered limited opportunities for entertainment and limited access to facilities and services specifically aimed at young people. Respondents felt there were inadequate opportunities to participate in sport or other social opportunities.

'When it's sunny out we can go to the river to hang out, play football and just be outside, but when it's raining there's just nothing to do here. We just have to stay in the house. It would be good to have

something to bring everyone together.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area).

'There's nowhere really to kick a ball around in Crickhowell which is really unfair. If there was a place for people to meet up and play, people would have such a laugh and it would just make such a difference.' (Crickhowell DofE, Crickhowell study area)

Once again, comparisons were also drawn with urban areas, which were seen to offer more social opportunities. Many respondents observed that their small rural communities were poorly served in comparison and forced young people to travel long distances to access facilities such as leisure centres, swimming pools and cinemas, which they felt was unjust and unacceptable.

'There isn't much to do here and nowhere you can go to meet up with friends after school or on weekends – we just have to go to each other's homes, or go on the train to Bangor. It would be nice to have a leisure centre or a swimming pool here. Every other area on Anglesey seems to have a leisure centre apart from us, but it's a journey of at least half an hour to get to one from here. There's no cinema on the island either – you have to go all the way to Llandudno if you want to go to the cinema.' (Ysgol Bodedern, Bodedern study area)

'We just need somewhere like the village hall where we can go any time, when it suits us to play Xbox and Playstation and things like ping pong - just like they have in the youth club in town.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area).

'Where I live there isn't much to do really, so it can be a bit boring. For those who live in town, there's much more stuff to do – there's plenty of shops and activities, but there's nothing here and it's far from everywhere. I think they should have more clubs in Botwnnog – there seem to be plenty in other areas, but they're spread out all over the place.' (Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area).

⁴ An organisation which works across Wales to provide opportunities for women across Wales to socialise in Welsh once a month in a pub or club.

Distinction between childhood and youth

Linked to the observations made by young people in the study areas concerning the lack of social opportunities aimed at young people was the common perception that while rural communities were good places in which to live as children and in which to grow up, as well as being good places to be an adult, they were not necessarily good places in which to be a teenager or young adult. Many felt that adults and children had plenty to do in the local community, but life for rural youth was frequently portrayed as 'boring' and 'dull', which, in turn, had an adverse impact on their sense of well-being and their position within the community. Such sentiments may be based on young people's experiences of what it was like as a child growing up in the area, and how this perhaps differs to their more recent experiences of themselves as young people in a rural area: *'I think because we've got older we think there's even less to do here. It's getting much more boring ... I think our perspective of the area has definitely changed.'* (Crickhowell High)

As young people, many felt that there was nothing for them locally:

'This place is all about really old people or really young kids. There's not that in-between, for the young adults. There's absolutely nothing to do here if you're like between fifteen and twenty-one.' (Crickhowell DofE, Crickhowell study area)

'If you're like over sixty then peace and quiet is a nice thing because you might want to escape from the city and the hustle and bustle. People come here to settle and to retire. I mean, Crickhowell's really nice, but for old people I'd say, not for young people.' (Crickhowell DofE, Crickhowell study area)

'There's a lot in the area for younger kids of Primary school age to do, but not for

teenagers.' (Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

'There's loads of stuff for older people, like whist, zumba classes and choir – there's something on in the hall nearly every night, and then there's loads of stuff for the younger kids too, but nothing for us. And then they complain that young people make a lot of noise and mess.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

Such concerns over the lack of leisure and social opportunities aimed specifically at young people were echoed by the older participants in several of the study areas, particularly in Talybont and Fishguard:

'We used to have a thriving youth club in the village on a Friday night from seven o'clock to nine, but it's closed now as there wasn't anyone to take it over. We definitely need something like a youth club for secondary age kids in the village – there's plenty for the smaller children, but not for teenagers.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'Quite frankly, there's absolutely nothing to do here to be honest with you, especially for younger people - there's not an awful lot here for them.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

Despite the difficulties experienced by young people in the study area, it is important to note that there were some respondents who indicated positive perceptions of lifestyle opportunities in the region. For example, one respondent described their local area in terms of the 'open countryside' and 'peace and quiet'. Others emphasised how much they enjoyed living in their area, particularly during the summer months, when there were plenty of opportunities to participate in outdoor activities on the local beaches, hang out by the river and in the woods and just wander around, making use of the open space around them. As the

following quotation from a group of teenagers in Pwllglas highlights, it was clear that rural young people were highly imaginative and creative in finding and providing their own entertainment opportunities, drawing on the natural environment around them, given the relative lack of amenities and opportunities available to them locally. Their views suggested that they were keen to mark themselves out as different to urban youth, particularly in relation to the cultural activities they participated in, and that urban life was much less exciting compared with the rural:

S2. 'In the summer we can just go over to the graig for a walk, but they [urban youth] would find that boring – just hanging out and playing around in the woods. Because when we didn't have a shop in the village we'd just have to find something to do, or just sit in the house.'

S5. Yeah, they just go to the shops if they're bored, whereas we find things to do.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

Transport and accessibility

Transport was highlighted as a major issue for both young people and young families, but something that they simply accepted as a feature of everyday life within the study areas. For those research participants who were either too young or unable to drive, or simply did not have access to a car, public transport was seen as inadequate and unreliable in their areas; this was confirmed by the large number of respondents who reported difficulties when using public transport in their day-to-day lives. The principal problem appeared to be inefficient and infrequent services. For example, the last bus from Fishguard was late afternoon rather than late at night, while getting to another part of the county by public transport necessitated a long and drawn out journey involving multiple stops,

delays or modes of transport, as these respondents from Fishguard and Botwnnog noted:

'The transport here is ridiculous. You've got the buses to Haverfordwest and to Cardigan, and the town services, but they stop at a certain time. Whereas if you moved to somewhere near Cardiff or Carmarthen, then at least you know that the buses are coming every two or three minutes.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'I remember having to get to Goodwick from Pembroke Dock, which isn't actually that far if you're in a car. But I used to have to get a bus from Pembroke Dock to Haverfordwest, and then there was a 50-minute wait for the bus to Fishguard and then you had to wait for the bus down to Goodwick. And that used to take nearly three hours – nearly three hours to get from Pembroke Dock to Goodwick.' (Point Young Persons Trust, Fishguard study area)

'We're quite out of the way here, which makes getting around quite difficult. There are bus services, but, you have to go round and round and call in every village before you get to the place you're trying to reach. You have to travel around five miles on these small, windy roads before you get to anywhere, and then there's the onward journey to Pwllheli. So it's a long journey, nearly double what it would be in a car.' (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

The lack of access to other alternatives to public transport services to meet the travel needs of non-drivers was therefore highlighted as particularly problematic in the study areas, while those who could drive were left heavily reliant on their cars to make essential journeys, such as travelling to work – as this participant emphasised:

'Before I could drive I used to travel to work by bus, but I found it really hard. I'd have to

leave work earlier than I was supposed to, or later, so sometimes I'd have to do longer hours for no extra money.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

Several young people also spoke of the logistical difficulties of catching a bus to meet up with friends in town, or complained that unsuitable timetables often made it impossible to reach the nearest town for a particular time, with services either arriving too early or too late:

S.10. 'Every time I arrange to go into town I either have to be really early or half an hour late.'

S3. Yes, the bus times just aren't very good. And I think they come back from town really early too, something like nine o'clock.' (Ysgol Penweddig, Talybont study area)

Public transport was also seen as expensive, with several young people pointing out that they had to pay a full bus fare when they were 16, even if they were in full-time education.

As a result of these difficulties, young people who lived in the remoter rural communities, particularly on the Llŷn Peninsula, were heavily dependent on lifts, which was seen to limit their independence, as the comments below show. Learning to drive and getting a driving licence were therefore seen by these young people as essential for living in their rural area:

'It would be nice to be able to go on a whim somewhere, without having to rely on someone from home to give me a lift. I have football training in Pwllheli every week; I catch the bus there and because it doesn't finish until nine o'clock I have to get picked up from there.' (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

'A lot of my friends from college live in Nefyn, which is quite far from where I live. Last summer when I couldn't drive it was

quite difficult to meet up with them, because quite a few of them lived quite close to each other and could walk to each other's houses, whereas I had to rely on my parents to take me there and back.' (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

Housing availability and affordability

The affordability of housing in rural areas and the supply of affordable housing have long been identified as key factors in the vitality and sustainability of rural communities (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008). However, it is widely acknowledged that houses are much less affordable in villages and smaller settlements compared to larger urban areas. Limited provision of, and lack of access to, affordable housing – to buy or to rent – was identified as a major factor forcing young people and young families out of the study areas or discouraging their return. Respondents perceived a number of difficulties, which were compounding the difficulties experienced by young people and young families in their areas, including high house prices, a limited supply of both private and social housing, and restrictive planning regulations.

A common concern in all six study areas was that disproportionately high housing prices, fuelled by demand for commuting, second homes, holiday homes and retirement accommodation, was taking owner occupation beyond the reach of many people resulting in young people and young families being driven out of the communities where they worked or had grown up:

'House prices around here are very, very expensive, compared to people's earnings. Overly-expensive I'd say.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'The only reason we bought was because we had help from family – they gave us half the money and then we got a mortgage on the other half. Otherwise we would never have been able to afford to buy.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'Families and young people find it so hard to find a place to live around here, because house prices are so incredibly expensive. Over the last thirty years or so a lot of people have moved in and bought up the houses and prices have just gone out of all reason.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

Where affordable housing was being made available, for example through quotas of affordable housing on private developments, the supply was often insufficient to meet demand. Similarly, the inadequate provision of social housing, both by local authorities and by housing associations, was seen to limit choices even further for young families on lower incomes. This was highlighted as a particular problem in Talybont:

'S3. When I first came back to the area and tried to get on the local authority housing list, they said to me that because I'd been away so long I didn't qualify as 'local' any more. There's nobody more local than me – I was born and bred here.'

S2. We've been in exactly the same boat. There have been about six or seven houses that have come up recently in Maes-y-Deri, and each time someone from away will come in, and then after a while they realise that they don't like it here and they've gone again.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area).

Young families' experiences of the local housing market in the study areas also indicated that the current planning system was considered too regulatory and rigid, and often hindered the development of simple solutions to rural housing needs. This problem was compounded by the fact that development sites were scarcer because of additional planning

constraints, especially in National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and areas of scenic value.

'S3: It's virtually impossible to get planning permission to build a house around here.'

S4. Yes, and I'd emphasise that they're supposed to be planning guidelines and not planning rules about affordability, but they're so stringent.'

S3. It sounds like a good idea, but you go ahead and try to find a mortgage and you'll find that not one single building society will give you a mortgage, so you end up being stuck with your parents for years. So there needs to be more flexibility within the rules.'

S5. I'd agree with every word of that. We battled for three years to build our house.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area).

Local service provision

The discussion indicated that overall levels of service provision varied across study areas. The larger study areas, including Crickhowell, Talybont and Fishguard tended to be well served by services such as post offices, libraries, chemists, banks, GPs, food shopping, dentists and primary schools, while in the remaining areas local services were limited to a village shop, butcher, and a village hall or community centre, which necessitated a trip to a nearby village or town to access more specialist services. The group discussions sought to measure young people and young families' patterns of using these local services and their perceptions of the quality of those services.

Respondents' assessments of the provision of local services within the study areas were fairly mixed. For example, young families in Talybont and Pwll Glas appeared to be broadly satisfied with the areas they lived in and with the quality of service provision in those areas:

'We've got everything we need in Talybont – we've got shops, pubs, co-op, a school a garage.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'The new shop has made such a difference to the village, because a lot of local people have started to use it. It's somewhere you can go just to see people and the children really enjoy going there too.' (Cylch Meithrin Pwllglas, Pwllglas study area)

A relatively consistent pattern emerged of dissatisfaction being concentrated in the smaller or more remote communities – in particular Botwnnog on the Llŷn peninsula and Bodedern on Anglesey, where the lack of services available locally, combined with remoteness created a necessity for residents to travel to nearby villages and towns to access services:

'It's quite difficult here sometimes, in terms of facilities such as shops and things like the hospital and the vets, because we have to travel everywhere, no matter what we need.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

As a result of these challenges, respondents' shopping patterns and approaches to accessing a wider range of services confirmed the findings of previous research undertaken by the WRO. Most respondents chose to access services either by travelling to the nearest town or city or by using web-based services, and several mentioned that they regularly combined a number of activities into a single trip so as to take advantage of the lower costs and better quality of goods and services:

'I usually go to Pwllheli to do my food shopping. But if I need to buy clothes, then I tend to shop online, because it's so much cheaper and it saves me from having to travel to Bangor. I do most of my shopping online too, especially food shopping.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

Declining levels of service provision were also highlighted as particularly problematic in Fishguard, particularly for young people and households with young children. In terms of the latter, the main issues related to services for children, namely, the closure of local primary schools and the availability of activities aimed at young children.

There was also a general perception of neglect in relation to the provision of services locally, with those respondents who had either lived in the area or had visited regularly since childhood recalling the town as a vibrant tourism and service centre:

'I'd say the town's changed quite visibly in the last couple of years - shops closing, and it's not just a gradual thing it's all of a sudden.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'I've lived here for twenty-six years, and when we first moved here it was thriving. In the summer time you'd have flowers on all of the shops, they'd re-paint everything and the tourists would come down and it would be absolutely heaving. But, there's nothing now – it's just a ghost town.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

Where new services had been introduced into the area in recent years, there were complaints that these were too expensive and unsuited to the area and to the local population:

'...You can't just pick up the phone and order in food here, or go to a restaurant, because there's not an awful lot of restaurants around here to be quite honest. And those that do exist don't open regularly, and it's being able to afford it as well.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

Access to the decision-making process

There is growing awareness and interest among the public and policy-makers of the important and critical role that young people play in forming and sustaining sustainable communities. This is particularly crucial in terms of rural communities, where the ageing population trend is particularly marked and where there has been a steady decline in the proportion of the younger population. Young people are also more likely than other population groups to be impacted by the range of activities and facilities available at the local level, including the provision of education and training, employment, services, housing and so on. Despite this, young people are too often excluded from the decision-making process. The research therefore sought to investigate what effect young people and young families in the study areas felt they had on policies and decisions affecting them and to what extent they felt included in the democratic and political processes in their areas.

The group discussions revealed a genuine enthusiasm for playing a part in certain aspects of the local decision-making processes, both by young people and young families. Common issues of concern included education, facilities and activities for children and young people, local economic development, the environment and housing. However, there were indications that both groups felt excluded from certain parts of the decision-making process and argued that on certain issues they had no meaningful representation within the community. Young families in Talybont and Fishguard were particularly concerned that their views and concerns on specific matters, such as the closure of local services or the lack of facilities aimed at children within

their community, were not sufficiently taken into account and even ignored – as these quotes illustrate:

'If our local council wants to do something it would just do it, whether the local population like it or not. No matter how many petitions you get together, they just don't listen.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'You can have your say on things that happen locally, but whether it makes any difference I don't know. ... it just seems that we're stuck in the dark ages when every other village seems to be moving on.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Fishguard study area)

Respondents in Fishguard also commented on the lack of vision shown by older residents and local decision-makers and highlighted that there were tensions between the older and newer generation, particularly in respect of recent proposals to develop a new marina in Goodwick:

'S5. I think our councillors are pretty much out of touch, aren't they? We'd like to have a little bit more input into what's happening down in Goodwick with Stena Line and the plans to develop the marina. But the axe is split between the older generation and the younger generation. Something has to happen, it really does because the whole area is pretty much dying on its feet.'

'S4. I think the younger people think, well it can't get any worse, let's try something different, whereas the older generation are thinking "No, we're not having this, it'll bring noise".' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

Tensions / injustices of rural youth

Such perceptions of being ignored, excluded or overlooked were also expressed by young people. One of the main activities undertaken by young people within the study areas was meeting up with friends and just 'hanging around'

on the streets and outside the local shop, mainly due to the lack of alternative opportunities in their local areas. One group of teenagers spoke about how they regularly met up in the local playground, but had been blamed for causing damage to the facilities. Subsequent efforts by a group of local young people and the Community Council to organise a petition calling on the county council to consider investing in a new playground and developing additional facilities such as a skate-park were rejected on the basis that they would be immediately vandalised. They saw this as an injustice, and as a real loss.

Young people therefore felt that community life was highly intrusive, and they felt that they were constantly being watched and monitored by older members of the community:

'A lot of the younger kids go to the youth club in the community centre, but they have a lot of fights and people ring the police on them quite a lot. Literally, if you just go out on the streets they'll ring the police on you because they just don't like kids.' (Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

'It would be good if we had more stuff to do, and for the police to stop bullying us ... There's a cricket cage down by my school where we sometimes go and sit, but they're always driving past and they don't really leave us alone. They obviously follow us because we'll settle down somewhere and then they'll drive past. Then we move somewhere else and they'll drive past again. It's like they're constantly watching us. It's really awful.' (Point Young Persons Trust, Fishguard study area).

There was also a perception among young people within the study areas that many of the decisions made within their local communities were taken by adults, and children and young people's thoughts and feelings were often not considered or

taken into account in any part of the decision-making process. This, despite the fact that any choices or decisions made would have a profound impact on their lives, both now and in the future. Many young people observed that a commonly held perception in their areas, particularly among adults, was that children and young people had no sense of reality, and when asked for their opinions and recommendations would suggest elaborate and unrealistic ideas. As a result, it was felt that young people were often silenced on many decisions that impacted on their lives. The discussions around this issue demonstrated that young people in the study areas were very keen to have a voice in what went on around them, to participate in local decision making processes, and to be given genuine opportunities to express their views on projects, activities and services that were currently on offer and any ideas for the future development of services.

'The council usually take older people more seriously. If we ask for anything they don't really listen.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

S5. *'Whatever we ask for or want to do, they all say straight away that we need supervision. We're all nearly 16 and there are some in the village over 17, so we're old enough to look after ourselves and to not trash things ... They should be able to do something for us.'*

S7. *'Yeah, and ask us what exactly we want, not just do something and then expect us to turn up because we won't. If it's not something we've asked for then we don't want it. And we shouldn't have to pay for it either.'* (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area).

'S3. This place is very pretty and parochial ... you can't really approach the community'

council with an idea – they seem to have better things to do, like arrange bake sales.

S2. Yeah. I think the council have a lot of time to hear complaints, so, if someone was upset about rubbish or something like that, then they'd be quite happy to hear about that. But I think if we were to approach them and offer them an idea they wouldn't listen. They need to be more open to ideas.' (Crickhowell DofE, Crickhowell study area)

Local labour market / employment opportunities

In the past century, rural economies have been experiencing restructuring associated with a decline in agricultural production and a rise in the service economy, particularly tourism, which has had implications for the rural labour market. These include a narrow economic structure, employment characterised by low pay and a lack of opportunities for progression, and higher levels of self-employment, informal and seasonal work – all of which appear to be having an impact on young people in rural areas. As a result, young people face the choice of moving away from their home rural community and entering the national labour market, or remaining in a labour market characterised by few prospects and insecurity.

The research findings suggested that life was problematic for rural young people in socio-economic terms, particularly for school-leavers who wished to stay on in their home communities or educated and qualified young people who wished to return in the future after completing their studies. In relation to employment opportunities and conditions, young people tended to describe employment opportunities in their areas in mostly negative terms. Interviewees frequently identified a lack of employment options, including the quality and range of

employment and poor wages, as a key concern, as the following quotations illustrate. For many, these factors forced young people to move elsewhere to seek suitable employment:

'We need more jobs in the area, and different types of jobs because everything seems to be the same around here - you either work in a shop, train to be a teacher or you're a farmer. There doesn't seem to be any variety.' (Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

S5. 'I just think that the main problem about living here is there just aren't any jobs on Anglesey, and that's why a lot of people choose not to stay in the area. If there were more opportunities available perhaps people would re-consider staying.'

S6. The problem is, I think there is work, but not good quality work. It doesn't pay very well. We need more jobs that aren't just on the minimum wage.' (Ysgol Bodedern, Bodedern study area)

Opportunities for career development were also perceived to be limited. In the words of one respondent, the rural community was viewed as: *'... more of a place to retire than for a professional to move back to ... it's nice, but it's not like there's businesses and jobs everywhere. In cities there's more chance to be able to move up rank.'* (Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area).

A number of respondents also perceived difficulties in finding full-time, stable employment, and similarly some suggested that the difficult employment situation was often compounded by the fact that much rural work was seasonal and temporary in nature and therefore associated with low pay, lower levels of job satisfaction than permanent employment, and poor career prospects. This was highlighted as a particular problem in Fishguard, Botwnnog, and

Bodedern – all areas with a strong association with tourism and agriculture.

'S3. In terms of jobs, there's local government, and the shops and businesses in Pwllheli. A lot of the work in this area tends to come in the summer months, but then they're often temporary and you can't earn a living from them.

S2. Yeah, it tends to be something to earn a little extra income from really.

S3. Which is fine for young people while they're at University, but they're not much help to them afterwards when the time comes to find a proper job.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

'In terms of jobs, you've got Stena Line. And then there's the small shops, and Tesco's and Co-op as well. ... So, you know, there are obviously a lot of opportunities around. But, I think it's more aimed at the students who are on a break from Uni or need extra work when they're back.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

'My daughter found work through Communities First, but as it's funded through grants, it's often only short-term. So, when it comes to finding a mortgage and trying to borrow money to buy a house, it's just impossible.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area).

Faced with a limited range, young families were realistic about employment opportunities and there were several examples of participants adapting to suit opportunities available locally:

'If you want to work there's a job out there for you. It doesn't matter if it's cleaning or whatever, it's work and money at the end of the day.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'If you want to stay in the area you've just got to take what's available in the area and then stick to it.' (Cylch Meithrin Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

Similarly, comments from older participants who were either in employment or considering re-entering the labour market after raising a family, revealed patterns of working that enabled them to adapt to employment opportunities in rural areas. Commuting and travelling long distances to work was the norm and a common feature of the study areas. These respondents acknowledged that the labour markets in their communities did not provide a sufficient supply of jobs to match their skills and qualifications, but accepted this as a part of rural life:

'It can be an hour's drive to get to work some mornings. ... I'm a teacher, so I don't have much choice really – you have to be prepared to travel.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

'Jobs-wise there's nothing for me here. I've got a Biochemistry degree, and so I'd have to travel quite far to use that.' (Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Fishguard study area)

Future Migration Decisions

The statistical analysis presented in Section 2 has shown that, in recent years, Wales has consistently experienced a net loss of young persons aged between 15 and 24 years, as well as those aged 25-29. The net loss in these age groups appears to be greatest in the rural authorities and the trend shows no sign of stopping. It is, therefore, important to further investigate the future migration intentions of young people in rural Wales by examining the intentions of those rural young people currently resident in the case study areas, as well as the choices and intentions of those young families who have either chosen to stay in their local area or who have returned to the area following a period living elsewhere.

The remainder of this section therefore turns attention to young people's and young families' decisions or future plans to either stay, leave or return to the area where they grew up.

Young people: The future and staying on

The material presented thus far clearly shows that a defining feature in the lives of the young people that participated in this research in each study area was whether they would stay in or leave their community, and if they left, whether they would return in the future. For many, there were a number of tensions and issues associated with these decisions.

Migration as a natural process

As has been suggested already, there was a clear culture of leaving among the younger generation in each study area; this was confirmed by the large majority of research participants who stated that they were planning to move away, either to further their studies at university, for vocational training and further education, to travel, to establish their careers or to find a wider range of more suitable work opportunities elsewhere. Leaving home and moving away was, therefore, seen as a natural step following school and in many cases was actively expected and encouraged by their families. In order to develop a deeper understanding of the evolving patterns and processes of youth migration in rural Wales, the following section considers the key factors influencing young people's decisions to either stay or leave in their home communities.

The qualitative evidence gathered from the focus groups highlighted the complex and multi-layered processes involved in

formulating a decision to either stay, leave or return to a particular area.

Economic and lifestyle factors

As has been touched upon already, the educational aspirations of rural youth, combined with their perceptions of the lack of adequate skilled job opportunities that offered long-term security and full time non-seasonal positions, were quoted as the main economic influences shaping young people's decisions about whether to stay in, leave or return to their home communities. Alongside these influences were a range of lifestyle factors, relating to quality of life, which were key influencing factors for many rural youth who wanted a change from the 'boring' and 'dull' life in their local areas.

Influence of family and friends

An analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the focus groups highlights the conscious (and often subconscious) role played by family and other social networks in the decision-making process of potential out-migrants from the study areas - in terms of their decision to move, their choice of destination, and in subsequent moves.

Time and time again, those participants who were considering a move from their communities for higher education reported the influence of peers and family and friends – in terms of previous decisions they had made and particular perceptions they held. For certain young people, their first move was likely to be to a neighbouring area, which would allow them to remain close to their home locality and to their family and friends, while for others distance was less of an influencing factor. In the case of the latter, popular destinations for those originating from the

north Wales communities included Bangor, Aberystwyth, Liverpool and Manchester, while young people from the study areas in mid and west Wales and in the south-east favoured cities such as Cardiff, Bristol and London. Respondents stated that they were influenced by their peers and some indicated that their choices were based on where other family members were studying or already lived:

'I'm hoping to go to Cardiff, because I'd really like to stay in Wales if I can. It would feel more familiar, and I know a lot of people from this area who have moved there so they could help you along to try to adjust. That, and being able to speak Welsh are probably the major deciders about going down there.' (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

'I'm hoping to stay on for sixth form and then go on to University – either to Cardiff or Liverpool, because I've got family in Liverpool, and in Cardiff too. So, it would be nice to go somewhere where I know someone and it would give me a chance to see them more.' (Ysgol Bodedern, Bodedern study area)

Others were looking for the opportunity to experience something completely new and their choice of destination was influenced more directly by the social side of university life. A number of respondents saw it as a chance to meet a wider range of people and experience new cultures, whilst at the same time obtaining qualifications. For example:

'I've always lived in small villages, so it would be nice to broaden my horizons, because around here you don't really get a chance to meet a lot of different people. So it would be nice to have a bit of variety, and then maybe return here later on.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area).

The distance of the new location from home was also a consideration. A common response by young people was:

'I think it's important to choose the best place for the subject you want to study, and I guess where your family lives is quite important too. I think that will definitely influence my decisions, because I don't really want to move too far away from them.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

'I'm hoping to come back to sixth-form and then go on to university – to Bangor I think, because I'd like to stay quite close to home. I don't really want to move too far away from home, because I'm a bit of a homebird really.' (Ysgol Bodedern, Bodedern study area)

'I'd like to stay quite close to home, because that means I can visit family. So, if I did go to England, it would be quite a hassle to keep going back if there was a problem, as opposed to just moving down to Cardiff, which is three quarters of an hour away.' (Crickhowell High, Crickhowell study area)

Desire to return to home community after finishing studies

It was clear that the culture of leaving was not necessarily viewed in a negative sense by all young people, with many expressing a desire to eventually return to their home communities to find work, either after completing their studies or at a later date.

'I'm looking forward to going to university, but I definitely wouldn't want to live in a city for the rest of my life. I just sort of like the space of the countryside, and after I've been to university I'd try and get a job back home, or somewhere close by.' (Ysgol Bro Gwaun, Fishguard study area)

'I don't think I could move too far away – I'd miss this place too much. Because eventually I'd really like to move back to the area and settle down here if I can.' (Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

'After finishing teacher training I'd really like to move back to this area. If there was a job for me close to here, or in Pwll Glas, then I'd definitely like to move back.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

Equally, when discussing possible moves back to their home communities, others cited the influence of social and family ties in their local areas, as well as the significance of local cultures and identities. For example, a large number of young people in the study areas saw their future in rural Wales, and expressed a strong sense of attachment and belonging, identifying with a culture that was viewed as distinctive:

'I'd really like to move back to this area at some point, because this is where I was brought up and all my family's here.' (Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

If I manage to get a degree and qualify, I might go travelling for a few years. And then, you know, I'd come back to the area then back to Fishguard, since it's where all my family and friends are.' (Coleg Penfro, Fishguard study area)

'I'd definitely move back here if I could because I enjoy living here, and if I could manage to find a job in the area then that would be excellent. I think it's just knowing that all my family's here, and that my family's been here for years. And the community's really close-knit too, so it's like you know everyone here.' (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

'I definitely want to stay in Wales when I go to University so I can carry on with my education in Welsh, and then move back here, or somewhere close by after finishing if I can find a job.' (Ysgol Penweddig, Talybont study area)

Several young people also cited quality of life as a key factor influencing their potential return, and in particular

emphasised that the study areas were ideal places to raise a family:

'This area would be a really nice place to live if you wanted to settle down. It's just a nice place to raise kids because it's so safe. And it's a strong Welsh speaking area too, so keeping the Welsh language alive is important to me too.' (Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Pwllglas study area)

I wouldn't want to live too far from here, because if you start a family then you don't want to be too far from your mum and dad.' (Ysgol Bodedern, Bodedern study area).

Perceived obstacles to returning

Many respondents noted a desire to return to their home community in future, but felt that this would not be possible. Perceived obstacles to returning to the local area included a lack of suitable and well-paid employment opportunities, the individual's qualifications and skills and housing availability and affordability.

Several respondents from the Botwnnog area emphasised the urgent need for more affordable housing to enable young people either to stay or return to the local area at some point in the future. While these individuals expressed a strong desire to return to their home communities, they felt that this would be virtually impossible due to the rising number of holiday homes in their area which were pushing house prices out of the reach of young people:

'In terms of moving back after being to college or University, I think it's a case of getting hold of affordable housing. A lot of people are in this position, trying to find somewhere to live, but it's just so hard. If you want to come back to the area and live independently then it's tough not having to rely on your parents.' (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area).

'Young people just can't live here because there are so many summer houses here. They have no choice but to move away.' (Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

'I think that we need more young people to stay around here, to keep the area going, but then it's so difficult to get a house here because of the huge costs involved.' (Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

The lack of suitable local employment opportunities was also seen to limit young people's ability to return to their home communities, particularly in the study areas on the Llŷn peninsula and on Anglesey. Within these areas, the range of jobs available and job insecurity arising from the temporary nature of many local job opportunities was highlighted as particularly problematic for young people:

'I'd really like to move back to this area at some point, because this is where I was brought up. But, I'll have to move away if I want to pursue the career that I want.' (Ysgol Botwnnog, Botwnnog study area)

'Jobs hardly ever come up in this area. Say if you wanted to train as a nurse, there just aren't any opportunities. You could spend years in training and then there's nothing at the end of it.' (Bodedern Young Farmers' Club, Bodedern study area)

'...The work situation's difficult. I know this is a problem everywhere at the moment, no matter where you live, but I think there's a need to look at the situation because there's a particular problem with finding work round here.' (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Botwnnog study area)

Young families: staying, moving away or returning

As has been emphasised throughout this report, rural areas are seeing significant demographic change with particular issues around the under representation of both young people and young families and

the rapid growth of the elderly population. The academic literature consistently highlights the importance of both retaining and attracting young people and young families in order to achieve sustainable rural communities (see Gibson and Argent, 2008; Jentsch, 2006; Jones and Jamieson, 1997; Rugg and Jones, 1999; Stockdale, 2004). However, the growing imbalance in the rural population is placing pressure on services and lack of affordable housing and employment opportunities have become notable issues in many rural communities. As a result, and as we have seen from the comments provided in the previous section, young people in particular are having to leave their home rural communities and find it increasingly difficult to return later in their lives.

This final section of the section considers the key factors influencing young families' decisions either to stay, move away, return or move into rural Wales.

Motivations for staying or moving away

A lack of job opportunities and a lack of choice in the job options available were highlighted as key challenges by many of the young families who participated in the discussion groups. Specific concerns were raised in terms of pay, training, job security, career progression, the compatibility of local job opportunities with graduate-level qualifications, and opportunities to develop new skills.

Returning to the community

There appeared to be a strong perception among many of the young parents who participated in the discussion groups that their communities provided an ideal environment for bringing up children. Key factors that were considered particularly important in this respect were safety, a

high standard of primary education, a strong and supportive family and social network, and the fact that small rural communities offered children and young people plenty of freedom. This view appeared to be shared by long-term residents, in-migrants and return migrants. Alongside this, there appeared to be a desire amongst certain rural residents to raise their children in similar circumstances or conditions that they themselves were raised, as these comments from residents in Talybont and Pwllglas emphasised:

'I have a friend who's moved back to the area from London and they've been back here now for around ten years, and she says that she'd never move away again because she's just so happy here. The local school is really good – it's an extremely good school with a good reputation. So that's attracted a lot of people back to the area.' (Cylch Meithrin Pwllglas Pwllglas study area)

'I was born and bred in Talybont, but I moved away for ten years and I've been back again for about four and a half years. And the main reason I moved away was to find work, but then we decided to come back home and moved here with the kids because it's a lovely area and there's a good school here.' (Cylch Meithrin Talybont, Talybont study area)

The second quotation also highlights a perception that those aspects of life in the region that may initially influence a young person to leave a rural community – in this case a desire to pursue a specific career path and earn a decent income - may change with time, or become less important as that person reaches a different stage in life.

Section 5: Conclusion

This study has provided an in-depth examination of contemporary rural youth migration patterns in rural Wales, by focussing specifically on the experiences and aspirations of young people aged between 15 to 24 years living in six rural communities in Wales. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, it reviews recent trends in youth migration for rural Wales, in terms of the origins and destinations of the flows of rural youth and reports on the perceptions held by young people and young families of their local rural communities, the key factors influencing migration decisions and the effects of out-migration on rural communities.

The research employed a mixed-method approach, drawing on detailed analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. The study involved three main stages of enquiry. Firstly, a detailed review of policy and academic literatures was carried out to identify key themes and to inform the design of research study. Alongside this, the second stage involved temporal and spatial analyses of relevant data from various data sources. The third stage was focussed on the local spatial scale and specifically on six communities in rural Wales. This phase consisted of detailed analyses of statistical data; a series of focussed group discussions with young people and young families in each community; and in-depth interviews with careers advisors based in the schools which participated in the study.

It is clear from the evidence presented in the previous sections of this report that youth migration from rural Wales is likely to continue, if not accelerate, in the foreseeable future. Among the young people who participated in the research, a large number of respondents indicated that they planned to move away, either to attend university, for further education, to travel, or to pursue their chosen careers. Whilst most were of the opinion that their rural communities afforded a safe environment and a good quality of life, these same communities were also perceived as lacking in education, employment and social opportunities – key areas that were identified as of particular importance to young people, particularly those under the age of 24 years. Despite this, it was interesting to note that a number of participants stated that they intended to return to their home communities at some point in the future. These young people saw the study areas as home and as a place where they would like to finally settle down and perhaps raise a family. Indeed, a number of the young families who participated in the group discussions had decided to move back to their home communities after a period living away. Whilst it was clear that the factors influencing this decision-making process varied from individual to individual, and indeed from area to area, there were some common themes that emerged during the discussions.

This concluding chapter draws together the common themes running

through the report and sets out the conclusions from our study.

Attachment to area

Most respondents, had either been born in the study areas, and therefore had strong familial, social and cultural connections, or had chosen to move to the area, either to raise a family or to pursue a particular lifestyle. Both groups appeared to have a strong sense of attachment to their communities, which they defined in a variety of ways. The most prominent of these was family attachment, with many respondents referring to their strong local roots and the fact that their parents, and in some cases grandparents, had been born and raised locally. This, in turn provided them with a sense that their own identities were tied up with the area. Connected to this, respondents appreciated the sense of attachment gained from having a deep knowledge or familiarity with both the community and the locality in which they lived. In particular, young people noted that the ability to identify with other similar people in the community and having a strong social network of peers was a key factor influencing their enjoyment of living in their area. Young families, on the other hand, valued the tight-knit nature of their communities, which were small enough that everyone knew each other well and looked out for one another.

The discussions also indicated that there was, to varying degrees, a strong Welsh culture within the study areas - most prominently in Talybont, Botwnnog, Bodedern and Pwllglas - which facilitated a strong attachment to each local area. When discussing this issue, several respondents emphasised the significance of the

Welsh language and its associated culture in their everyday lives and its overall importance in forming the social and cultural fabric of their local communities. The maintenance of the Welsh language and culture were cited by a number of young people as important reasons to return in future.

Quality of life issues

The areas studied in this report, by their very nature, had many similarities, being rural and highly scenic. To a large extent, these characteristics dominated respondents' perceptions of the study areas. Respondents spoke of the beautiful countryside and coastal landscapes, and argued that the scenery, together with the quietness and a slower pace combined to provide a superior quality of life. Young families who had always lived in the study areas continued to appreciate their quality of life, and tied by family, community and work could not imagine moving away. Those who had returned following a period living and studying or working in large population centres emphasised that this perceived quality of life was a major factor influencing their decision to move back to their home community. Many of these respondents argued that this had brought about lifestyle improvements, for example, by offering a better work-life balance and providing an ideal environment for bringing up children. In terms of the latter, there was a general perception among respondents that their rural community offered plenty of freedom, safety, a high standard of primary education, and a strong and supportive community. Linked to this, there appeared to be a strong desire amongst certain rural residents to

raise children in the circumstances that they themselves were raised. Similarly, young people also liked living in these rural areas for the quality of life it afforded and pointed to several advantages of growing up in their home community. These included the peace and quiet, the beautiful scenery, ease of access to the high quality natural environment and the wide range of outdoor activities available nearby and the freedom that this gave them, particularly on weekends and during the summer months. The perceived safety of the rural communities, particularly compared to urban and more built-up areas, was also highlighted as a positive feature by several young people.

Nevertheless, despite the overall positive perceptions held by young people and young families, the discussion revealed that there were particular aspects of rural life that were seen as highly problematic for young people and for young families, which was not helped by the fact that many of the study areas were seen to be in socio-economic decline. The most pressing problems highlighted by the two groups were the lack of leisure and social opportunities, the withdrawal of services, the high cost of living, particularly in respect of housing; transport issues, and limited employment opportunities. The findings from this study highlight the extent to which a combination of these issues impacted on young people's decisions about whether to remain in, leave, or return to their home communities, and how this varied according to the specific geographical region and the individuals involved. The main factors that were reported to influence young people's decisions

about whether to migrate from their home are now discussed in turn.

Higher education

A lack of higher education facilities and opportunities, particularly ones that were within easy access to the study areas, was highlighted by several respondents as a key factor influencing their decision to move away after completing their formal education. For example, while a number of young people indicated that the distance from home was a key consideration in their choice of university location, allowing them to gain formal qualifications while remaining in the parental home or in their home community, the vast majority of respondents indicated an ambition to follow career paths and higher education options that were more readily available in urban areas, such as Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol and London. For these young people, a desire to get the best start for their future careers, even if this meant moving away, was highlighted as a key deciding factor.

Employment

A specific concern for young people when considering their future work or career options and aspirations was the limited range of job opportunities available in their local areas. Particular concerns were raised in terms of the lack of graduate jobs compatible with specific skills and qualifications and the overall lack of large employers and businesses which offered opportunities for young people to develop and enhance their skills and to progress their careers. A key motivator for a number of young people, for example, was the ambition to have 'a good job', which for many was synonymous with

urban areas due in part to the higher quality jobs available there. Additional issues concerning young people's employment in rural areas included a perception that young people tended to occupy the lowest paid and insecure jobs in rural areas. As a result, low earnings, combined with a lack of savings and the often high cost of living reported in rural areas, led to a view that it would be increasingly difficult for them to achieve the quality of life they desired. A lack of job security, due in part to the predominance of temporary and seasonal work, was also highlighted as a key issue in several of the study areas. A number of young families, for example, pointed to the challenges of short-term employment, which made it increasingly difficult for them to control household finances and even harder to plan ahead for the future - for example, to take out a mortgage to purchase their first property or to move up the housing ladder.

Housing

The research confirmed that the availability of housing, to buy or rent, that was affordable and accessible was a major and growing problem within the study areas, and was a key factor influencing young people's decisions to move out of their home communities, or discouraging their return. The findings suggest that young people and young families were disadvantaged in housing markets because they had to compete in housing markets where there was intense competition from commuters, retirees and second-home buyers. Younger households, typically those on lower incomes and with young families, were also being hard hit by a shortage of available social housing, particularly in the smaller study areas;

social housing that would otherwise enable them to stay in their home community where they might have lived for some time and had strong family ties.

The planning system was also seen as a major obstacle to the provision of sufficient and suitable affordable housing in the study areas and was widely viewed as inflexible with regard to local needs. Respondents, particularly those with young families, called for greater flexibility in the use of planning guidelines in an effort to tackle the difficulties encountered by young people within their areas, and specifically to provide more flexibility in the type of housing to be provided locally through the planning system. This included affordable properties for first-time buyers, as well as houses that were suited to young residents looking for larger homes to accommodate their growing families.

Leisure and social facilities

In several of the study areas, including Fishguard, Crickhowell and Bodedern, there appeared to be an acknowledgement of the importance of providing youth-focused services within the local area. These services offered local young people a wide range of opportunities for both formal and informal leisure and social activities outside the school environment, assisting young people to engage in additional training and skills development, and providing them with general information, advice and guidance.

However, despite this provision, there appeared to be an overall perception that the availability and choice of leisure and recreation facilities and wider social activities specifically

aimed at young people and children, and accessibility to those facilities that were available, were very poor. For many young people this contributed to feelings of social isolation and led to a perception that their views and needs were being overlooked. As a result, several respondents observed that while their home communities were good places in which to live as children and in which to grow up, as well as being good places to be an adult, they were not necessarily good places in which to be a teenager or young adult. This view was also shared by many of the young families who participated in the research.

Many young people, therefore, saw leaving their home communities as an opportunity to experience something different and to seek more freedom and choice. For these respondents, urban lifestyles appeared to be more attractive as they offered more social and economic opportunities for young people, as well as better chances for personal and professional development.

Infrastructure and service provision

Although the research indicated that the majority of respondents were broadly satisfied with the areas they lived in and with the quality of service provision in those areas, there appeared to be some scope for improvement. A number of specific comments were raised by young people and young families about accessing local services in their areas. Principal among these was a common concern that their local communities were in decline, due to the closure of local shops and services. Where local shops existed, respondents noted that they supplied basic goods and services, but often lacked variety and

charged high prices. As a result, weekly food shopping and less regular purchases such as clothes, shoes and more specialised goods were undertaken in larger towns or cities nearby. There was also widespread use of the internet for access to such services, with several respondents in Botwnnog – the remotest of all the study areas – noting that they made food shopping purchases on the internet, mainly via Asda in Pwllheli. Overall, these findings suggest that most of the respondents found ways to overcome their accessibility limitations, but the costs and added burden of achieving this accessibility for both local and longer distances trips was still perceived to be unreasonably and unfairly high.

Recognising these difficulties, young people and young families emphasised the importance of securing and maintaining the current levels of service provision within their areas, particularly the small core of services that they viewed as crucial to their communities, such as a shop, primary school, GP surgery and community hall or leisure centre. In some areas where some specific hospital services or local primary schools were being threatened with closure, such as in Fishguard, the local population had set up petitions and campaigns to protest at these changes.

Transport

The availability of both private and public transport was identified as a major barrier to young people and young families in accessing local education and training opportunities, leisure and social activities and for travelling to educational establishments or workplaces. One

form of disadvantage that almost all young people in the study areas under the age of 17 faced was a lack of, or very limited opportunity for independence, since they were too young to drive. Similarly, a number of young families who were unable to drive, or did not have access to a car, faced a number of difficulties in carrying out daily tasks, such as travelling to work or taking children to school. Even if these particular groups lived in areas served by public transport, it was often the case that the issues relating to the cost and availability of services posed significant challenges and severely restricted the options and opportunities available to them. In particular, bus fares were perceived to be too high and in many cases there were concerns about the flexibility and frequency of services, with respondents noting that services did not run at the times they wanted to travel, such as at suitable times in the morning, or in the evenings and on weekends. As a result, this made travel between smaller towns and villages, and even to larger population centres difficult, or even impossible.

The anecdotes provided by respondents emphasised that careful planning and a great deal of flexibility was, therefore, required when travelling by public transport in several of the study areas. For young people who were too young to drive or were without access to transport, learning to drive and getting access to a car was considered essential, while young families who were non-drivers relied heavily on family and friends for lifts. The interviews with Careers Advisors also revealed that young people in the study areas who wished to secure training placements or employment after leaving formal education often

found that their job search strategies were severely limited by the transport options available to them, and frequently relied on other people, such as family members to overcome these logistical difficulties. In particular, it was emphasised that the availability of public transport during the evening and at weekends, particularly if the placement or job involved shift work or anti-social hours, could represent a key challenge for young people to finding and sustaining employment.

Influence of family and friends

The research highlighted that parental expectations and ambitions were important factors influencing young people's migration choices, with those who studied or began their careers in an urban area or further afield being generally much more likely to encourage their children to do the same.

Social issues

The research identified a general perception among the younger sections of the population within the study areas that they were undervalued within their communities, and were not taken into account when local decisions were made. In addition, there were also marked differences between young people's values and priorities and those of older community members, which led to a great deal of tension when consultations and decisions concerning certain matters such as the closure of local services and facilities, or future developments arose. This feeling of being undervalued and overlooked by the local community appeared to motivate young people to leave their rural area. Alongside this, there was also a perception that certain rural

communities were too oppressive and claustrophobic, preventing young people from achieving the freedom they desired.

Moving forward

In conclusion, the results of this research suggest that rural communities across Wales will continue to face a net loss of young people to larger population centres in the foreseeable future. Comments from the young people and the young families who participated in the discussion groups confirmed that much of this outflow can be attributed to a combination of educational, employment, financial and social factors. However, many of these same individuals also expressed a desire to return to their home communities at some point in the future, if these communities could be made more attractive to young people.

This study, based on contributions and input from over one hundred young people living in rural Wales should, therefore, be viewed as a starting point for discussions on changing rural communities to help them become more attractive places for young people to live, work and raise a family.

Annexe 1

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Annexe 1

Case study	Description	Statistical profile (2011 Census)				
		Population structure	Ethnicity & Language skills	Household structure	Economic activity	Employment structure
Botwnnog (Llŷn Peninsula, Gwynedd)	<p>Small rural community located eight miles from Pwllheli.</p> <p>The village is among the most deprived communities in the Gwynedd and is located in one of the most remote and sparsely populated areas in the county.</p>	<p>Total population: 996 residents</p> <p>Age structure: 21 per cent under the age of 16; 30 per cent aged between 16 and 44 years; and 49 per cent aged 45 years or more.</p> <p>Nearly a third of Botwnnog's population (30 per cent) were over the age of 60.</p>	<p>Nearly all of the population was born in the UK: 73 per cent in Wales and 25 per cent in England.</p> <p>The area has a high percentage of Welsh speakers: 75 per cent of residents could speak Welsh and 66 per cent stated that they could speak, read and write in Welsh.</p>	<p>Of the 436 households in the village more than two-thirds (68 per cent) were owner-occupied, and 30 per cent rented from the private sector.</p>	<p>In terms of employment, 68 per cent of residents were economically active, two per cent were unemployed, while the remainder were classified as 'economically inactive'. Of this latter figure, 55 per cent were retired.</p>	<p>The employment categories that together constitute the 'service sector' were the largest employers at 31 per cent.</p> <p>The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector and the construction sector each accounted for</p>

						14 per cent of the working population.
Talybont (Ceredigion)	<p>The village lies within the county of Ceredigion, some six miles to the north of Aberystwyth.</p> <p>It is the largest of three neighbouring villages on the A487 - the others being Taliesin and Tre'r Ddôl.</p>	<p>In 2011 the Llangynfelyn parish, which includes the village of Talybont, had a population of 1,013.</p> <p>Age structure: 35 per cent were aged between 16-44 years old and 46 per cent were aged 45 years or more.</p> <p>A quarter of the population was aged 60 years or</p>	<p>The population was mainly indigenous to the UK, with 63 per cent born in Wales and 32 per cent born in England.</p> <p>At 57 per cent, over half of the population could speak Welsh, while 48 per cent were able to speak, read and write in Welsh.</p>	<p>At the time the research was carried out, there were 436 households in the village.</p> <p>Nearly three quarters (74 per cent) were owner-occupied, six per cent were social sector lettings, with the remainder of the population making housing arrangements through the private</p>	<p>Of the 73 per cent of the population who were economically active, three per cent were unemployed.</p> <p>Just over half (55 per cent) of the economically inactive section of the population were retired, 15 per cent were students, eight per cent were carers, 16 per cent were</p>	<p>The 'service sector' was the largest single employment sector, employing 24 per cent of the working population.</p> <p>Education was the second largest single employment sector, at 20 per cent, followed by 'human health and</p>

		more.		sector.	long-term sick or disabled; and six per cent were classified as economically inactive for other reasons.	social work' at 14 per cent of the working population. Agriculture, forestry and fishing employed 10 per cent and construction nine per cent.
Crickhowell (Powys)	Crickhowell lies to the south-east of the county of Powys, situated between the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons.	In 2011 Crickhowell parish had a population of 2,063, of which 26 per cent were aged between 16-44 years old and 60 per cent were 45 years old or more.	Nearly all of the population was born in the UK, with 62 per cent of these born in Wales and 30 per cent in England. The percentage of	Of the 937 households recorded in 2011, the vast majority (71 per cent) were owner-occupied; 10 per cent were rented from the private sector; and	While 64 per of the population were economically active, five per cent of these were unemployed. The highest proportion of the	The service sector (which includes education and human health and social work) represented the largest employer in the

		Notably, 37 per cent were aged 60 years or more.	Welsh language users was relatively low, with eight per cent speaking Welsh and seven per cent indicating that they could speak, read or write in Welsh.	17 per cent of households were classified as socially rented accommodation.	economically inactive population was retired (70 per cent); 12 per cent were students; six per cent were carers; eight per cent were long-term sick or disabled; and four per cent were economically inactive for other reasons.	area, accounting for 33 per cent of all employees. Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for one per cent of the working population.
Pwllglas (Denbighshire)	Efenechtyd parish, which includes the village of Pwllglas, is located in the county of	In 2011 the parish had a population of 655. Of this figure, 31 per cent were aged between 16 to 44 years, just under a half (47	Almost all the population was born in the UK, with 66 per cent born in Wales and 30 per cent born in England.	There were 248 households in the village, of which the vast majority (84 per cent) were owner occupied. The remainder was	Three-quarters of the population were economically active and unemployment was low at three per cent.	The largest single employment sector was human health and social work activities at 17

	<p>Denbighshire. It is positioned on the A494 to the south of Ruthin.</p> <p>The south of Denbighshire is more dependent on agriculture, and is more rural in character than the north of the county, which is the location of traditional seaside resorts such as Prestatyn and Rhyl.</p>	<p>per cent) were aged over 45 years, and over a quarter (26 per cent) of the population were over 60 years old.</p>	<p>The percentage of Welsh language users was relatively high, with over half (54 per cent) speaking Welsh and 43 per cent of the population stating that they could speak, read and write in Welsh.</p>	<p>evenly divided between private rented (seven per cent) and socially rented (seven per cent).</p>	<p>Of the economically inactive population, the majority (64 per cent) were retired; 19 per cent were students; seven per cent were carers; and a further seven per cent were classified as long-term sick or disabled; and three per cent were economically inactive for other reasons.</p>	<p>per cent, closely followed by education at 16 per cent.</p> <p>Construction accounted for eight per cent with agriculture, farming and fishing and manufacturing both at seven per cent.</p>
Fishguard	Fishguard is	In 2011, the parish	The majority of the	Latest figures from	Of the 64 per cent	A quarter of the

(Pembrokeshire)	located on the western coast of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and is intersected by the A40 and the A487. It possesses a railway station and a harbour, which acts as an important port for a regular car-ferry service to Ireland.	of Fishguard and Goodwick had a population of 5,407. Age structure: 31 per cent of the local population were aged between 16 and 44 years; just over half (52 per cent) were aged 45 years or more; and a third (33 per cent) of the population were of pensionable age.	population was born in the UK, with 70 per cent born in Wales and 24 per cent born in England. In terms of the Welsh language, 32 per cent of the population spoke Welsh, while 22 per cent were able to speak, read and write in Welsh.	the 2011 Census showed that there were 2,528 households in the parish. Owner-occupiers dominated the household structure at 69 per cent, while the remainder was divided equally between those renting from the private sector and those in socially rented accommodation.	of the population that were economically active, seven per cent were unemployed. The economically inactive population (36 per cent) was constituted as follows: 55 per cent were retired; 10 per cent were students; 14 per cent were carers; 16 per cent were long-term sick or disabled; and five per cent were economically inactive for	working population was employed in the service sector. Other notable sectors of employment were human health and social services at 15 per cent; construction at 12 per cent; and education at nine per cent. Agriculture, forestry and fishing employed two per cent.
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					unspecified reasons.	
Bodedern (Anglesey)	Bodedern lies in the county of Anglesey, seven miles from Holyhead. It is situated approximately one mile from the A55 expressway, the main communication link for the area, which runs from Holyhead to Bangor, and eastwards towards Chester.	Bodedern parish had a population of 1,051 in 2011, 37 per cent of which were aged between 16 –and 44 years and 46 per cent aged 45 years or more. Approaching a quarter (24 per cent) of the population were 60 years old or more.	Almost all of the population was born in the UK: three-quarters of the population born in Wales and 22 per cent in England. Welsh language use was relatively high, with 69 per cent speaking Welsh and 58 per cent noting in the 2011 Census that they speak, read and write in Welsh.	The village contained a total of 443 households. Of these, 64 per cent were owner-occupied, 14 per cent were in the private rental sector; and 18 per cent were in socially rented accommodation.	The rate of economic activity was 68 per cent. Of the remaining 32 per cent of the population which were classified as economically inactive, approaching one half (49 per cent) were retired; 12 per cent were students; 14 per cent were carers; 16 per cent were long-term sick or disabled; and nine per cent were economically inactive for other reasons.	A quarter of employees worked in the service sector. Education accounted for 14 per cent of employees, while construction (11 per cent), public administration and defence (12 per cent) were other prominent sectors. Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for seven per cent of employees.

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