

Designing a Pilot Remote and Rural Migration Scheme for Scotland:

Analysis and Policy Options

Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	7
1. Population Trends in Remote and Rural Areas	9
2. Economic and Social Context	20
3. Policy Options	32
4. Integration and Settlement	46
References	56

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Executive Summary

This report sets out analysis and policy options to inform a potential pilot scheme for migration to remote and rural areas of Scotland. It builds on earlier Expert Advisory Group reports setting out the particular demographic challenges faced by remote and rural areas, and the potential for international migration to help address them. These considerations underpinned recommendations from the Migration Advisory Committee in 2019 to establish a pilot scheme for attracting migration to remote and rural areas, endorsed by the then Home Secretary.

In designing such a scheme, it is important to clarify which types of areas would be covered. Most definitions of 'remote and rural' areas are based on measures of population density and drive-time from more populous settlements; however, such classifications can be based on different geographical units, and this becomes important when considering which areas might be included in such a scheme. In the report, we suggest two main ways of identifying which remote and rural areas of Scotland might be 'designated areas' for a remote and rural migration scheme, based on population data, and also taking into account travel to work areas.

A second key point is about the goal of such a scheme. A migration scheme for remote and rural areas should not aim to achieve 'replacement migration' to offset population decline. Rather, it should be targeted to attract migrants with the skills and profile that would best address socio-economic challenges created by population decline – an approach we term 'strategic mitigation'.

The Challenges for Remote and Rural Areas

Scotland's remote and rural areas have experienced population ageing and decline over a number of years, and by 2019, the share of population of working age in remote and rural areas was 6-7 percentage points below the Scottish average. This ageing process reduces the number of births and increases the number of deaths, with the consequence that the only way for an ageing population to grow is through expanding in-migration. However, population decline in remote and rural areas has not been offset by in-migration. Positive net migration to remote rural areas has remained at very low levels, and in 2017-18 only around 7% of in-migration was from overseas.

Population decline has a range of negative social and economic impacts on local communities. It restricts the local labour supply, and leads to an increase in its average age. Labour markets in sparsely populated areas are particularly vulnerable, as small increases or decreases in labour supply can have large effects on the viability of the local economy. There is no readily available pool of labour to fill vacancies. Population decline can also adversely affect public service provision, through creating labour shortages in key services. Moreover, government funding formulae for public services are largely population driven, implying that public services will receive less resource as people move away, which can then further accelerate economic and population decline.

As employers struggle to recruit and local economies become less buoyant, businesses may leave the area taking with them access to more attractive or better-paid jobs. As remaining residents age, commercial and leisure facilities and social services for younger people and families often decline making it less attractive for those age groups to stay, whether they are locally born or newer arrivals. In these ways a spiral effect is created.

It is important to understand these dynamics, to inform the design of a potential immigration scheme. Clearly, the negative socio-economic impacts of population decline create a strong rationale for seeking to mitigate such decline through facilitating in-migration. At the same time, in order for such in-migration to be viable and lead to longer-term settlement, it is important to make sure there are sustainable employment opportunities and an attractive environment for migrants in the local area.

Options for a Remote and Rural Migration Scheme (RRMS)

Based on this analysis, we suggest that a RRMS should aim to attract migrants with the skills and profile that can best contribute to strategic mitigation in remote and rural areas. This implies selecting migrants with relevant skills and occupations to meet labour market needs; and supporting them to settle and integrate in such areas with their families. Building on these considerations, we set out three main proposals for a RRMS.

1. *Expanding Skilled Worker Route*

The first scheme would involve relaxing conditions for the Skilled Worker route (previously known as Tier 2), specifically for employers in designated areas. We suggest the most viable option for this approach would be through a bespoke Shortage Occupation List for remote and rural areas. The list would include occupations of strategic importance to remote and rural areas, and accommodate a wider range of skills and salaries than currently permitted under this route. Sponsored employers could recruit migrants to jobs located in a designated area, and matching the list of shortage occupations.

In order to maximise the benefits of this scheme for remote and rural areas, the scheme would need to either encourage, or require, entrants and their families to also reside in the designated area. This would be more feasible if the designated area took the form of an existing travel to work area.

The advantage of the modified Skilled Worker approach is that it would involve only modest adjustments to current UK immigration rules. It would allow employers in remote areas to recruit migrants across a wider spectrum of skills, salaries and occupations. It also builds in a route to permanent settlement, although migrants would need to have continuous employment in an eligible occupation and a designated area for 5 years.

2. *Scottish Visa*

The second scheme would build on the Scottish Government proposal for a Scottish Visa, but specifically targeted at designated areas. Rather than relying on employers to identify entrants, this scheme would involve a points-based system, which prioritised features such as skills and occupational experience, age, family/dependents, language skills, ties to the region. Scottish Government would set a quota for the number to be admitted, potentially by local authority.

Such a scheme would need to offer a generous package of rights from the outset, including recourse to public funds. This would be especially important for migrants moving to remote and rural areas, given the existence of 'shallow' labour markets in such areas. We propose that the requirement to be based in a designated area would apply for the first 4 years, at which point migrants would be eligible for permanent residency and full mobility rights within the UK.

The disadvantage of this scheme is that it would not include a guarantee of viable employment, or a successful business start-up, in the place of destination. This risk could be partially mitigated by including criteria relating to particular occupations/skills that are in demand within the points-based system.

3. *Remote and Rural Partnership Scheme*

The third option, modelled on the Canadian Atlantic Pilot scheme, would be a job-based scheme, embedded in a broader partnership between local authorities, employers, public services and the voluntary sector. Under this scheme, the Scottish Government would work with local authorities and employers in designated areas to develop a 'strategic mitigation' plan, including identifying occupations that were seen as crucial for mitigating population decline. However, unlike for the Shortage Occupation List option, they could be areas displaying strong potential for future growth/regeneration, rather than being limited to those that could demonstrate (existing) acute shortages. Employers with job vacancies within the occupations identified in the strategic mitigation plan could enrol in the scheme. They would agree to take an active role in supporting employees, in turn receiving assistance in recruiting workers from overseas, and exemption from paying fees or charges.

Enrolled employers would nominate employees to enter through the scheme, with entrants approved by the Home Office. Those entering under the scheme would signal their intention to stay in a designated area of Scotland (for at least 4 years). They would have a job offer, and be offered an integration package including help in finding accommodation, schooling, access to health and other public services, and language classes for the family. As with the other options, it would be most beneficial for local areas if entrants would both work and reside in the designated area. If designated areas are defined as co-extensive with travel to work areas, this is likely to be achievable in the majority of cases.

Evaluating a Pilot Scheme

For each of these three options, a pilot scheme would involve trialling the scheme for a small number of migrants (for example, 200). The long-term success of the scheme would be assessed based on its potential to contribute to strategic mitigation in remote and rural areas facing depopulation. As such an effect may take many years to kick in, and it would be more appropriate to evaluate the performance of the scheme in relation to more specific medium-term goals, notably:

- Attracting migrants with the appropriate profile to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the local community in designated areas.
- Supporting the integration and long-term settlement of migrants and their families in these designated areas.

We set out a range of indicators and methods that could be used to monitor achievement of these goals, to evaluating the success of a pilot scheme.

Promoting Integration and Settlement

All three of the schemes would be enhanced by complementary initiatives to support integration and settlement in remote and rural areas. This approach was built into our third 'partnership' scheme; but the other two schemes would also benefit from measures to mobilise stakeholders and the wider community to support migrants and their families.

Communities in remote and rural areas may have limited experience of receiving international migrants, and offer more limited public services and amenities than urban areas. In such settings, particular attention needs to be paid to assisting newcomers to make positive social contacts and ensuring that they have access to and knowledge of their rights and entitlements. It will therefore be important that the RRMS be developed alongside a clearly defined integration strategy. The Scottish Government would need to work with local authorities and other stakeholders to develop an integration framework that can be adapted to the capacities and needs of the designated areas and the groups of migrants who arrive to them; and which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and the resources available to them.

Introduction

Introduction

Background to the report

Scotland's remote and rural areas face significant demographic challenges. A legacy of selective out-migration over the last decades of the twentieth century means that most remote and rural areas are experiencing negative natural change (more deaths than births), and their population is declining as well as ageing. At the same time, low levels of net migration from other areas of Scotland, the UK and overseas (especially compared to Scotland's cities), means that population decline is not being offset by in-migration. Population ageing and decline can have a range of negative effects for local communities, reducing their capacity to sustain local services and businesses.

These challenges were highlighted in the first Expert Advisory Group (EAG) report, which argued that in-migration of working-age migrants was the only viable option for averting a downward demographic spiral.¹ The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) acknowledged the issues in a May 2019 report, noting that the 'only way to address this question in the UK context would be to pilot a scheme that facilitated migration to these areas, then monitor what happens over several years and evaluate the outcomes'.²

In order to develop an evidence base for designing and piloting a remote and rural migration scheme (RRMS), the Scottish Government commissioned the EAG to prepare a report on how such a scheme to attract international migration to these areas might operate, and its potential impacts on remote and rural communities. The commission reflects the priority which the Scottish Government places on addressing depopulation in rural and island areas, as reflected in the National Planning Framework.³

Chapter 1 of the report provides some background analysis on the demographic challenges in remote and rural areas, building on earlier EAG analysis. Chapter 2 analyses the economic and social impacts of population ageing and decline for local communities. The chapter discusses different approaches to identifying which remote and rural areas might participate in the scheme.

The report goes on to consider different options for a RRMS (Chapter 3), including the criteria for recruitment of entrants; and their rights and conditions of stay. The chapter also considers how such a scheme might be piloted and evaluated. Finally, we consider how a RRMS would best be implemented, including exploring issues around settlement and retention and longer-term integration (Chapter 4).

Definitions

It is important to note at the outset how we use the term 'remote and rural' through this report. There is no standard definition of this term, and its meaning will vary depending on which aspect of 'remoteness' is emphasised, and which data and level of analysis are employed.

We define and clarify various aspects of these definitions in Chapter 1, which starts with an analysis of small area data, to gain a granular picture of demographic change across smaller geographical units. However, we go on to adopt a more generalised framework allowing us to draw on a wider range of data, and to align the analysis with more familiar geographical classifications. To this end, we draw on the Scottish Government's own Urban-Rural classification (2016).⁴ The 8-fold version, distinguishing 'very remote' rural areas and small towns, contains most of the areas with the most rapid demographic decline. An even 'tighter boundary' is provided by the James Hutton Institute's 'Sparsely Populated Area' (SPA) definition.⁵

The analysis of population change in Chapter 1 uses these definitions. Parts of the socio-economic analysis of Chapter 2 use the 6-fold version of the Urban-Rural classification, in which the 'very remote' rural areas and small towns form part of the 'remote' category. Other parts of the analysis in Chapters 1 and 2 are based upon data for Council Areas. In this case, the Rural & Environment Science & Analytical Service (RESAS) Urban-Rural classification⁶ is used. Some analysis in Chapter 2 is based upon data from Rural Scotland Key Facts, and it is important to be aware that in this case the small towns are not included in the 'remote rural' category. Based on the analysis of Chapters 1 and 2, the report also introduces the term 'designated areas' to refer to those areas that might be included in a RRMS.

A second key concept in the report is the notion of 'strategic mitigation'. We use this term to capture the insight that a scheme to attract international migration to remote and rural areas should not aim to achieve one-to-one 'replacement migration'. Rather, it should focus in a more targeted way in attracting migrants with the skills and profile that would best address the social and economic challenges created by population decline.

Finally, we note that the report focuses on international migration, rather than internal migration within Scotland or from the rest of the UK (covered in the EAG's fourth report⁷). This reflects the specific recommendation to design a pilot scheme for international migration to remote and rural areas, and Chapter 3 on policy options is focused solely on a discussion of schemes to attract migrants from overseas. However, we note that much of the analysis in Chapters 1 and 2, and the recommendations in Chapter 4, are relevant to promoting and supporting migration from within Scotland and the UK.

1

Population Trends in Remote and Rural Areas

1. Population Trends in Remote and Rural Areas

This chapter explores population trends in remote and rural parts of Scotland. It begins (section 1.1) by illustrating the complexity of patterns of change at the most detailed geographic level (data-zone), and for three broad age groups. However, at this level of granularity it is very difficult to understand the overall narrative of recent changes, and for this reason we introduce a discussion of different ways of classifying remote and rural areas (1.2). We then consider population trends in these areas, looking at changes in overall population and age structure (1.3), and migration (1.4).

1.1 Patterns of Population Change at the Local Level

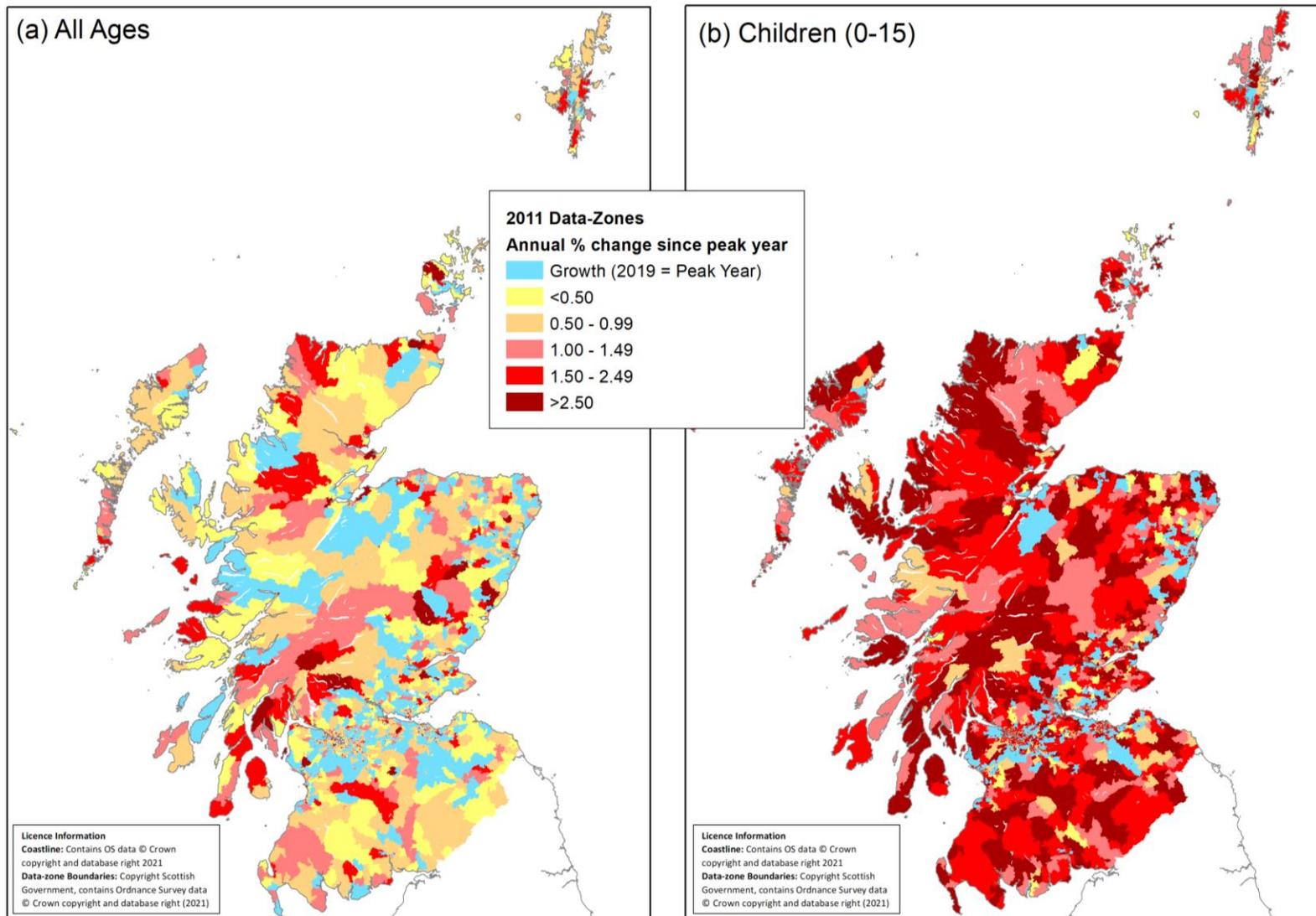
Remote Scotland has experienced a long history of demographic decline, dating back to the Highland Clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries. In terms of age structure legacy effects, it would be interesting to track change since the middle of the last century. However, for small area analysis with a consistent data set we are limited to the period 2001-19.

The Scottish population as a whole has seen fairly steady growth over the past two decades. The population was 8% higher in 2019 than it was in 2001. However, many parts of rural Scotland have seen periods of both growth and decline since 2001. Generally speaking, the first few years of the new century were characterised by growth, even in the most remote areas of Scotland. However, from the later years of the first decade, change turned negative in the more remote parts of Scotland, whilst the upward trend was sustained only within the most accessible rural areas.

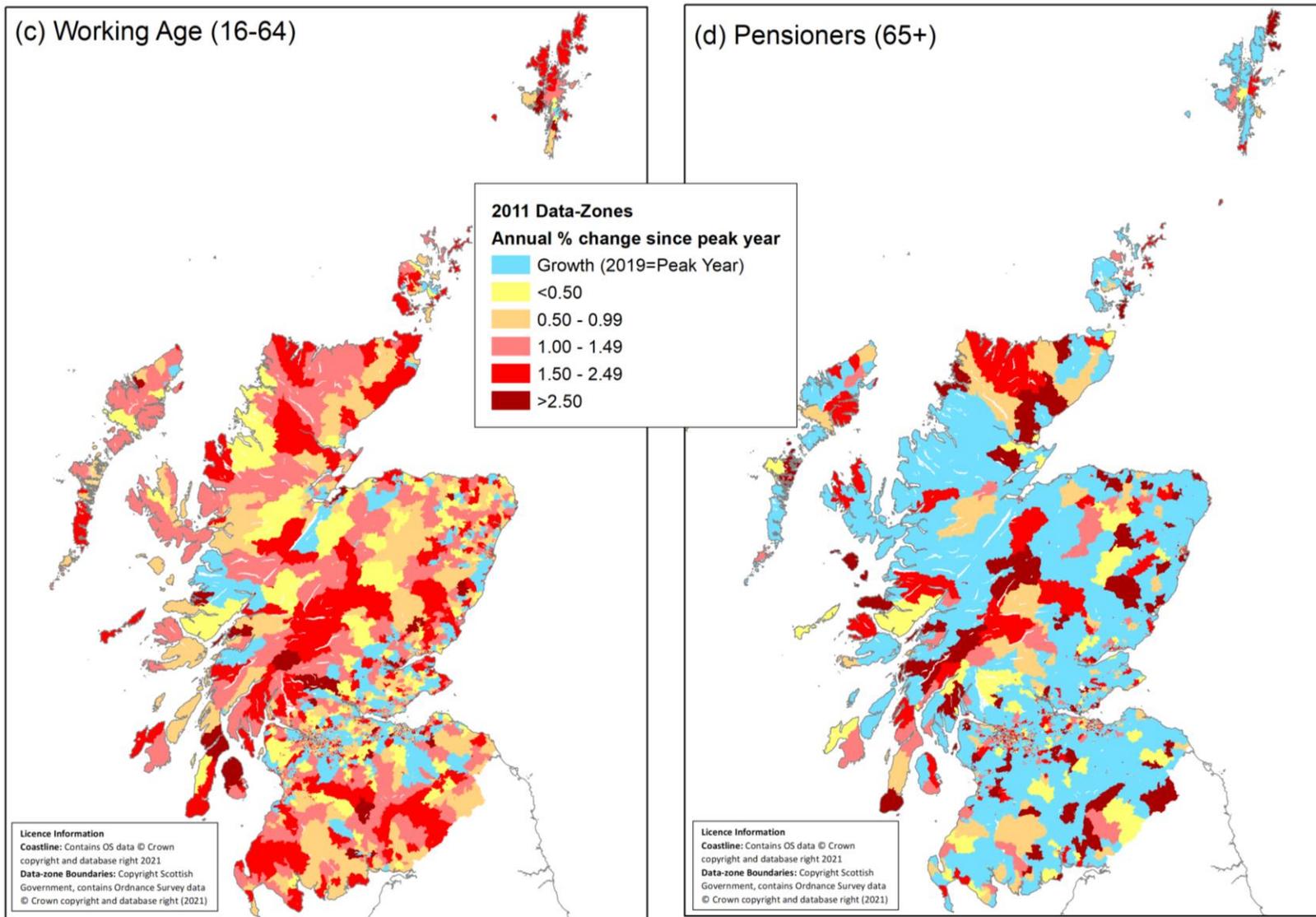
The best way to capture variations in population change across different areas is through data-zone mapping, drawing on the Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE) produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS). These provide population estimates for 6,976 data-zones across Scotland, each containing approximately 500-1,000 people. The SAPE offer population estimates for each year since the 2001 census. Using these data, we can identify the year of peak population, and then calculate the average annual percentage change since that date.

For many more accessible parts of the country, growth has been continuous, and peak population is recorded in 2019. These areas are shaded blue in Figure 1.1a. The yellow-red shaded areas have been losing population for all or part of the last two decades. The distribution of blue and red areas across Scotland demonstrates the complexity of patterns of population change, and serves as a warning against simplistic generalisations. The pattern is very fragmented, and maps like Figure 1.1 tend to make rural-urban comparisons challenging, but as the aggregate analysis in Section 1.3 indicates, remote parts of Scotland have shown the most consistent decline.

Figure 1.1: Average Annual Percentage Change in Population since Peak Year, 2001-19 by Data-Zone



Source: Derived from NRS Small Area Population Estimates Time Series Data



Source: Derived from NRS Small Area Population Estimates Time Series Data

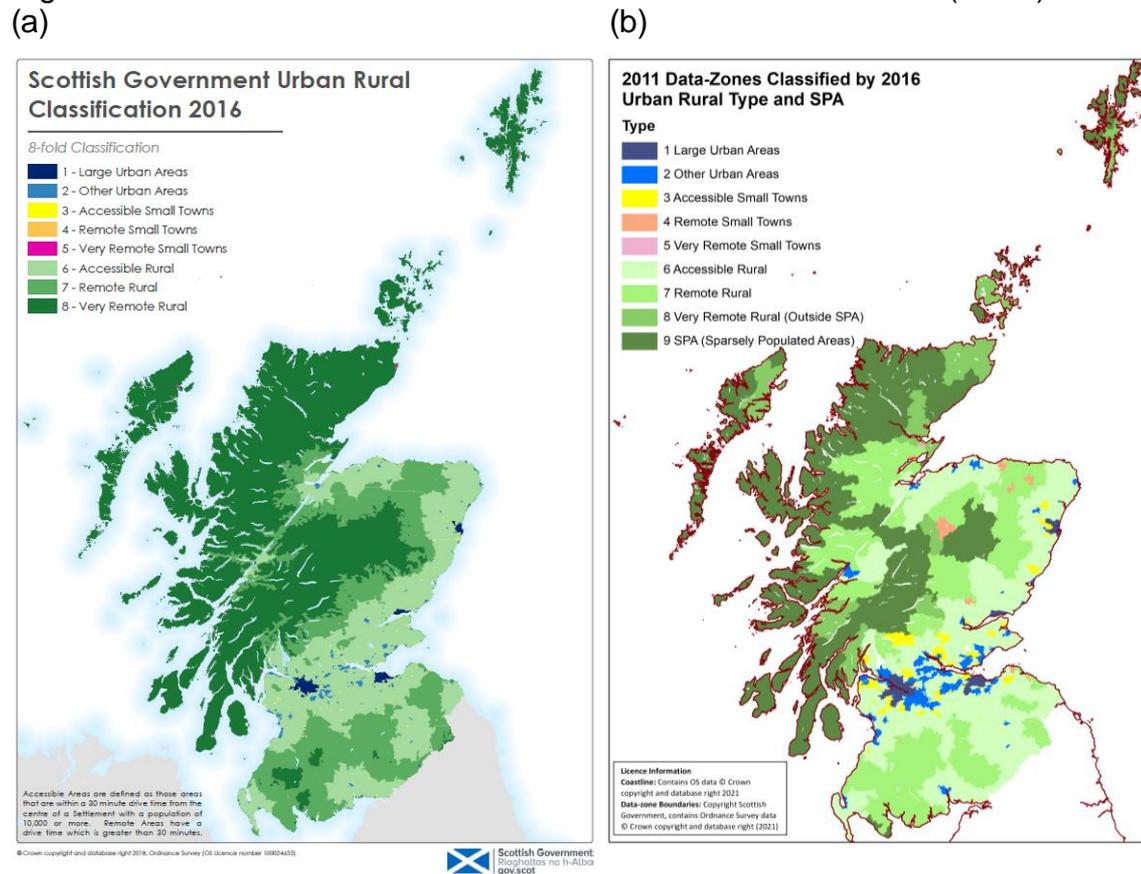
Figures 1.1b-d show that the overall trend masks important age-related differences. Decline has been more rapid and widespread for children (Figure 1.1b). The population of pensioners has grown in most parts of rural Scotland (Figure 1.1d). The pattern for the working age population is intermediate between these two extremes (Figure 1.1c). Arguably it is the working age population that is most relevant to this report, since it is working age migrants who can contribute most to strategic mitigation. However, children are of course crucial to the demographic sustainability of rural Scotland.

This breakdown of population growth by data-zone provides important insights into detailed local demographic patterns; but it is less helpful as a framework for understanding broader trends. For this we need to group zones into larger geographical areas. Such a framework can facilitate analysis of different age groups within the population, which for many rural data-zones is rendered precarious by the small numbers involved. It will also assist in the identification of viable units for inclusion in pilot schemes.

1.2 Classifying remote rural and sparsely population areas

For these reasons it is helpful to group data-zones by rurality and remoteness. Our starting point is Scottish Government's 2016 Urban-Rural classification.

Figure 1.2: Scottish Government Urban-Rural Classification 2016 (8-fold)



Source: Scottish Government 8-fold Urban-Rural Classification

Note: Figure 1.2b is derived from a combination of Scottish Government 8-fold Urban-Rural classification and James Hutton Institute SPA classification

The 8-fold version (Figure 1.2a) is more useful than the 6-fold version for a study of population change, because it separates the very remote rural areas and small towns. The remote rural areas of the 6-fold classification are defined by a drive-time contour of 30 minutes from a settlement of 10,000 persons. This incorporates a very large and diverse area – much of which has seen population growth in recent years. The very remote area is defined by 60-minute drive-time from a settlement.

The boundaries of the Urban-Rural classification follow the drive-time contours. In order to relate our (SAPE-based) analysis of population trends to this classification it is necessary to produce a ‘best fit’ map of data-zones. Figure 1.2b shows Scotland’s data-zones classified according to which Urban-Rural category their centroid falls within.

As Figure 1.2a shows, the Urban-Rural classification designates almost all of the three Island Council Areas, and the north and west of Highland, including the areas immediately surrounding the three island capitals, together with Thurso, Wick and Oban, as ‘very remote rural’. However, as Figure 1.1a shows, the immediate commuting zones around these centres exhibit very different demographic characteristics to the rest of very remote rural. These areas can be separated if we overlay the ‘Sparsely Populated Area’ (SPA) (Figure 1.2b).⁸ The SPA was specified (at output area level) using a ‘population potential’ approach, based on the total population which fell within a 30-minute drive-time. For the purposes of this analysis, data-zones 100% within the SPA boundary have been identified as SPA. On this basis the areas adjacent to the Islands capitals can form a separate category, which we have labelled ‘very remote rural (outside SPA)’. This category also covers an area around the Dornoch Firth, Speyside, and around Lochgilphead.

1.3 Population trends

The particular demographic challenges faced by remote and rural areas may be illustrated in greater detail through an analysis of the NRS Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE).

Table 1.1 provides some basic demographic data for each of the urban rural categories shown in Figure 1,2b. Remote and very remote rural and small town data-zones are home to less than 10% of the total population of Scotland. Whilst urban, accessible and even remote rural areas continued to grow in the two decades prior to 2019, the populations of very remote rural areas and small towns have declined in recent years. A similar, but more negative, pattern is seen in the working age population, with peak population occurring in 2011 in all the small town categories, and in 2007/8 in the remote/very remote rural categories.

Table 1.1: Population Totals and Peak Years for Rural and Urban Categories

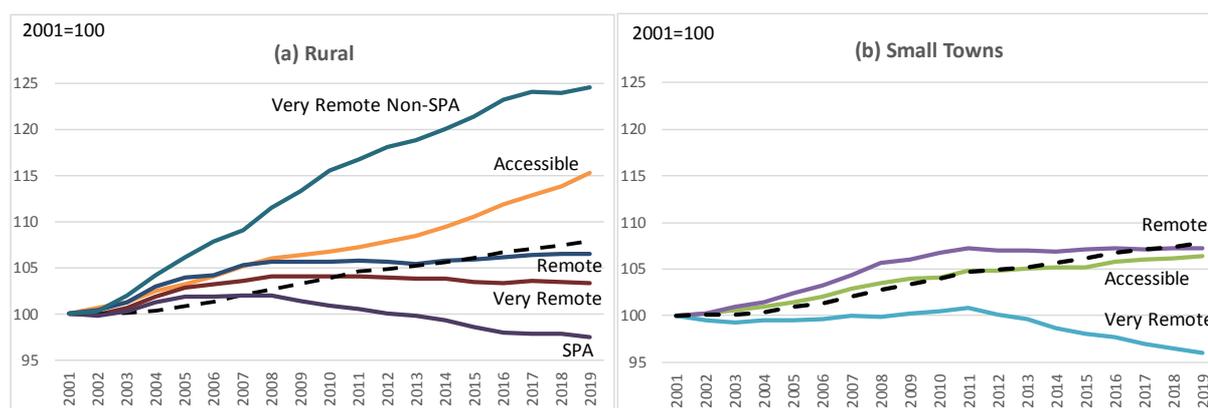
	Total Population ('000)		Peak Year	Working Age Population ('000)		Peak Year
	2001	2019		2001	2019	
Large Urban	1,748	1,911	2019	1,157	1,303	2019
Other Urban	1,854	1,960	2017	1,201	1,232	2011
Accessible Small Towns	441	469	2019	283	286	2011
Remote Small Towns	117	125	2019	71	73	2011
Very Remote Small Towns	69	66	2011	43	39	2011
Accessible Rural	535	617	2019	346	378	2019
Remote Rural	156	167	2019	97	98	2007
Very Remote Rural	145	150	2010	90	88	2008
SPA	113	111	2007	70	64	2007
Very Remote Rural Non-SPA	31	39	2019	20	24	2019
Scotland	5,064	5,463	2019	3,287	3,498	2019

Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates

Note: The table rows are a combination of the Scottish Government 8-fold Urban-Rural classification and James Hutton Institute SPA classification.

Between 2001 and 2019 the total population of Scotland (dashed line on Figures 1.3-1.5) increased by 8%. That of remote, very remote, and SPA data-zones initially grew faster than Scotland as a whole, reaching a peak in the second half of the noughties, then declined. The SPA population reached a point more than 2% below its 2001 level, whilst the remote and very remote areas remain above their starting point in 2001. In contrast the population of accessible rural areas has consistently out-performed that of Scotland as a whole. Perhaps most surprisingly the fastest growing group of data-zones (though also by far the smallest in population terms) was the very remote rural (non-SPA), which reached a point almost 25% up on its 2001 level.

Figure 1.3: Population Trends for Rural and Small Town Data-Zones 2001-19



Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates

Notes:

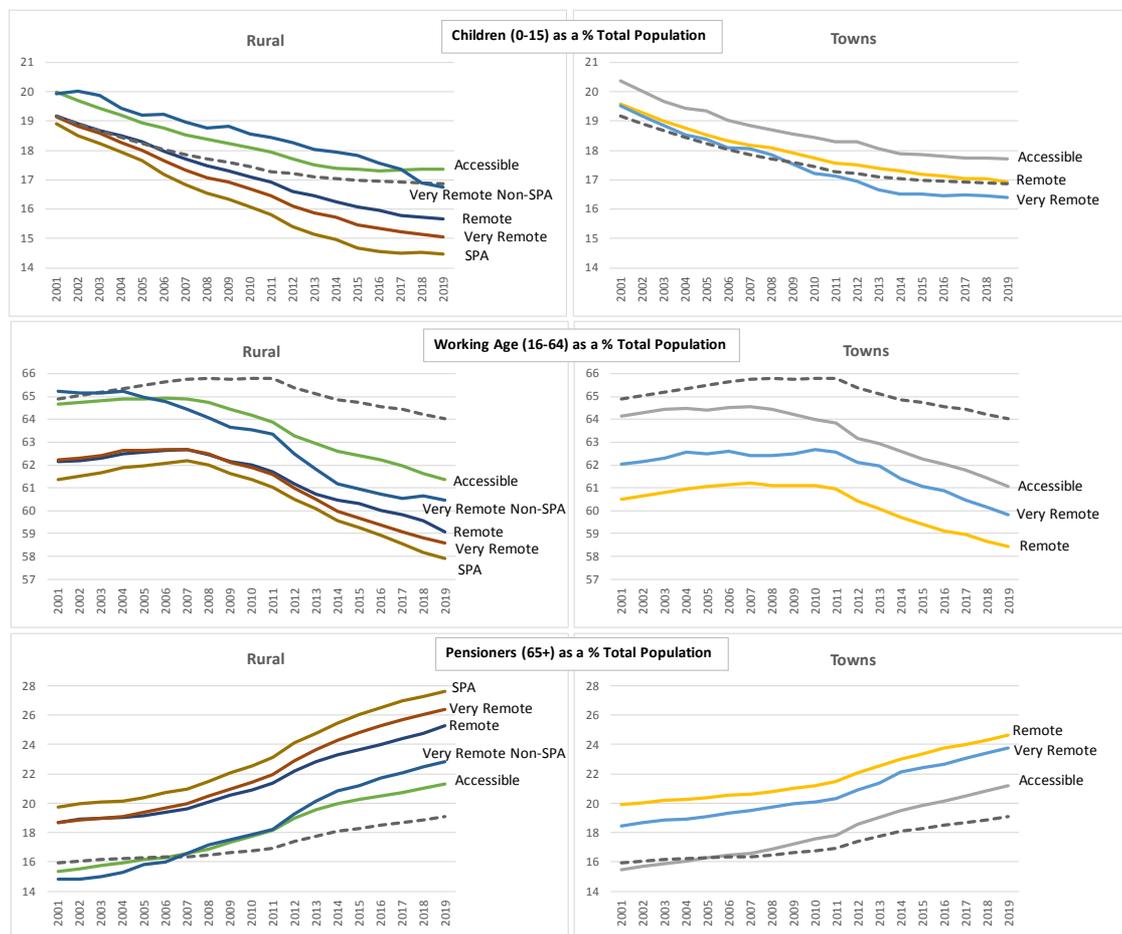
(i) Estimated by aggregating data zones according to Scottish Government Urban-Rural classification and James Hutton Institute SPA classification.

(ii) Black dashed line is Scotland average.

Population trends in small towns (Figure 1.3b) were rather more subdued. Accessible Small Towns closely followed the national trend, whilst remote towns grew slightly more rapidly until 2011, but subsequently levelled off, converging with the national trend by 2019. Very remote towns showed stability until 2011, but then contracted by almost 5%.

Turning to the age structure of the population, SAPE data shows that across Scotland, the percentage of the population in the 0-15 age group declined from 19% in 2001 to a little under 17% in 2019 (Figure 1.4a). The child populations of remote, very remote and SPA data-zones were at a similar level in 2001, but over the past two decades their shares have all contracted more rapidly – reaching between 14.5% (SPA) and 15.5% (remote).

Figure 1.4: Broad Age Group Trends by Rural and Small Town Category, 2001-2019



Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates

Notes:

- (i) Estimated by aggregating data zones according to Scottish Government Urban-Rural classification and James Hutton Institute SPA classification.
- (ii) Black dashed line is Scotland average.

The working age share of the Scottish population (Figure 1.4b) rose slightly from 2001 to 2011, reaching almost 66%, thereafter declining steadily, reaching 64% in 2019. All but one of the rural groups of data-zones had a similar profile over the two decades, but with an earlier onset and deeper decline. Accessible rural areas and the non-SPA part of very remote rural were both close to the Scottish average at the beginning of the period, but diverged steadily, so that by 2019 they were approximately 2.5% and 3.5% lower than the country as a whole. The remote, very remote and SPA areas began the period with their working age share 2-3% below the average, and ended it 4-5% below.

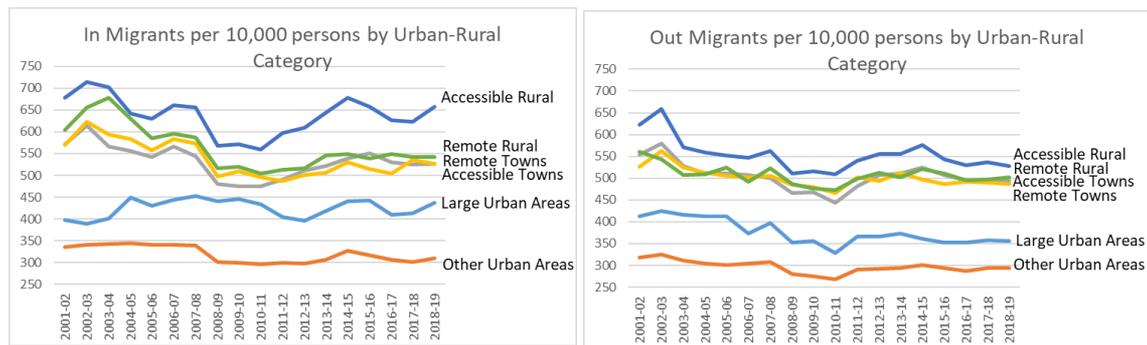
The pensioner (over 65) share of the Scottish population was 16% in 2001 (Figure 1.4c). It rose steadily over the next two decades, reaching 19% by 2019. All the rural groups of data-zones showed a steeper upward trend in the share of pensioners. The remote, very remote and SPA groups were already well above the Scottish average in 2001, and by 2019 the SPA share was almost 10% higher. Among the small towns groups the trends were very similar, with the accessible towns beginning slightly below the Scottish average and finishing 2% above. Remote and very remote towns had a higher share of pensioners throughout the period.

The above account illustrates the familiar story of demographic ageing, which is more severe in rural and remote areas than in the urban parts of the country. The trend in working age population, which has two segments, initially increasing and later turning negative, is particularly interesting. The key finding here is that by 2019 the share of population of working age in remote and rural areas and towns was 6-7 percentage points below the Scottish average. The significance of the ageing process for migration policy lies in the fact that the ageing of the population has consequences for its capacity for natural increase, reducing the number of births and increasing the number of deaths. As a consequence, the only way for an ageing population to grow is through expanding in-migration.

1.4 Migration trends

As we have shown in previous EAG reports^{9,10} population decline in remote and rural areas has not been offset by in-migration. In this section, we briefly consider patterns of both Scotland/UK and international migration into and out of these areas. This is relevant both for understanding the demographic challenges of remote and rural areas, and also for reflecting on the design of a future RRMS.

Figure 1.5: In and Out Migrants per 10,000 persons by 6-fold Urban-Rural Classification 2001-2019

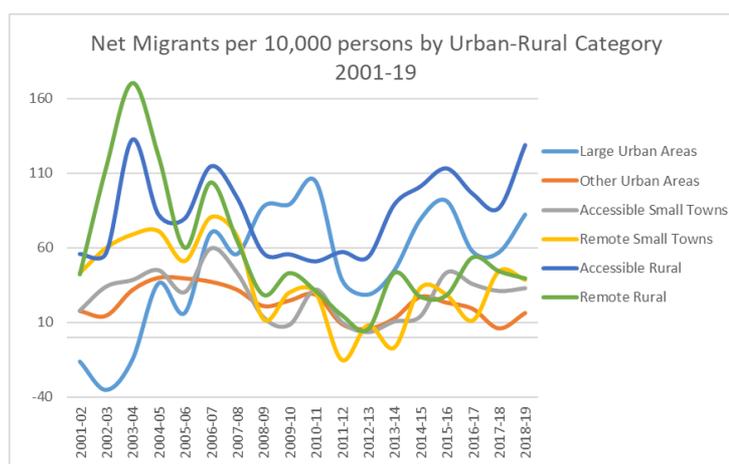


Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates; Urban-Rural Analysis Table 3

In order to explore trends in migration to remote and rural areas, we draw on a table provided by National Records of Scotland as part of the SAPE, which is disaggregated according to the six-fold classification (Figure 1.5). These data do not distinguish overseas migration from that originating in other parts of the UK, or mobility within Scotland.

These data indicate that rural areas and small towns, especially in accessible areas, have more mobile populations than the cities – rural areas and small towns have higher rates of both in and out migration per 10,000 head of population. This may reflect a greater propensity to relocate in search of jobs and services. The trend over time is less clear, although all areas appear to have experienced a gradual reduction in both in and out flows in the 2000s. After 2011 there appears to have been a rising trend which levelled off during the second half of the decade.

Figure 1.6: Net Migration per 10,000 persons by 6-fold Urban-Rural Category 2001-19



Source: NRS Small Area Population Estimates; Urban-Rural Analysis Table 3

Patterns and trends of net migration are less clear (Figure 1.6). During the first few years of the century, remote rural and accessible rural had the most positive net migration rates (per 10,000 head of population), whilst the large

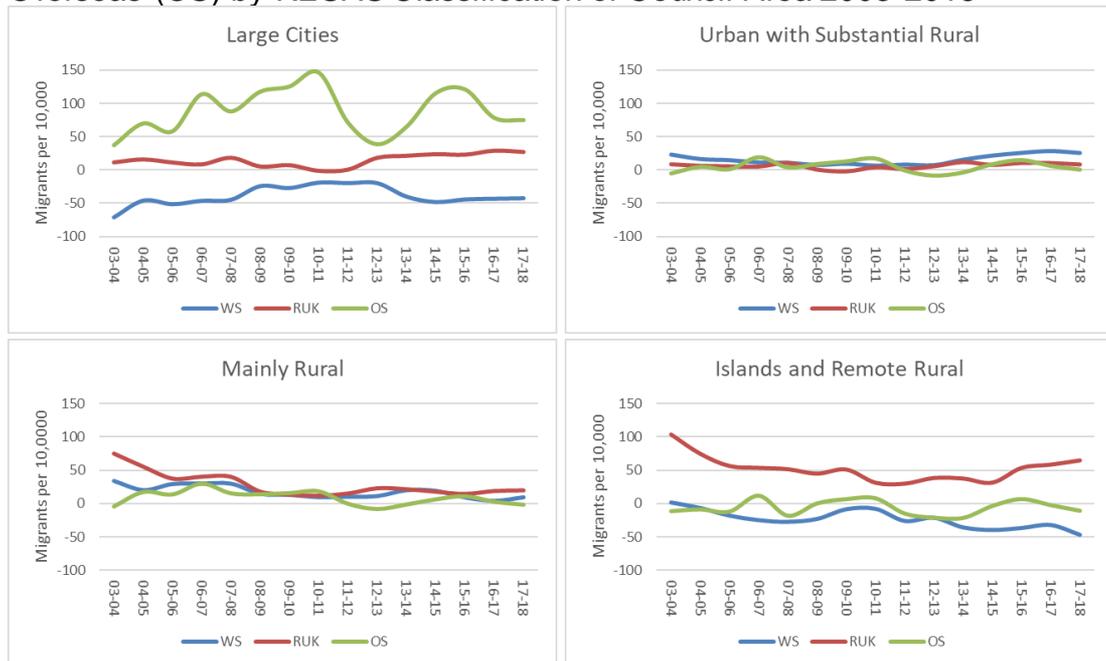
urban areas showed negative rates. By the end of the period, although accessible rural areas remained in the most positive position, the rates for remote rural areas had moved down close to zero, whilst the large urban areas had the second most positive rates.

Only a very small proportion of this migration involved migrants from overseas. The RESAS classification of Council Areas¹¹ groups the three Island Areas and Argyll and Bute in the category 'Islands and Remote Rural'. According to NRS Local Area Migration data, only 7% of in-migrants to these areas, in the year 2017-18, originated overseas. In the Mainly Rural, and Urban with Substantial Rural Council Areas the proportion was a little higher, at 8% and 9% respectively. In the Larger City Council Areas the proportion was three times greater, at 28%.

Figure 1.7 illustrates the trends in net migration rates (per 10,000) from within Scotland, from the rest of the UK, and from overseas, for the four RESAS groups of Council Area. As one might expect, the Large Cities group shows net out-migration to the rest of Scotland, and positive net migration from overseas; and a net migration rate close to zero for UK flows. There are large fluctuations, particularly for overseas migration.

At the other end of the urban-rural continuum, the graph for the Islands and Remote Rural Council Areas shows a declining, and increasingly negative, net migration rate from within Scotland, and an overseas migration rate fluctuating around zero. Flows from the rest of the UK are the most positive, and latterly increasing. The two intermediate groups of Council Areas show much smaller differentiation between the three sources of migrants, all of which have rates per 10,000 close to zero.

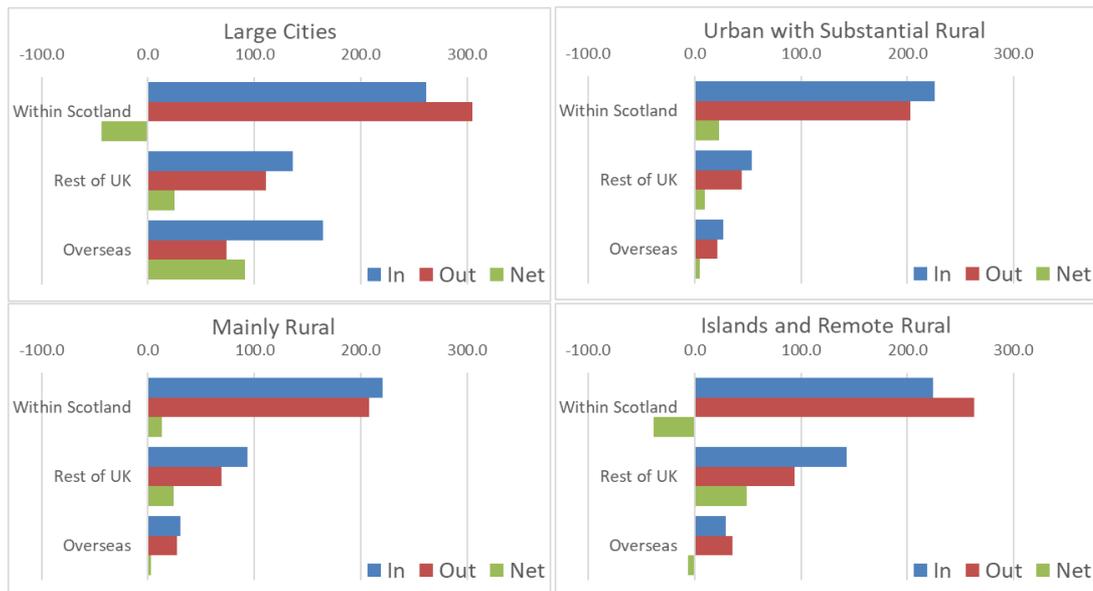
Figure 1.7: Net Migration from Within Scotland (WS), Rest of UK (RUK) and Overseas (OS) by RESAS Classification of Council Area 2003-2018



Source: NRS Local Area Migration data 2018

Net migration rates, expressed in rates per 10,000, do not, however, give any impression of the absolute size of in and out flows. Figure 1.8 shows that in all four groups of Council Areas, flows from within Scotland were by far the largest, and those from overseas the smallest. In the Islands and Remote group, the net effect of within-Scotland migration, and migration from overseas, were both negative. Of the three sources only the rest of the UK had a positive impact upon total population, averaging an additional 50 persons per 10,000.

Figure 1.8: In, Out and Net Migration per 10,000 persons, 2013-18, by Source, RESAS Classification of Council Areas



Source: NRS Local Area Migration data 2018

2

Economic and Social Context

2. Economic and Social Context

Population decline can have a range of negative economic and social impacts on local communities, often contributing to a cycle of declining services and employment opportunities, which in turn triggers further out-migration. This chapter sets out some of the economic and labour market challenges for remote and rural areas created by population decline (2.1) and considers the distribution of incomes in these areas (2.2) and the impacts on public services and local communities (2.3). The chapter ends with a discussion of different approaches to identifying what we term ‘designated areas’: remote and rural areas facing population decline, which would potentially benefit from a remote and rural migration scheme (2.4).

2.1 Employment Patterns in Remote Rural Scotland

As we saw in Chapter 1, prolonged periods of natural decrease in population and low levels of in-migration result in a shrinking population and an ageing workforce. Such demographic change influences the balance of supply and demand in the local economy. It both restricts the local labour supply and leads to an increase in its average age. Population decline can also adversely affect public service provision, through creating labour shortages in key services. Moreover, government funding formulae for public services are largely population driven, implying that public services will receive less resource as people move away.

Labour markets in sparsely populated areas are particularly vulnerable to small fluctuations in labour supply. Here it is useful to distinguish between ‘deep’ and ‘shallow’ markets. Markets are described as deep when there are many buyers and sellers, which implies that the loss of a few buyers or sellers would make no material difference to the operation of the market. Labour markets in sparsely populated areas are, in contrast, extremely shallow. Small increases or decreases in labour supply can have large effects on the viability of the local economy. These effects may be amplified to the extent that households are dependent on both partners working. The loss of one job may cause both to emigrate to take up new employment opportunities. It may also cause a loss of children to the area who would form the future labour supply.

Nevertheless, those in remote rural areas are typically more economically active than those in the rest of Scotland, albeit by a small margin. Annual Population Survey data for 2017 shows that 81% of adults in remote rural areas between 16 and 64 were economically active, compared with 80% in accessible rural areas and only 77% in the rest of Scotland. With unemployment rates at around 4% (irrespective of geography), employment rates in the remote rural areas stood at 78%, therefore exceeding those in the rest of Scotland where they were 74%.

Remote rural areas are also characterised by more diverse employment patterns than elsewhere. Self-employment accounts for 23% of employment in remote rural areas, 18% in accessible rural and only 11% in the rest of Scotland. The proportion of the employed in remote rural areas with a second job, at 6%, was double the rate for the rest of Scotland. And the proportion

working from their own homes comprised 24% in remote rural areas in 2017 compared with only 9% in the rest of Scotland. The share of those working from home rose dramatically during the pandemic: this was a working pattern with which residents of remote rural areas were already more familiar. It remains to be seen how much of the change in working patterns persists after the pandemic.

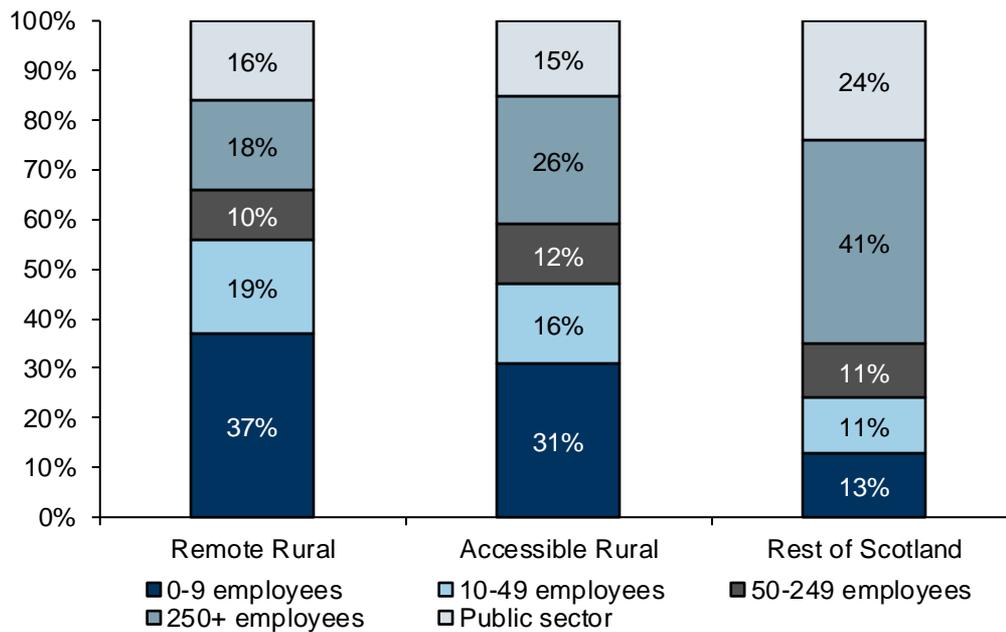
The occupational distribution of employment drawn from the 2017 Annual Population Survey shows that only around 11% of those living in remote rural areas belong to higher managerial and professional occupations, compared with 16% in the rest of Scotland. In contrast, 18% of those employed in the remote rural areas are small employers and own account workers. This compares with 14% in accessible rural areas and 8% in the rest of Scotland. Those living in Scotland's more remote areas are more likely to work on their own behalf, as 'solo self-employed'.

Another aspect of the fragility of the rural economy is its lack of diversification. The Scottish Government produces annual data on registered private sector businesses by the six-fold rural/urban classification. Registered businesses are those either registered for VAT (implying turnover over £85,000 as at March 2018) or for PAYE (employing others). In 2018, registered businesses accounted for 52% of the nearly 300,000 businesses operating in Scotland. Most agricultural businesses do register for VAT even if their turnover is less than £85,000, so that they can recover VAT on their input costs.

Figure 2.1 shows estimates of the share of enterprises, employment and turnover of those registered businesses located in Scotland's remote rural areas.¹² It clearly suggests that agriculture is the dominant sector in these areas. However, this may be misleading for the reasons alluded to above: Scotland has almost as many unregistered businesses as registered businesses. Unregistered businesses are likely to be relatively small and therefore disproportionately located in remote rural areas. Figure 2.2, which again reflects data on registered businesses, shows that even within this group, smaller businesses are overrepresented in Scotland's remote rural areas.¹³ While 13% of employment in registered businesses in the rest of Scotland is accounted for by enterprises with between 0 and 9 employees, 37% of remote rural area employment falls within this type of business.

It is also noteworthy that remote rural areas have a substantially smaller share of employment (16%) in the public sector than is the case in the rest of Scotland (24%). This is likely to reflect lower representation of parts of the public sector where activity is centralised, such as hospitals, colleges, universities and administrative centres, which rarely have a presence in remote rural areas. Note that international recruitment in these parts of the public sector is not unusual: the public sector is more likely to have processes in place for such recruitment than would be the case among small rural enterprises.

Figure 2.1: Employment by Sector and Number of Employees 2017

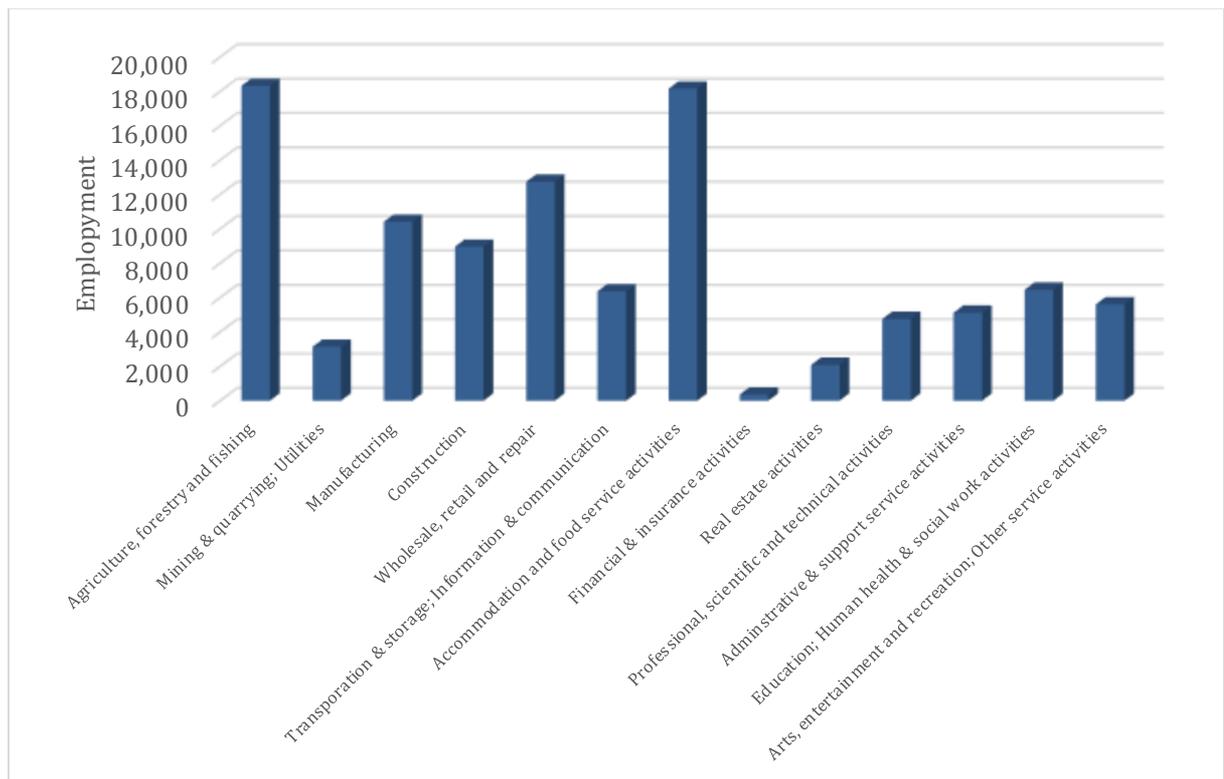


Source: Scottish Government Rural Scotland Key Facts 2018

Figure 2.2 shows estimates of employment in registered businesses in remote rural areas in 2017. Agriculture plays a more significant role in employing people in remote rural Scotland than in any of the other geographic zones, accounting for 39% of all Scottish registered enterprises in this sector. However, total employment in food and accommodation is almost the same as that in agriculture in registered businesses in remote rural areas. Food and accommodation has a much larger presence than agriculture in the rest of Scotland. This sector therefore represents a smaller share of total Scottish employment than does agriculture in remote rural areas.

Note that these estimates derive from a census carried out each March. They therefore do not capture seasonal variations in employment which are likely to be more pronounced in food and accommodation than in other sectors in remote rural Scotland. Agricultural employment in remote rural areas does not vary seasonally in the way that it does, say, in Tayside and Angus, where seasonal fruit picking causes large swings in employment. It is likely therefore that employment in food and accommodation substantially outstrips that in agriculture during the summer months. Employment in other sectors, such as professional and scientific services, administration, education and health is, as one would expect, relatively low and will remain so throughout the year.

Figure 2.2: Employment in Remote Rural Area Registered Businesses

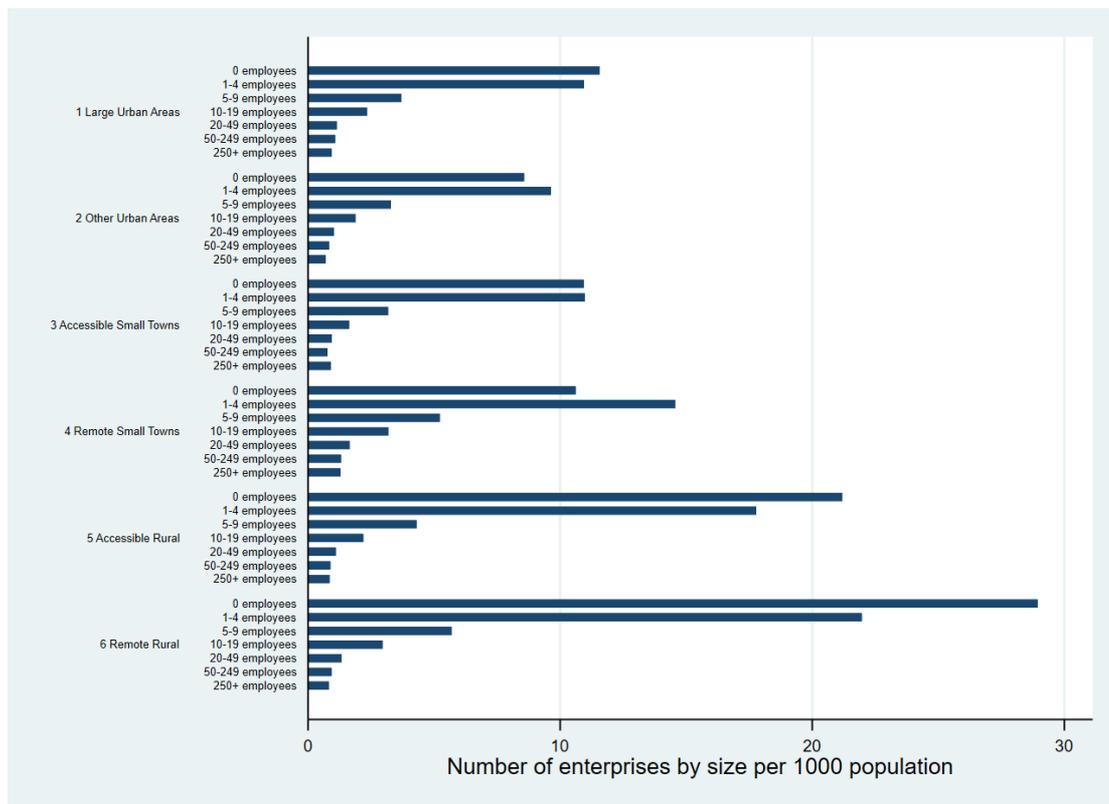


Source: *Scottish Government Businesses in Scotland 2019*

Figure 2.1 showed that businesses in remote rural areas are typically smaller on average than those in the rest of Scotland. A different visualisation of the same theme is shown in Figure 2.3. It shows the number of businesses per thousand population by size of employment across Scotland is different in rural/urban geographies.¹⁴ Remote rural Scotland has the largest representation of enterprises with *no* employees. Confirming the high levels of self-employment recorded in the Scottish Household Survey, these data show that there is a disproportionately high level of small-scale entrepreneurship in remote rural Scotland. Overall levels of employment are high, but the large share of self-employment may be a form of ‘concealed unemployment’ among the ‘solo self-employed’. The Institute for Fiscal Studies¹⁵ argues that this group typically earn less than average employees and that this wage gap has widened over time. Moreover, a large proportion of the solo self-employed are underemployed – they would prefer to work more hours, but there is insufficient demand to warrant extending their working time. Remote rural areas also have the highest share of enterprises with 1-4 employees.

Population decline can also adversely affect public service provision, through creating labour shortages in key services. Moreover, government funding formulae for public services are largely population driven, implying that public services will receive less resource as people move away, which can then further accelerate economic and population decline.

Figure 2.3: Number of Enterprises by Size per Thousand Population by Rural/Urban Geography



Source: *Scottish Government Businesses in Scotland 2018*

We found evidence of labour shortages in responses to the EAG survey conducted in 2019 for our report on internal migration in Scotland and the UK.¹⁶ Local authorities in remote and rural areas noted difficulties for a range of employers in attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff. This was affecting both private and public sector employers, although the industries and kinds of vacancies most affected vary between areas. At a more local level still, local authorities, including both Shetland and Argyll and Bute, reported that within their area more remote communities or remotely located businesses, such as hotels or processing plants, struggled the most.¹⁷

Shetland Council’s most recent employment survey, conducted in 2017, found that over 20% of employers reported difficulties with filling vacancies.¹⁸ This issue was particularly acute in manufacturing (food and drink processing, engineering, textiles and crafts) and construction, but also affected public services. The Council noted long-term difficulties filling vacancies in health and social care and NHS Shetland’s Workforce Plan Update 2019-2020 highlighted posts for consultants and senior nurses vacant for six months or more.¹⁹ The Workforce Plan also notes augmented pressure on services due both to increased demand linked to ageing of the local population and to difficulties maintaining supply as the workforce ages. In certain specialisms ageing of the workforce is an acute concern: 53% of nurses and midwives for example are aged 45 and above and 40% are over 50 years old.²⁰ The report

also notes that some services especially in more remote communities, rely on a single practitioner or specialist, making them particularly vulnerable.

Argyll and Bute also reported 'significant skills gaps and unfilled vacancies in areas such as health and social care, where demand is increasing as the population ages'.²¹ Moreover, a 2019 survey of the tourism and food and drink industries revealed significant recruitment issues across both industries, with 40-50% of employers reporting difficulties filling posts either due to a lack of applicants or a lack of suitably skilled applicants. Senior managerial and operational roles were reported as particularly hard to fill and the tourism sector also specifically noted problems recruiting and retaining chefs, other kitchen and waiting staff.²² Since those employees who were successfully recruited to and retained in such posts were often EU nationals, there were further concerns about how the end of free movement would exacerbate these trends.

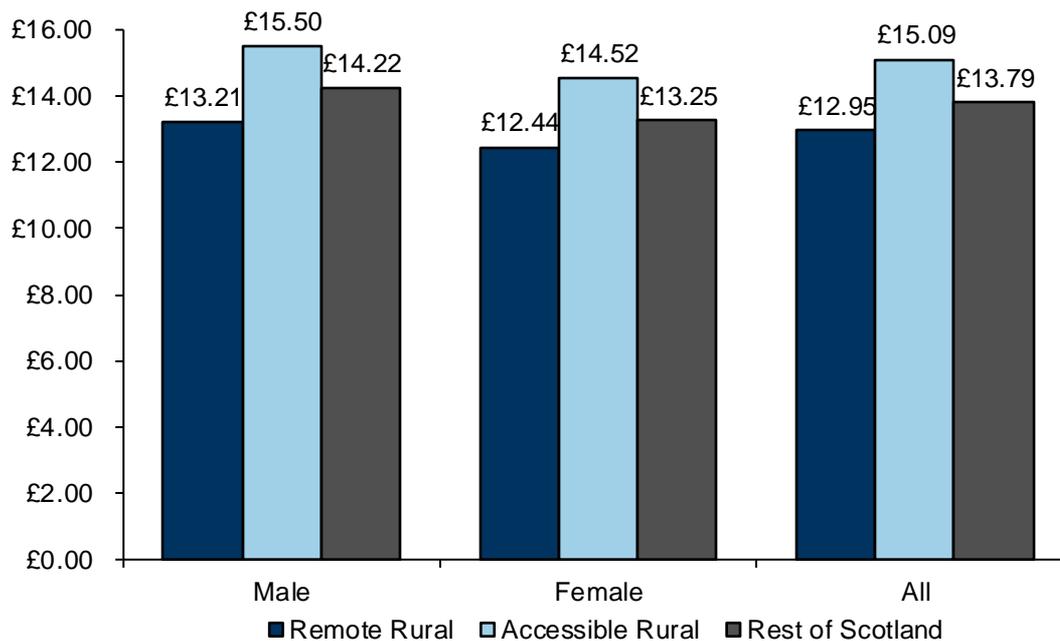
These difficulties reflect the shallowness of the labour markets in remote rural areas. Employment rates are very high, but many are employed in small scale enterprises associated with agriculture or food and accommodation. There is no readily available pool of labour to fill vacancies in other sectors: such vacancies are therefore likely only to be met from migrants who must assess the costs of moving in respect of income, housing and movement costs and (possibly) partner's employment.

2.2 Incomes

We now consider incomes across remote rural areas of Scotland. This is important both for understanding the local economy, but also the potential to attract migrants to work in key sectors and occupations in remote and rural areas. Our main data source is the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) collected by the Office for National Statistics provides accurate estimates of national employee earnings. However, for relatively small areas, mean or median annual earnings cannot be estimated precisely because sample sizes are relatively small.

Hourly earnings in remote rural Scotland are lower than in the rest of the country. ASHE data analysed by the Scottish Government shows median hourly pay (based on residence) is £12.95 in remote rural Scotland. This compares with £15.09 in accessible rural areas and £13.79 in the rest of Scotland (see Figure 2.4). Similar differences emerge for both males and females. However, this is largely a compositional effect. Median annual earnings for *full-time* workers in rural areas are around 3.3% less than those in the rest of Scotland, while hourly earnings for *all* employees lagged by 6.1%. The larger share of part-time employment in the remote areas explains the greater differential between earnings for all workers compared with those for full-time workers. Focussing on full-time wages for employees gives a very partial view of the remote rural labour market because full-time employees constitute a smaller proportion of the labour market than is the case for the rest of Scotland.

Figure 2.4: Median Hourly Earnings in Remote Rural, Accessible Rural and the Rest of Scotland



Source: Scottish Government, *Rural Scotland Key Facts 2018*

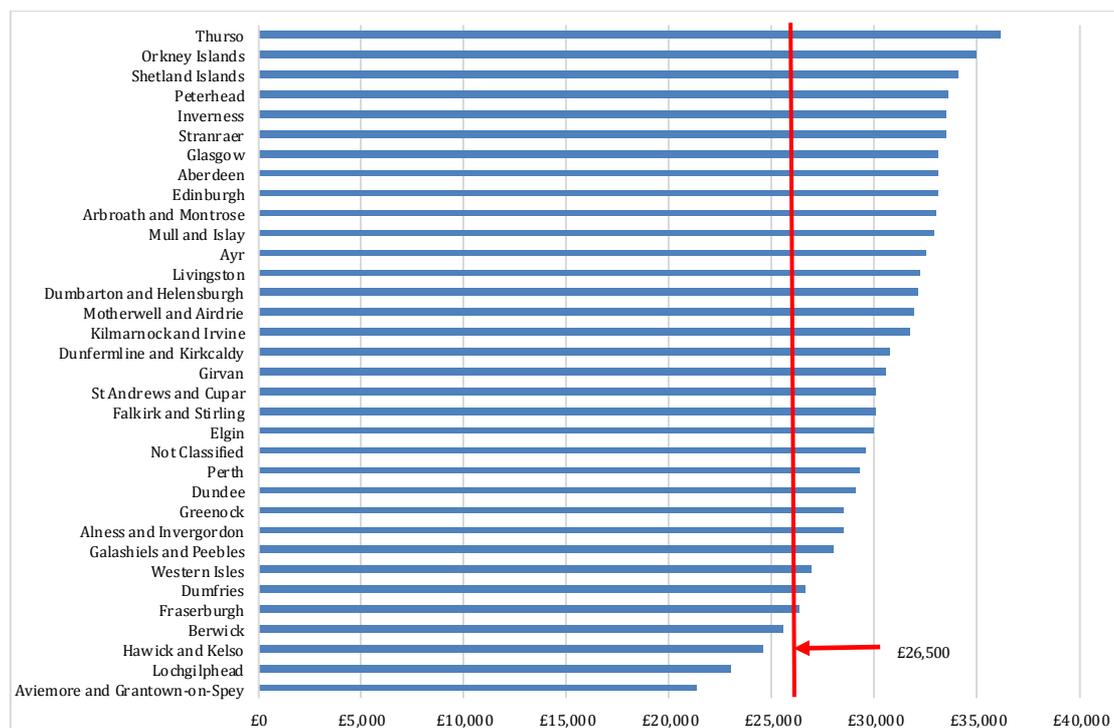
Median annual earnings for full-time employees in remote rural Scotland were estimated at £27,188 per annum in 2017. Although, as already noted, this estimate lies below that for the rest of Scotland, it suggests that more than half of all full-time employment in remote rural Scotland pays above the Skilled Worker route earnings threshold of £26,500 per annum. Data from the Scottish Household Survey suggest that the distribution of income in remote rural areas is closer to that of the rest of Scotland, then it is to Scotland's *accessible* rural communities. The most striking example is that while 22% of highest income householders in remote rural Scotland earned more than £40,000 per annum and the corresponding proportion for the rest of Scotland is 21%, the proportion earning more than £40,000 in accessible rural areas is 30%. High income householders in Scotland prefer to live in *accessible* rural areas rather than in urban centres or *remote* rural areas. Accessible rural is desirable for high earners who can commute to urban centres. The time and transport costs of accessing high-paying urban jobs from Scotland's remote rural areas has tended to be an almost insurmountable obstacle to this form of commuting. The pandemic may have changed this calculation somewhat, given the substantial increase in home working that it has caused.

The ASHE data can also be disaggregated by travel to work area (TTWA). TTWAs do not directly align with measures of rurality. Instead, TTWA boundaries are derived from commuting patterns: they capture areas *within* which 75% of journeys to work take place. This may be relevant for migration policy if these are employer-based without a residence requirement. Workers will seek accommodation within what they considered to be feasible travel to work distances, and these are more likely than not to be within the relevant TTWA (we discuss TTWAs further in 2.4).

Figure 2.5 shows median gross *annual* earnings for full-time employees in 2020 by Scottish TTWA. (More up-to-date earnings data is available on TTWAs from ASHE than on remote rural Scotland). It shows that for most TTWAs, median annual earnings are above the Skilled Worker route threshold of £26,500. Those where median earnings are below the threshold are concentrated in rural areas, though it is not easy to determine how far these overlap with our *remote* rural areas. However, where the median lies close to the threshold, migrants would not be eligible for around half of the full-time jobs available within the TTWA.

These data focus on full-time workers. Our earlier analysis shows that full-time work is less common in remote rural areas. Instead, part-time work, double jobbing and self-employment are much more common than in Scotland as a whole. These are manifestations of weakness in the local labour market and likely also to be a major cause of emigration from these areas.

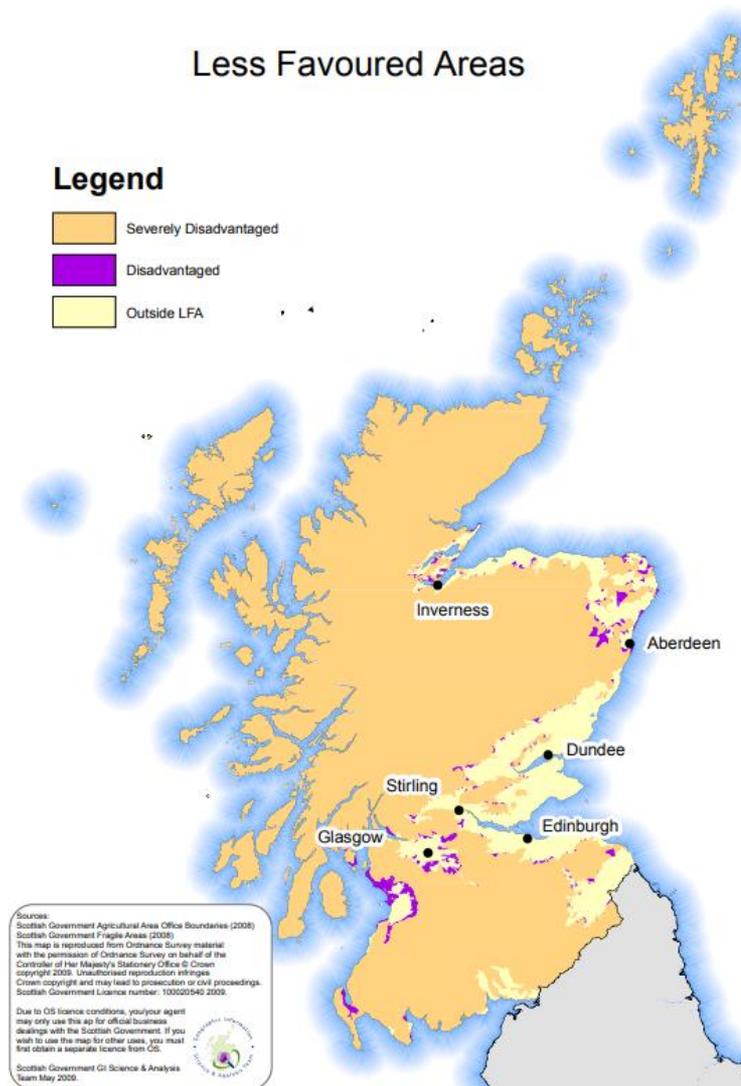
Figure 2.5: Median Gross Annual Earnings for Full-time Employees by TTWA 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2020

As we have already seen, agriculture is one of the two most important sectors in remote rural areas. It is heavily dependent on subsidy. Eligibility for subsidy is contingent on location. The most generous subsidies are available in 'Less Favoured Areas'. The map of these areas is shown in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6: Less Favoured Areas in Scotland



Source: Scottish Government, *Less Favoured Areas 2009*

LFAs cover much of rural Scotland, including remote rural areas. Payments to farm enterprises within LFAs have traditionally been paid through the Common Agricultural Policy. These comprise a major source of income for farmers in rural areas. Thus, in 2017-18, the average farm business *income* in LFAs for sheep farms was £18,231 while for cattle, it was £24,734. However, the CAP *direct payment* for sheep was £33,231 while that for cattle was £37,426: without direct payments from the EU, these businesses would not have been viable. Until the design of post-Brexit agricultural support in Scotland is clear, it is not possible to predict how the agriculture sector in remote rural Scotland will be affected.

These observations on the labour market and on incomes show that the health of labour markets in remote rural areas is much more tenuous than statistics on employment rates and unemployment might suggest. This makes it difficult to design appropriate policies for attracting international migrants. In employer-based schemes, the usual assumption is that the migrant is moving

to a single full-time job. But, as we have seen, this working pattern is much less common in remote rural Scotland than in the rest of the Scottish economy. Instead, more flexible employment patterns are common. Indeed, some of these may be a form of disguised unemployment. In addition, enterprises in remote rural areas tend to be relatively small and there is a lower proportion of public sector employees than in urban Scotland.

Home Office proposals for Skilled Worker route entry are likely to substantially increase the costs of recruitment from EEA countries, which have provided the bulk of international migrants to remote areas during the last two decades. There may be a case for providing employers with finance and advice to support EEA recruitment, which will inevitably be a more costly recruitment process for employers in remote rural Scotland post-Brexit.

2.3 Social impacts

The shrinking and ageing of local populations also bring social impacts, some of which are knock-on effects of the labour shortages discussed above. In the broadest terms, a steadily declining and ageing population can simply make an area feel less attractive to remaining residents, and especially younger people, as others in their age group leave. As employers struggle to recruit and local economies become less buoyant, businesses may leave the area taking with them access to more attractive or better-paid jobs. As remaining residents age, commercial and leisure facilities and social services for younger people and families often decline making it less attractive for those age groups to stay, whether they are locally born or newer arrivals. In these ways a spiral effect is created.

As noted above, the impact on local service provision is not only felt in terms of an increased demand for services to support the older population, although this is an issue of considerable concern for local authorities. Health services such as midwifery and the general availability of local health care are also affected, and this has clear implications for the working age population. So too does the provision of other services, such as childcare for younger families, and educational opportunities for those with older children. In a '10 year plan to attract people to live, study, work and invest in Shetland' launched in 2018, the local authority notes problems with access to childcare especially in more remote communities on the island.²³ This is a major issue affecting both employability and retention of existing population and the ability to attract and retain newly arrived workers and their families.

A lack of affordable, well-maintained and suitably sized accommodation for young families and/or younger workers living in couples or alone is also mentioned as a concern in both the Shetland '10 year plan' and the Argyll and Bute workforce survey. Poor transport links between residential areas and places of employment, some of which are located in more remote areas (for example, hotels, distilleries, food processing plants), affect the quality of life and job satisfaction of workers. This can contribute to problems with recruiting and retaining workers, whether new to the area, or locally born. It is important to understand these dynamics to inform the design of a potential migration scheme. Clearly, the negative socio-economic impacts of

population decline creates a strong rationale for seeking to mitigate such decline through facilitating in-migration. At the same time, in order for such in-migration to be viable and lead to longer-term settlement, it is important to make sure there are sustainable employment opportunities and an attractive environment for migrants in the local area.

As suggested in the introduction, a rural and remote migration scheme should not seek to mitigate population decline through ‘replacement migration’. Rather, the scheme should seek to recruit and retain individuals and families who have the skills, background and preferences that can best mitigate the negative social and economic impacts of population decline. The goal of the scheme should thus be focused on ‘strategic mitigation’, with the goal of providing skills and services that can best promote the well-being and sustainability of local communities. We discuss what such a scheme might look like in Chapter 3.

2.4 Identifying designated areas

Based on the analysis of the last two chapters, how might we identify which areas would participate in a RRMS? The last two chapters have identified which areas of Scotland face the most acute challenges in terms of population decline and ageing, and this chapter has explored some of the social and economic problems that these population trends create for local communities. Based on this analysis, we now consider which areas of Scotland might be the most in need of an RRMS – or, as we term it, might be identified as ‘designated areas’ for the purpose of the proposed scheme.

We saw in Chapter 1 that it is possible to produce a very granular breakdown of areas facing population decline. A second classification broke down areas according to remoteness (drive-time from larger settlements). And the third classification combined these two measurements to produce Sparsely Populated Areas (SPAs) – see Figure 1.2b in Chapter 1. However, these SPAs still represent relatively small areas, and do not necessarily capture the geographical units in which people work and live. Indeed, the 2011 Census revealed that of the 2.1 million people in Scotland who travel to work, 43% travel between 5 km and 30 km, while 8% travel 30 km or more.²⁴ The implication is that international migrants may be recruited to take up a job in an area facing demographic stress; but choose to reside in an area that is less challenged. In this way, the potential benefits to the more challenged community would be substantially diluted. There will also be enhanced risk of subsequent internal migration to reduce commuting costs, once any restrictions on place of work were lifted.

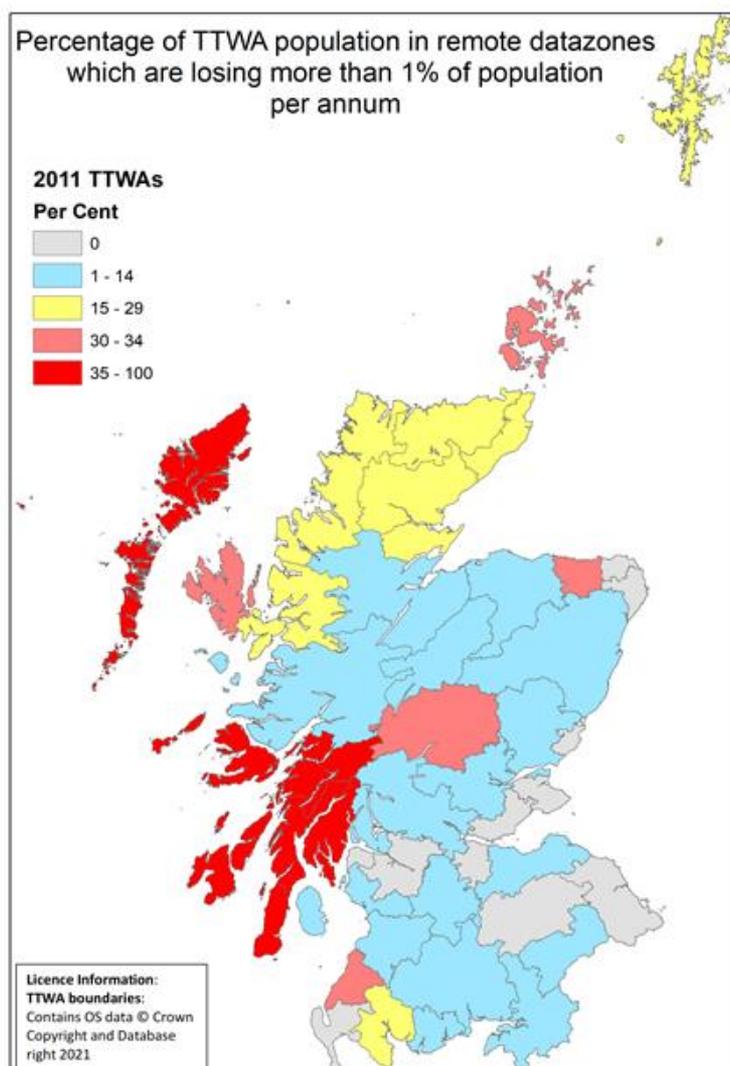
In order to capture the significance of commuting within such labour market areas, Coombe et al. (1986) developed an algorithm to define TTWAs in Great Britain. These TTWAs frequently span local authority boundaries, and one local authority may contain more than one TTWA. However, they offer a promising basis for defining ‘designated areas’ for an RRMS. They identify ‘activity spaces’ within which people are likely to spend most of their daily lives – working, attending school, accessing health services, shopping, using leisure facilities, socialising, and so on. In this sense, these areas would

capture the range of activities that migrants are engaged with, which would be relevant to strategic mitigation in areas facing depopulation. We suggest that the RRMS should be designed to encompass such TTWAs.

If we choose TTWAs as the designated areas for the scheme, we then need to determine which of these areas face the most significant demographic challenges. Figure 2.7 below shows which proportion of the population of each TTWA lives in data-zones which: (a) are classified as 'remote rural' or 'remote small towns' (6-fold classification); and (b) lost, on average, 1% or more of their population annually since the year their population peaked.

In the TTWAs Dunoon and Rothesay, Lochgilphead and Oban (shaded dark red), more than 35% of the population live in remote data zones that have lost 1% or more of their population. For Orkney, Portree, Turriff and Banff, Pitlochry and Aberfeldy and Girvan (shaded pink), 30-35% of the population live in such zones. All the TTWAs in the northern part of Highland are shaded yellow (15-29%), together with Shetland and Newton Stewart.

Figure 2.7: An example of use of statistical criteria to define a designated area



Source: EAG calculations, based on NRS Small Area Population Estimates

3

Policy Options

3. Policy Options

Thus far, we have considered the demographic, economic and social factors that might influence the design of a remote and rural migration scheme (RRMS). In this chapter, we build on this analysis to set out the options for a scheme. We focus on two main dimensions that need to be considered in developing the RRMS.

- Who should be admitted? This refers to the selection criteria, including what types of skills, experience or demographic profile should be prioritised (discussed in 3.1).
- What rights and conditions should be built into the scheme? This covers features such as the flexibility to switch jobs or place of residence, access to social and public services, as well as the pathway to settlement (3.2).

We then group the options into three main proposals: a modified version of the UK Government's Skilled Worker route; a points-based system modelled on the Scottish Government's proposed Scottish Visa scheme; and an employer-led scheme modelled on the Canadian Atlantic scheme (3.3).

The analysis focuses on what a fully developed scheme might look like, before suggesting how a pilot scheme might be designed and evaluated (3.4). It draws on the second EAG report²⁵ which included assessment of and lessons learned from international models of regional migration schemes.

3.1 Selection criteria

The analysis of Chapters 1 and 2 examined the challenge of population decline in remote and rural areas, suggesting the need for what we term 'strategic mitigation': a focus on recruiting migrants with the occupations, skills and demographic profile that would best contribute to sustaining local businesses and communities. This implies a focus on working age migrants and their families; with the skills, experience and job preferences that match labour market needs or create new business opportunities in remote and rural areas; who intend to build a life in a designated remote/rural area of Scotland.

In previous reports, we have distinguished between employer-based and human capital based programmes for selecting migrants as part of a migration scheme. Both of these approaches could potentially be relevant for a RRMS that captures these three features.

A human capital-based scheme selects migrants based on characteristics such as age and family status, skills and experience, or links with the place of destination. These considerations could be built into a points-based system which gave particular weight to characteristics that best matched the programme goals. This may be an appealing approach for a RRMS, as it would accommodate a focus on particular occupations or skills that were of strategic importance in the rural/remote area in question. For example, such a system could give particular weight to those with skills and qualifications in social care, hospitality or food processing. It could also give weight to entrepreneurs intending to set up a business at the place of destination.

In terms of demographic characteristics, the points system could also give particular priority to younger migrants, and/or those with family. And it could also prioritise those with English language skills, and/or a prior or familial link to the region – for example, those who had previously studied or worked in Scotland or in a designated area of Scotland, or those with family ties to the area. This could increase the probability of entrants in the scheme settling in the host area. Such a points-based system could be restricted to entrants intending to work, or to live and work, in a designated area (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of this concept).

The main drawback of a scheme based purely on human capital criteria is that there would be no guarantee of a viable job, or – in the case of an entrepreneur scheme – that the business would be viable. For this reason, human capital points-based systems that do not build in a job offer typically provide access to generous rights, including unemployment/welfare support. Thus, for example, the Canadian Provincial Nomination Programme schemes provide a right to permanent settlement, including access to unemployment and other welfare benefits, from the outset.

By contrast, *employment-based programmes* are premised on a specific job offer. They rely on employers to identify candidates to fill particular vacancies. Such schemes therefore offer a more effective way of ensuring a ‘fit’ between entrants and the needs of local areas. Employment-based programmes may build in further conditions, which can ensure that such schemes are ‘strategic’ in the sense we have used. For example, they may involve restrictions linked to skills or salary thresholds (as is the case with the Skilled Worker route in the UK immigration system). These types of thresholds are likely to be less relevant to a RRMS, given that the types of occupations facing shortages may be on the lower skilled or lower salary end. Setting the threshold too high might rule out some of the occupations of most strategic importance to the designated area. However, such a scheme could build in conditions to ensure salaries are appropriate for the sector and occupation.

More relevant might be restrictions based on occupations. Thus employer-based programmes can be limited to particular occupations, reflecting acute shortages (as with the Shortage Occupation List, or SOL), or particular occupations within certain parts of the UK (as with the Scotland-only SOL). This would be of more relevance to a RRMS, as it could build in a range of occupations across different skills or salaries that are most crucial to strategic mitigation in remote and rural areas. Alternatively, an employment-based programme could allow employers in designated areas to recruit foreign workers without being subject to any salary, skills or occupations restrictions.

Employer-based programmes are able to address the problem of ensuring entrants have a job to go to, thereby ensuring financial stability for migrants and their families. Such programmes have tended to characterise UK immigration schemes, as well as those of most European countries. However, employer-based programmes are often characterised by fairly restrictive entry conditions, with limited scope for switching jobs or location, or transitioning to longer-term residency or permanent settlement. This is particularly the case for employer-based schemes that cover workers considered to be on the

lower skills or salary end. For this reason, such schemes may be less obvious candidates for attracting migrants and their families to remote and rural areas, or for supporting pathways to permanent settlement.

As set out in the second EAG report, many schemes combine features of both human capital and employer-based programmes. A number of hybrid schemes within the points-based systems of Australia and Canada include criteria related to demographic and skills features, and also require a job offer.

3.2 Rights and conditions of stay

A second key dimension of an RRMS will be the rights and conditions of stay offered to entrants. This includes rights to family reunion, welfare and social benefits and access to public services; mobility and employment rights, including any restrictions on where migrants would be allowed to live and work; as well as pathways to longer-term residence and citizenship acquisition. This dimension of the RRMS will be crucial: the scheme will need to be tailored to influence mobility and settlement decisions in a way that attracts migrants, and addresses the goals of the RRMS.

Both human capital and employment-based programmes can build in generous packages of rights. Examples of generous human capital-based programmes designed for particular regions include the Canadian Provincial Nominee Programs and the Australian State Specific and Regional Migration Scheme. On these schemes, migrants are selected through points-based systems building in demographic and skills criteria. Entrants enjoy extensive rights from the outset – in the case of the Canadian scheme, akin to citizenship rights, and with no restrictions on free movement within Canada.

Examples of employment-led programmes with extensive rights include the Swedish 2008 labour migration programme, which offers permanent residency after 4 years. This scheme built in more generous conditions in order to address longer-term shortages in particular sectors and regions, and also to attract migrants whose skills were in particular demand.

As we set out in the second EAG report, a scheme to attract and retain migrants in particular areas will need to carefully balance two considerations. On the one hand, the package of rights needs to be sufficiently flexible and generous to attract and retain migrants and their families. On the other hand, in order to meet the needs of remote and rural areas at which the scheme is targeted, the RRMS will need to build in features to promote settlement in designated areas.

One aspect of this is how restrictive the scheme is in terms of residency. An employer-led scheme might require entrants to have a job with an employer based in a designated area, but not necessarily require them to live in that zone. Indeed, UK immigration control is reliant on employer checks, rather than residency check. Unlike most other European systems, there is no registration system or identity cards to underpin regular checks on the residence and status of migrants.

However, as noted in Chapter 2, remote and rural areas would benefit most where migrants work *and* reside in the designated area. This might be achieved either through a legal requirement to reside in the area, noting that this would create challenges to enforcement. Alternatively, residency within a designated area could be promoted through designing the scheme in a way that maximises the probability of residence in the relevant area. We will return to this point later in this chapter.

The second consideration is how rights and autonomy for migrants participating in the scheme evolve over time. Even where there are clear work (and residency) requirements in place at the outset, there will be strong reasons to relax these requirements over time. In the case of employment-based schemes, the employer may not be able to guarantee the position over time; or the employee may have good grounds to want to seek another position. Indeed, a scheme that ties the employee to a particular job over an extended period of time would limit labour market flexibility, and may increase risks of exploitation. The scheme may therefore need to build in a possibility to change employment within the designated area (or perhaps within all designated areas of Scotland) and thus also to change residence. Moreover, once the entrant has been granted permanent settlement, it would be reasonable to expect them/their family to be free to move within the UK.

On a human capital based programme, the connection to the remote/rural area would be ensured through the place of residence and employment being located in a designated area. However, in the event of entrants facing challenges in finding employment, such a scheme may want to build in some flexibility to move (perhaps within the designated area, or across all designated areas). And as with the employment-based scheme, after an initial period of time, it would be expected that entrants would accrue rights to free movement across the UK.

In the 2019 report, we examined four examples of how different schemes – in Australia, Canada, Spain and Sweden – had balanced the need to offer generous rights with a desire to meet particular labour market and demographic needs. In each case, the programme built in an incremental expansion of rights, alongside a gradual easing of restrictions on mobility. For example:

- Under the Spanish Catalogue scheme, the migrant is tied to a specific job for the first year, with increasing flexibility for a further 2 + 2 years, and permanent residency (with no restrictions on mobility) after 5 years.
- The recently introduced Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional visa in Australia requires one year in the designated job, and 5 years in the recruiting region, at which point the migrant can secure permanent residency (with no mobility restrictions).

Finally, we note the importance of building in measures to promote integration and settlement of migrants within the scheme. This will be especially critical for the RRMS, given the challenges in – and crucial importance of – promoting settlement in more remote areas. We will explore this question in more depth in Chapter 4, which focuses on measures to promote integration and settlement in host communities.

3.3 Options

Based on the analysis above, we now set out three options, which we consider would be potential models for addressing the goals of an RRMS. We briefly consider the advantages and disadvantages of each scheme, which we also summarise at the end across three key criteria: matching local needs; attracting/retaining migrants; and enforcement.

(a) *Expanding Skilled Worker route to include remote/rural areas*

The first scheme would involve relaxing conditions for the Skilled Worker route (previously known as Tier 2), specifically for employers in designated areas. As such, it would be an employment-based programme, which relied on employers based in designated areas to identify migrants to fill vacancies.

The UK Government has implemented the new Skilled Worker route from January 2021, which includes a points-based system as set out in Table 3.1. Entrants need to earn 70 points to apply to work in the UK.

Table 3.1: UK Skilled Worker Route

Characteristics	Tradable	Points
Offer of job by approved sponsor	No	20
Job at appropriate skill level	No	20
Speaks English at required level	No	10
Salary of £20,480 (minimum) – £23,039	Yes	0
Salary of £23,040 – £25,599	Yes	10
Salary of £25,600 or above	Yes	20
Job in a shortage occupation (as designated by the MAC)	Yes	20
Education qualification: PhD in subject relevant to the job	Yes	10
Education qualification: PhD in a STEM subject relevant to the job	Yes	20

We suggest two main ways of adjusting these points, in order to produce a RRMS.

Designated areas approach. The first option would be to relax (or remove) the skills and salary criteria for jobs in a designated area. This could be achieved by introducing additional points for jobs located in designated areas; and ensuring that points earned for skills level were tradeable. The resulting points-based system could be as depicted in Table 3.2 (changes are marked in bold). The minimum points to be earned would remain at 70. We note that the points required to participate in the scheme would not be tradeable, so strictly speaking this would be a threshold scheme (entrants need to meet a number of conditions to enter) rather than a points-based system as traditionally understood.

Table 3.2: Designated areas scheme

Characteristics	Tradable	Points
Offer of job by approved sponsor	No	20
Job at appropriate skill level	Yes	20
Speaks English at required level	No	10
Salary of £20,480 (minimum) – £23,039	Yes	0
Salary of £23,040 – £25,599	Yes	10
Salary of £25,600 or above	Yes	20
Job in a shortage occupation (as designated by the MAC)	Yes	20
Job in a designated area	No	40
Education qualification: PhD in subject relevant to the job	Yes	10
Education qualification: PhD in a STEM subject relevant to the job	Yes	20

Occupational approach (within designated areas). Alternatively, the programme could be restricted to particular occupations which are considered to be of strategic importance to the area – for example, health and care occupations, or occupations in catering, food processing or hospitality. This would be operationalised through an expanded SOL specifically for remote and rural areas. The job would need to be located in a designated area, and match the list of shortage occupations. As for the approach above, entrants would earn additional points for moving to a designated areas, and also for working in a shortage occupation (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Remote and rural SOL scheme

Characteristics	Tradable	Points
Offer of job by approved sponsor	No	20
Job at appropriate skill level	Yes	20
Speaks English at required level	No	10
Salary of £20,480 (minimum) – £23,039	Yes	0
Salary of £23,040 – £25,599	Yes	10
Salary of £25,600 or above	Yes	20
Job in a shortage occupation (remote and rural list)	No	20
Job in a designated area	No	20
Education qualification: PhD in subject relevant to the job	Yes	10
Education qualification: PhD in a STEM subject relevant to the job	Yes	20

The remote and rural SOL could be developed by the MAC in close consultation with Scottish Government, local authorities and employers in designated areas. This consultation would be an important part of the process, as it would need to be part of a ‘strategic mitigation’ plan, identifying occupations in designated areas that faced acute shortages, and were key to mitigating population decline. Because this second option builds in a strategic element that identifies priority sectors and occupations, we consider it would be better equipped to address the needs of RRMS. It would also build on the precedent of the existing Scotland-only SOL. We therefore focus the analysis on considering this second variant of the modified Skilled Worker scheme.

In terms of conditions of stay, this route could align with the Skilled Worker route (which is based on the previous Tier 2 route). Similar to that route, employees would be permitted to switch jobs to another sponsored employer (as long as the new employment met relevant criteria, including in relation to the employment being located in a designated area). Entrants through this route would be able to extend their stay conditional on continued employment, and to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) after 5 years. Once ILR was granted, restrictions on employment, including any geographical restriction, would be removed. Migrants could be accompanied by their spouse/partner and children under 18, who would have the right to work. Employers would need a sponsor license from the Home Office.

We note, however, that the Scotland-only SOL does not impose requirements on place of residence, meaning it is possible for an entrant to work within Scotland but live in another part of the UK. In order to maximise the benefits of this scheme for remote and rural areas, we suggest that the scheme would need to either encourage, or require, entrants and their families to also reside in the designated area. This would be more feasible if the designated area took the form of an existing TTWA, as discussed in Chapter 2. We discuss issues around implementing a residency requirement further in relation to option (b) below.

The advantage of the modified Skilled Worker approach is that it would involve only modest adjustments to current UK immigration rules. It would allow employers in remote areas to recruit migrants across a wider spectrum of skills, salaries and occupations (in a way that is not possible under previous Tier 2 or new Skilled Worker route provisions). It also builds in a route to permanent settlement, although migrants would need to have continuous employment in an eligible occupation and a designated area for 5 years. Such a scheme could potentially apply to designated remote and rural areas elsewhere in the UK, although we assume a pilot programme would be restricted to specified areas of Scotland.

Potential disadvantages of this approach are that it may not be sufficiently generous to attract migrants with the sought-after profile, given its relatively restrictive approach to extending stay and settlement. This may be less of a challenge if it is broadened to include occupations that are not generally considered to be 'skilled', which would imply the scheme could be accessed by a wider pool of potential migrants. However, we should also note that where the scheme included jobs with lower salaries, and especially where migrants arrive with dependents (which would be an advantage for remote and rural areas), they may need to be able to access Universal Credit.

A further disadvantage is that this scheme focuses strongly on the employer/employee relationship, without factoring in wider aspects of the experiences of, and integration of, migrants and their families. As noted, it would clearly be important to local areas facing depopulation that migrants not only worked in their area, but also resided and based their daily activities in the area. For this reason, this route would need to build in incentives or requirements to stay in the designated area. It should also build in support for migrants and their families to promote integration and settlement.

Finally, if the scheme were only open to employers with sponsor status, it may be too administratively onerous for small employers, who would also face challenges identifying employees.

Some of these disadvantages could be partially addressed through complementary initiatives. Should such a scheme be introduced, the Scottish Government and local authorities could introduce a series of ‘softer’ measures to support employers in identifying and recruiting migrants; to incentivise residence in the designated areas; and to foster longer term integration and settlement. We would recommend that this take the form of a partnership model involving key stakeholders including local authorities, employers, schools and voluntary organisations (see Chapter 4).

(b) Scottish Visa

The second scheme would build on the Scottish Government proposal for a Scottish Visa, but specifically targeted at designated areas. Rather than relying on employers identifying entrants, this option would require the Scottish Government and local authorities to prioritise the weighting of different features as part of a points-based system. This might include age, family/dependents, language skills, ties to the region, and occupation or skills. It could also build in a strand to attract entrepreneurs with business ideas. Scottish Government would set a quota for the number to be admitted, potentially by local authority.

Table 3.4 provides an example of how points might be weighted on such a scheme. This is based on the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Programme within the Canadian immigration system, analysed previously in the second EAG report.

Table 3.4: RRMS Scottish Visa points-based system

Factor	Tradeable	Points
Language Proficiency (English or Gaelic)	No	20
Age	Yes	10
Work Experience (full-time)	Yes	10
Qualifications	Yes	20
Adaptability*	Yes	20

Note: Within the Manitoba PNP, ‘adaptability’ includes connection to the area, including a relative/friend living in the area, or previous work experience or education in the area.

In contrast to the UK Skilled Migrant route and its points-based system, some of the criteria are measured along scales (rather than yes/no answers), and there is a greater degree of tradability across points. This implies the need for more careful definitions (for example, setting out which age ranges earn which points within the age category); as well as more careful case-by-case interpretation of points earned (for factors such as ‘adaptability’). As noted in

previous studies, such points-based systems require more substantial investment in setting and adjusting scales and weightings, and in assessing potential entrants (Boswell et al 2017).

In contrast to the Scottish Visa proposal, we recommend that such a scheme would need to offer a generous package of rights from the outset, including recourse to public funds. This would be especially important for migrants moving to remote and rural areas, given the existence of 'shallow' labour markets in such areas (see Chapter 2); as well as for those migrants moving with their families who may need to access child support or other benefits. Moreover, we propose that such a scheme would need to allow greater mobility than the Tier 2 scheme, given the need to find suitable employment: migrants should be allowed to relocate to, and take up employment in, any designated area. We propose that the requirement to be based in a designated area would apply for the first 4 years, at which point migrants would be eligible for permanent residency and full mobility rights in the UK.

This scheme may be attractive to migrants and their families, if it offered a generous package of rights and a clear pathway to settlement. The disadvantage of this scheme is that it would not include a guarantee of viable employment, or a successful business start-up, in the place of destination. This risk could be partially mitigated by including criteria within the points-based system relating to particular occupations/skills that are in demand. Evidence of previous patterns of mobility to remote and rural areas suggests that migrants often move on their own for the first one or two years, and are then joined by family once they have a stable income, suitable accommodation, and have worked out where their children might go to school.

In the case of a scheme to attract entrepreneurs within a points-based system, the previous UK Tier 1 Entrepreneur visa category is targeted at potential businesses that have received at least £50,000 in funding from a registered venture capital firm or UK/devolved Government. This level of investment is unlikely to be feasible for many start-ups in remote and rural areas, so would need to be set at a lower level for potential entrepreneurs entering through an RRMS. However, in addition to raising capital, entrants would also need to have sufficient knowledge of the local economy to develop a viable business plan. Because of these potential impediments, we assume for the purpose of this discussion that most entrants would initially work as employees rather than starting their business, although that option may become more feasible after an initial period of stay.

A further challenge would be to enforce such a scheme, which would not be administered through employers. In the current UK immigration system, sponsored employers carry out checks on employees. A human capital-based system with no employment requirement would need to build in some form of registration system based on place of residence. Registered status would need to be checked at relatively regular points. The current UK approach would imply that these (non-employment related) checks be outsourced to a range of organisations and services, at the point they are accessed by migrants – such as welfare, health, higher education, private housing or banks. However, recent experience has shown that this system has significant

disadvantages, as undocumented status may only be picked up once migrants are settled in the UK. Outsourcing checks can also create challenges for organisations enforcing measures, and inadvertently lead to discrimination. These issues would need to be considered carefully before opting for a scheme that relies on non-employer checks.

(c) *Remote and rural partnership scheme*

The third proposed scheme is modelled on the Canadian Atlantic Pilot scheme, also analysed in the second EAG report. It would take the form of an employment-based scheme, but as part of a wider partnership between local authorities, employers, public services and the voluntary sector. On this approach, entrants would need a specific job offer from an employer in a designated area, as with the first option. However, local authorities, employers and public services (henceforth 'the partners') would play a more active role in identifying which types of areas and employers would benefit most from the scheme, and would be engaged in delivering an integration plan. We propose the following process for designing the programme.

The first step in developing such a scheme would be to identify designated areas to participate in the programme (see Chapter 2). The Scottish Government would work with local authorities and employers in these designated areas to develop a 'strategic mitigation' plan. As outlined for the remote/rural SOL (see the first option), this would involve identifying occupations and sectors in designated areas that were seen as crucial for mitigating population decline. However, unlike for the SOL option, they could be areas that display strong potential for future growth/regeneration, rather than being limited to those that could demonstrate (existing) acute shortages.

Second, employers with job vacancies within the occupations identified in the strategic mitigation plan could enrol in the scheme. They would agree to take an active role in supporting employees, including a guaranteed job for the first 12 months (with strong prospects for sustaining over 4 years), and providing various forms of support, for example in language and skills training. Employers would in turn receive support in recruiting workers from overseas, and would not be required to pay fees for a licence or skills charge.

Third, enrolled employers would then nominate employees to enter through the scheme, entrants would need to be endorsed by the local authority/Scottish Government, and approved by the Home Office. Those entering under the scheme would signal their intention to stay/settle in a designated area of Scotland (for at least 4 years). They would have a job offer, and be offered an integration package including help in finding accommodation, schooling, access to health and other public services, and language classes for the family (further discussed in Chapter 4).

We recommend that such a scheme begin with quite clear conditions of employment and residency, which would be gradually eased over the first 4 years. A possible approach to this might be as follows.

- First 12 months: requirement to stay in the relevant job (and employer needs to be able to guarantee at least 12 months employment).
- First 24 months: requirement to be employed by an employer enrolled in the partnership.
- First 4 years: requirement to be employed within a designated area.
- After 4 years: permanent residency, and no restrictions on mobility within the UK.

This pathway could also be simplified, for example through omitting the second requirement (referring to the first 24 months). We propose that entrants would be entitled to access public funds (including Universal Credit) after the first 12 months.

As discussed in Chapter 2, it would be most beneficial for local areas if entrants would both work and reside in the designated area. If designated areas are defined as co-extensive with TTWAs, this is likely to be achievable in the majority of cases. Where local areas also provide a generous package of support to migrants and their families, this would also provide a strong incentive to live and settle in the designated area (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of this partnership approach). Clearly, the RRMS could also build in a requirement to reside in the designated area, although this would face the types of enforcement challenges outlined in the discussion of the option (b), the Scottish Visa.

Table 3.5: Summary of proposals

	Modified Skilled Worker route	Scottish Visa	Partnership scheme
Designated areas	Yes	Yes	Yes
Job offer	Yes	No	Yes
Occupation list	No for option 1 Yes for option 2	Possibly (within points-based system)	Yes
Employment restrictions	Yes (aligned with Skilled Worker route)	No	Yes (easing after 12 months)
Settlement/ILR	After 5 years	From the outset	After 4 years
Recourse to public funds	After settlement	From the outset	After 12 months
Mode of enforcement	Employer sponsorship	Other checks	Employer enrolment system (new)

Table 3.6: Summary of pros and cons

	Modified Skilled Worker route	Scottish Visa	Partnership scheme
Matching local needs	YES	MODERATE	YES
Attracting and retaining migrants	MODERATE	YES	YES
Enforcement	YES	NO	YES

3.4 Designing a Pilot Scheme

Thus far, we have examined what form a *fully-fledged* RRMS might take. Based on this analysis, we now consider how UK and Scottish Government might roll out a *pilot* scheme to assess the viability and effects of such a RRMS. The pilot scheme would need to be designed in a way that enabled a rigorous assessment of whether the chosen approach could meet the objectives of the RRMS.

We defined the *overarching objective* of the RRMS as being to promote strategic mitigation of population decline in remote and rural areas of Scotland. This objective would be promoted through meeting the more *specific goals* of:

- Attracting migrants with the appropriate profile to match the goals of strategic mitigation, particularly in relation to their skills, occupation and job preferences; and intentions to settle in designated areas.
- Supporting the migration and longer-term settlement of these migrants and their families in designated remote and rural areas.

A pilot scheme would involve trialling the scheme for a small number of migrants, and assessing how far it was able to achieve these goals through a bundle of indicators (see below). We note that the focus of the pilot scheme would need be on the *specific goals* set out above (attracting and retaining migrants with relevant profile). A pilot scheme involving small numbers would be unlikely, in itself, to meet the overarching objective of strategic mitigation (although a fully-fledged scheme may be able to achieve this). We now consider what form a pilot scheme might take, for each of the three main options we set out above.

(a) *Modified Skilled Worker scheme*. A pilot scheme for this route would involve expanding the number of occupations on the Scotland-only SOL, potentially through a specific SOL for remote and rural areas of Scotland. For example, the analysis might reveal that the remote and rural SOL should include primary and secondary teaching professionals across all subjects, and occupations in food processing, catering and hospitality. Depending on the occupations listed, this may require relaxing the condition on skills level (a category that is non-tradeable within the new Skilled Migrants route). Salary thresholds would be set at a level appropriate to the occupation. See Table 3.3 (above) for how the points based system might be adjusted to accommodate this programme.

There are three main options for limiting numbers on a pilot programme for this scheme:

- Restricting the designated areas. For example, the pilot could involve designated zones in just one or two local authorities.
- Restricting the list of occupations. For example, the remote and rural SOL could include just 2 or 3 shortage occupations.
- Introducing a cap on the number of entrants (for example, 200 entrants).

We propose that the first approach would be most effective, combined with a cap. It would allow for a relative concentration of entrants in a particular designated area, with the potential for positive synergies generated by recruiting migrants across different areas of economic activity and public services. It would also represent more value for money, enabling concentrated investment in infrastructure and services to support migrants in a smaller area.

(b) *Scottish Visa*. A pilot scheme for the Scottish Visa would involve trialling a points-based system to attract migrants with the relevant skills and profile to designated areas. For the reasons mentioned above, we consider that a pilot should take the form of a scheme focused on designated areas in one or two local authorities. This would create the potential for a more meaningful impact in the designated local areas, and more efficient concentration of resources to support integration.

In addition, the pilot scheme could build in the possibility of adjusting the criteria and points depending on the volume of applicants. Thus, for example, if there is low take-up, the scheme could lower relevant criteria; and conversely, raise them if there is high demand. There could also be a cap on the number of entrants to the pilot scheme (for example, 200).

(c) *Partnership Scheme*. As with the previous proposals, a partnership RRMS could be piloted in cooperation with one or two local authorities that contain designated areas. As with the previous schemes, it could build in a cap of 200 entrants.

3.5 Evaluating the Scheme

The long-term success of the scheme would be assessed to a large extent based on its potential to contribute to strategic mitigation in remote and rural areas facing depopulation. However, such an effect may take many years to kick in, and it may be difficult to attribute such specific outcomes to a single policy intervention. Moreover, it may be the case that in-migration contributes to mitigating a more negative outcome (rather than avoiding it altogether).

For these reasons, we consider it would be more feasible and appropriate to evaluate the performance of the scheme in relation to more specific medium-term goals, notably:

- Attracting migrants with the appropriate profile to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the local community in designated areas.
- Supporting the integration and long-term settlement of migrants and their families in these designated areas.

In addition, evaluation would also need to build in 'process' related criteria, covering cost effectiveness, and efficiency and efficacy of implementation. (We will not cover this third criterion in our report, as these administrative considerations lie beyond the scope of EAG analysis.)

Relevant indicators for measuring achievement of these goals are listed in Table 3.7. The table lists a range of indicators, to allow evaluation of the scheme from the outset.

Table 3.7: Evaluation indicators

<i>Goal</i>	Attracting migrants	Integration and settlement
<i>Indicators</i>	Number of applicants <i>Admin data</i>	Entry with/joined by family <i>Admin data</i>
	Number of entrants <i>Admin data</i>	Entrant employment trajectory <i>Admin data</i>
	Employers (sponsors/enrolled) successful in recruiting <i>Admin data</i>	Partner employment trajectory <i>Survey data</i>
	Coverage of key sectors/occupations <i>Admin data, survey data</i>	Housing (rental/owned) <i>Survey data</i>
	Coverage of designated areas <i>Admin data</i>	Engagement with community groups <i>Survey data</i>
		Enrolment in language/citizenship classes <i>Survey data</i>
		Dependents integrated in school system <i>Survey data</i>
		Entrant stays in designated area <i>Admin data (first 4 years); survey data</i>
		Acquires ILR/citizenship <i>Admin data</i>

In terms of the first goal (attracting migrants), these indicators can be largely measured through quantitative administrative data on employer sponsorship/enrolment for schemes (a) and (c); applications to the scheme; visa decisions; and entry/take-up of employment.

Clearly, evidence on long-term settlement will only become available after several years. A relevant time-frame to ascertain whether entrants to the scheme were likely to settle in the designated area might be a period of 4 or 5 years. This would be a lengthy time-frame for evaluating a pilot scheme. Fortunately, there are a number of interim indicators that would enable one to ascertain whether entrants intended to settle in a designated area; and whether there was evidence of integration into relevant social and economic systems. Relevant indicators might be patterns of entry and employment, and eventually on applications for ILR or citizenship (gathered through administrative data). Other indicators – such as housing, integration into education systems, or engagement with language classes or community groups – might be collected through a survey on those participating in the pilot scheme. Written or oral surveys could also gather data on migrants’ perceptions of integration and well-being, and their intention to stay. We propose that entrants to the pilot scheme enrol in a longitudinal survey, which gathers data on their residence, work, family status and other relevant indicators on an annual basis, over the first 5 years.

4

Integration and Settlement

Chapter 4 Integration and Settlement

All three schemes proposed in Chapter 3 would be enhanced by complementary initiatives to support and encourage integration and settlement in remote and rural areas. This approach was built into our third 'partnership' scheme; but the other two schemes would also benefit from putting in place measures to mobilise stakeholders and the wider community to support migrants and their families.

This chapter sets out some of the issues to consider in supporting and encouraging settlement and integration, and suggests how local communities can best engage in these processes.

4.1 Integration in remote and rural areas

Whatever the contours of migration policy developed for a RRMS, for it to be successful it is important to think more broadly about the wider social and cultural needs of migrant workers and what they will bring to local communities beyond simply filling gaps in the labour force, or contributing to stemming depopulation and demographic imbalances.²⁶ As new members of local communities, whether in the short or longer term, whether as lone migrant workers or accompanied by family members, migrants will impact more broadly on communities and will have support needs. The OSCE Local Authorities' Migrant Integration Guide states:

Successful migrant integration is key to maximizing the strength, vitality and innovation that migrant populations bring to local communities, thus benefitting society at large. ... Migrant integration policies and measures should not be limited to long-term migrants, but should also respond to the needs of those staying for short terms.²⁷

Like many existing guides and policy documents, the OSCE guidance draws mainly on experiences in cities and more populous urban areas, often with already ethnically diverse populations and a wide range of civic partners, including established migrant organisations, available. In remote and rural areas, numbers of migrants are likely to be relatively low (even in the context of a RRMS), and host communities may be relatively homogenous, with a limited variety of community spaces available and less obvious diversity within workforces, school communities, and so on. In such settings especially, attention needs to be paid to supporting opportunities for integration, assisting newcomers to make positive social contacts and ensuring that they have access to and knowledge of their rights and entitlements.

A recent report by Nordregio for the Nordic Welfare Centre focuses specifically on issues of everyday integration in smaller, rural and remote municipalities. This report points strongly to the importance of partnership working, albeit with a slightly different range of community partners. Local governments, employers, churches and religious organisations, volunteers and community groups can all contribute to successful integration in rural contexts, but their 'important role ... can be lost when no-one has the clear responsibility for coordinating it'.²⁸ It will therefore be important that the RRMS be developed alongside a clearly defined integration strategy. Ideally this will offer a framework, flexible enough to be adapted to the capacities and needs

of the designated areas and the groups of migrants who arrive to them, but laying out clearly the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and the resources available to them.

Government, at both national and local level, has an important role to play in facilitating and supporting a co-ordinated and appropriately resourced approach, avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring regular constructive evaluation is carried out. This has been recognised in Scotland through the development of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (2018-2022), much of which has been implemented in rural settings. Learning from and adapting this as a starting point for an integration strategy to accompany a rural migration scheme would seem a sensible approach. In developing and widening this strategy to include migrants arriving through the RRMS, thought should also be given to how it will dovetail with programmes and policies for rural development more broadly, including the replacement of European funds previously available through LEADER/CLLD. Thus, for example, if migration is to be part of a longer-term strategy to tackle demographic issues in remote rural areas, then policies to improve employment outcomes and opportunities for young people would need to take account of including young people and families from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds equally in this picture.

Successful integration requires both ensuring access to and knowledge of rights, opportunities and responsibilities and the development of a more subjective sense of welcome and subsequently belonging. As laid out in Ager and Strang's core domains which have already been used by the Scottish Government in developing the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (2018-2022), a cross-cutting approach is required to address migrants' needs across a range of policy areas including employment, housing, education and health and social care. This should be complemented by attention to social connections and facilitators of integration.²⁹

A first and crucial stage in this might involve a package of information and support both before and on arrival to ensure that potential migrants are well informed of the characteristics, opportunities and challenges offered by the area they are planning to move to. Detailed information about housing, schools, health and social services, welfare entitlements and leisure facilities could be made available to applicants as part of the selection process, ensuring a better fit, well-informed decisions, and a better prospect of retention. On arrival new residents often require additional support with orientation and assistance with the bureaucracy linked for example to registering children at school, opening bank accounts, understanding their responsibilities in relation to health insurance, driving licenses, car tax and insurance, and so on. As noted in section 2.3 above, a significant challenge in recruiting and retaining staff in remote and rural areas is finding suitable accommodation. This can be supported through, for example, employers offering good quality tied accommodation, access to social housing, or tailored schemes to assist and support matching with suitable private rentals.³⁰ The Orkney Gateway programme offers an example of an innovative solution in this regard. The local authority identifies empty homes to be offered as secure 12-18 month lets and matches these with new residents' needs and preferences, allowing them an initial period to get used

to Island life before making a longer term commitment through, for example, purchasing property. Community refurbishment and renovation schemes also assist the owners of empty properties to prepare them for rental and/or sale, thus helping to balance housing supply and demand on the Island.³¹

There is a need for joined up policy making between the RRMS and wider rural development policies to ensure the success of both. A study on migration to rural contexts in Northern Ireland has pointed out that potential gains from migration are limited or curtailed where there are inconsistencies, for example between equality and community development policies on the one hand and economic development strategies and policies on the other.³² More coherent policy-making might also include encouraging civic participation from new residents and fostering social connections between long-term residents and newer arrivals from the outset. This could, for example, involve encouraging and supporting the involvement of migrant populations in consultation processes on local policy issues and in community-based discussions and decision-making about local community development and planning.³³ It might also involve mentoring or befriending schemes as developed for example as part of the Nordland in-migration project in Norway, where experience showed that combatting social isolation and mutual concerns about 'cultural difference' were key to retaining migrants in rural areas.³⁴ A study of cases from Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Faroe Islands, USA and Canada produced similar findings about the need for well-resourced, holistic and flexible approaches to two-way integration.

Similarly, thought should be given in advance to how local authorities, service providers and other institutions will be resourced to provide support for an increased migrant population. This would help to avoid a repetition of problems experienced following EU enlargement in many parts of the UK, and perhaps especially so in more rural contexts with less existing experience of managing and supporting diverse populations, namely that, 'institutions were unable to cope with the pressures that were being placed on them due to a lack of anticipation'.³⁵ Dedicated staff and training programmes for other front-line staff will be needed. As such, local authorities themselves may become employers of more international staff:

Local governments may also promote the employment of migrants in the local public sector by introducing internship schemes and employment opportunities for migrants at town halls and local public institutions, and by advertising these positions as 'migrant friendly' through migrant organizations and media.³⁶

4.2 Employment and employers

The existing literature on employment and integration is often focused on preventing exploitation and discrimination in the workplace and supporting migrants' fair access to the labour market.³⁷ This is clearly important; however, depending on the way in which a pilot scheme is developed, different priorities might come to the fore. If an employer-led or partnership scheme is envisaged whereby migrants are coming to already specified jobs, then less work may be needed on supporting employability in general and protecting migrants from precarious and informal forms of employment.

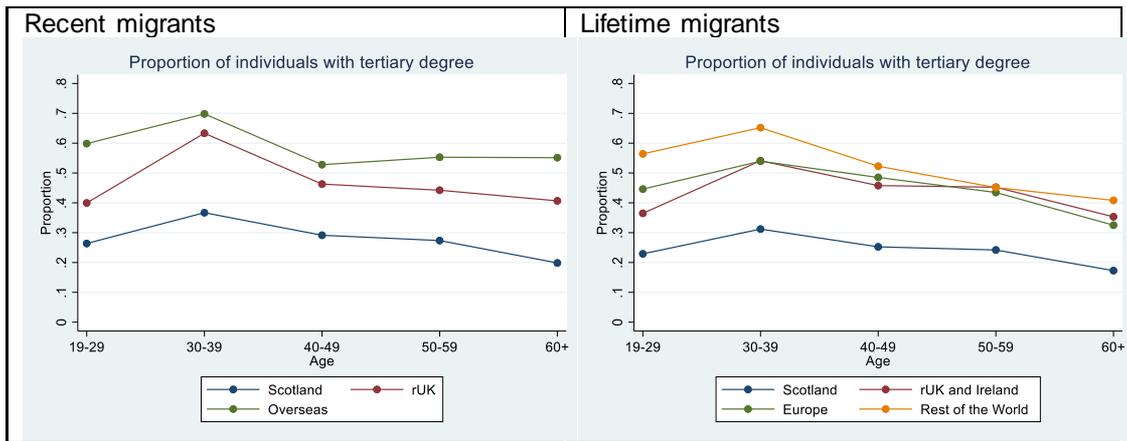
However, there could be a need to work with employers in advance to ensure good practices and support for new workers, including support for initial orientation, training and career progression. As noted in Chapter 3, care will need to be taken that migrant workers are not tied to a single employer or job over a protracted period in a way that might encourage exploitation or at least work against the better integration outcomes produced when individuals are able to progress their careers successfully. On the other hand if a Scottish Visa scheme is taken as the basis for the RRMS and migrants arrive without a specific job offer, then more attention would need to be given to employability and support through a period of job search.

Since all of the proposed RRMS schemes are designed to allow and encourage migrant workers to bring family members with them, with an aim to encourage longer-term settlement of families, it will be important also to think about measures to support pathways into employment for spouses/partners and children leaving education. A recent study by SRUC of rural repopulation initiatives in Scotland and internationally found that programmes encouraging and facilitating in-migration need also to focus resource and effort on longer-term factors affecting migrant families if they are to settle successfully: 'wider factors are of major importance in ensuring sufficient opportunities exist for in-migrants, particularly in relation to economic growth and employment creation and the availability of affordable housing for young families'.³⁸

This might require, for example, the development of opportunities for volunteering and internships, advice to employers on recognition of international qualifications and prior experience, and either immediate right to work or a clear pathway from spousal or dependent visas for adult family members and children leaving education. Initiatives under the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy which have promoted volunteering as well as creative approaches to language learning and employability for new arrivals to rural areas of Scotland through the Syrian Resettlement Programme would again be worth considering as a starting point for new, adapted, initiatives.³⁹ As noted above, these should be developed alongside and in conjunction with wider schemes for rural development and population retention.

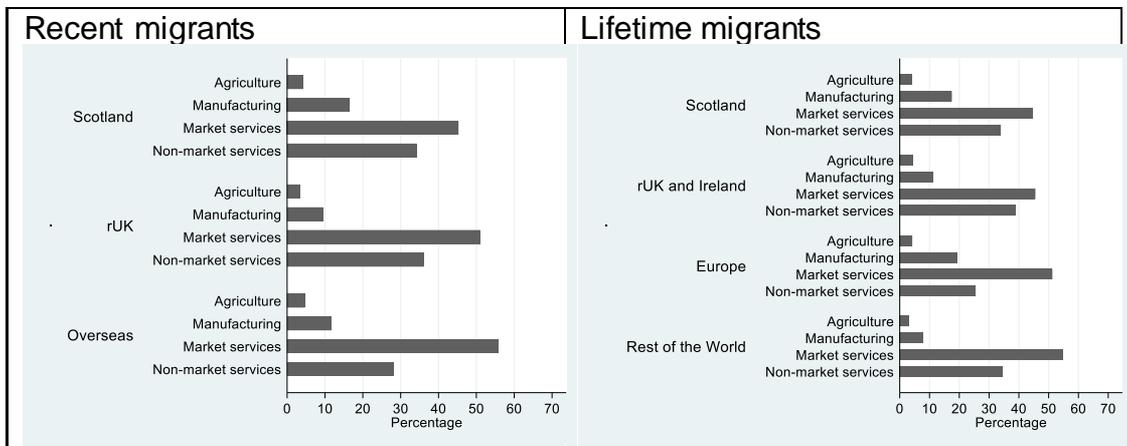
One area that may need particularly careful consideration is in relation to under-employment and the longer-term career prospects of migrants with relatively high human capital. Analysis carried out by the EAG drawing on the 2011 census data confirms that existing migrants in rural areas of Scotland are well-educated (more likely to hold a university degree than Scottish born residents, as per Figure 4.1). But they are also most likely to be employed in manufacturing, agriculture, hospitality and tourism and least likely to be employed in white collar work or the public service sector (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1: Proportion of individuals with a degree by migrant status, 2011



Source: The 2011 census microdata (a five-percent sample)
 Notes: ‘Recent migrants’ are individuals who arrived in Scotland between April 2010 and April 2011. ‘Lifetime migrants’ were born outside Scotland. The following groups are distinguished: non-migrants in Scotland, migrants from the rest of the UK and from overseas for recent migrants; the Scottish-born population (83%), migrants from the rest of the UK and Ireland (10%), from continental Europe (2.8%) and from the rest of the world (3.7%) for lifetime migrants. For the sake of simplicity confidence intervals are omitted.

Figure 4.2 Migrants and non-migrants in Scotland by sector, 2011



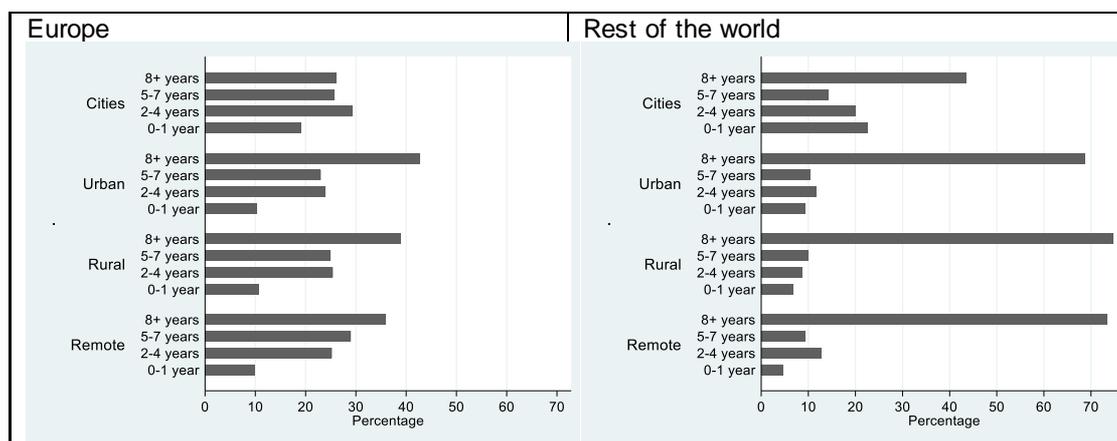
Source: The 2011 census microdata (a five-percent sample).
 Notes: $X^2 = 156.1$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.01$; $X^2 = 1100.0$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.01$.

Whilst lower level vacancies in these sectors may be a desirable part of an RRMS, our analysis has also highlighted shortages in higher-level roles, for example senior managerial and operational posts in tourism and food and drink manufacturing as well as in health and social care sectors. Matching applicants through an RRMS as closely as possible with jobs which are either commensurate with or have the prospect of promotion to roles commensurate with their levels of education and skill is particularly important where successful longer-term settlement and integration is a desired outcome.

The partnership scheme set out in Chapter 3 envisages a proactive role for employers as partners and stakeholders supporting integration. Such an approach would also be crucial for the other two schemes. Previous research with migrants from central and eastern European countries who entered after EU enlargement and were employed in agriculture, care work, retail and hospitality in rural Scotland, found that having a ‘good’ employer made a huge difference to migrant experiences.⁴⁰ Migrants were most positive where they had an employer who was supportive and knowledgeable about the bureaucratic processes migrant workers face, their needs for assistance in securing reasonable accommodation and signposting in relation to local services, facilities and sources of further information, and understanding of their need to maintain transnational ties, for example through flexible leave arrangements to allow for trips ‘back home’.⁴¹

EAG analysis shows that significant numbers of migrants have been living and working in rural areas of Scotland for prolonged periods (Figure 4.3) and many have been clustered in particular sectors (Figure 4.2 above), often with particular employers, so there is the potential for learning from and sharing of existing best practice and positive experiences. Local authorities might, for example, work with employers and migrants as well as drawing in more detail on existing research, such as COSLA’s Migration Matters Scotland database, to develop information and training packs for employers prior to the arrival of new migrant workers. Examples of best practice could usefully be shared across designated areas, perhaps with co-ordination from COSLA. The Scottish Government could develop a system to recognise and incentivise excellence, modelled for example on the living wage employer mark.

Figure 4.3: Lifetime migrants from Europe and the rest of the world in Scotland by time since arrival in the UK and place of residence, 2011



Source: The 2011 census microdata (a five-percent sample).

Notes: $X^2 = 214.6$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.01$; $X^2 = 703.4$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.01$.

4.3 Language learning and ESOL provision.

Acquisition and proficiency in the host language is widely seen as playing a key role in migrant integration, and in generating improved and fuller experiences of life in a new context for migrants (Cooke and Simpson 2009). Increased proficiency in the host language has been shown to be a key means by which migrants achieve greater equality through improved opportunities for employment, education and participation in public life (Zhou 1997; Ager and Strang 2008). It is also crucial to facilitating social contacts and exchanges and the possibility of establishing networks and friendships beyond a co-linguistic community. Existing research with recent migrants to rural areas of Scotland has shown that many have struggled to access sufficient support for their language learning needs and have experienced considerable social isolation, a lack of opportunities for progression in employment, and difficulties accessing their rights as a result.⁴² Even were a pilot scheme to assume that applicants would be required to have a certain level of language ability prior to entry, for example as part of a points-based scheme, migrants may still need assistance and support to adapt their language skills to understand and communicate in local accents, including elements of Scots dialects, and/or to operate in contexts which may include communities of Gaelic speakers. Furthermore, any points-based requirement would only apply to the lead applicant, and family members would likely still require language learning support for their successful integration into education and employment as well as social settings.

Therefore, whatever the precise parameters of the RRMS, thought and planning must be given to provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The recent history of migration to rural areas of Scotland has driven an increase in demand for and provision of ESOL across Scotland, including a reasonable network of ESOL classes and providers in rural, and even some remote rural areas. The ring-fencing of ESOL budgets in Scotland since 2012 has protected this provision from some of the more severe cuts seen in other parts of the UK, but nonetheless funding has fallen in real terms and the impacts of changing governance and funding streams since 2019 is not yet known.

Existing research with EU migrants in rural areas has highlighted the importance of language learning, but also a range of difficulties in accessing classes, even where provision may look generous at first glance.⁴³ The timing and location of classes has been an important element of this, and provision linked to an RRMS should give careful consideration to local geographies – distances to learning centres, access to public transport – as well as to working patterns and other commitments (for example caring roles within migrant families).

Alongside formal ESOL provision, rural areas of Scotland have also seen a variety of community-based and creative language learning initiatives in recent years. These have been instigated both through projects aimed at linking migrant learners and native speakers through community development and integration initiatives⁴⁴ and through the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy⁴⁵ and there has in practice been some overlap, or at least shared learning and practice, between the two strands.

These community-based approaches have deliberately combined language learning with activities to facilitate knowledge of local structures, introductions to the area (through trips and excursions), forging connections through the involvement of volunteers and native speakers, and buddying and befriending schemes. Whilst not a replacement for more formal language classes, such initiatives can be an excellent complement, helping to facilitate a sense of two-way integration as volunteers, buddies and befrienders also learn about and from the language learners. This rich recent experience within Scotland's rural areas would provide a valuable resource for the development of language learning schemes to support the RRMS in designated areas.⁴⁶

4.4 Supporting long-term settlement and two-way integration

A prominent critique of integration as a concept guiding policy has been that it is often used in a way that effectively externalises migrants, making them the objects of policy making and requiring them to assimilate into what is assumed as a homogenous and unproblematic social milieu.⁴⁷ Since the underlying rationale for the RRMS is a recognition of the problems faced by populations in remote rural areas, it seems all the more pertinent to insist on an approach to integration as a two-way process of mutual learning and coming together to solve problems that are faced by all residents. The Nordland in-migration project offers one good example of how this might be approached through mentoring and befriending programmes. The project found that 'local-level initiatives which link in-migrants and Norwegians in meaningful ways are critical for long term retention of in-migrants in rural areas'.⁴⁸ Such person-to-person linkages, especially if well supported through training and facilitation can significantly contribute to two-way processes of learning and cultural exchange.

Successful two-way integration goes beyond interpersonal contacts and friendships however. From a policy-making perspective, such an approach demands that migrants are from the moment of arrival viewed as part of existing communities and their needs and perspectives must be taken account of as a dimension of equality and diversity in resolving social issues locally. As noted above, this would imply that where policies are being developed for example to deal with housing issues for young families, tackling issues of connectivity and transport, combatting poverty and providing support to low wage earners, encouraging civic engagement or increasing the availability of accessible community spaces, and combatting social isolation, specific thought should be given to including migrants needs and perspectives, not as a separate group but as part of the local population. Such an approach is also helpful in recognising, a priori, that many of the more negative experiences and barriers or disincentives to settlement faced by migrants, are also problems for the wider local population. Tackling them in a more holistic way can help to prevent negative perceptions of 'favouritism' and competition for resources between groups. To be successful this requires the targets of integration policies and initiatives and their expected outcomes to be clear and addressed not only to migrants but also to front-line staff, employers and host communities.

The RRMS provides an opportunity to plan in advance how this might best be achieved and to monitor its effectiveness with a relatively limited number of migrants in a relatively small number of designated areas.

Such forward planning should also pay attention to preparing public opinion, laying the foundations for positive community relations and countering a negative politicisation of migration, which may have had slightly less traction in Scotland than other parts of the UK, but has without doubt contributed to negative perceptions and fears of migration in Scotland also. The OSCE guide for local authorities warns that community relations are much harder to mend after conflicts have set in, and calls for 'close co-operation with local media to ensure that the public receives clear information about migration and the steps taken ... to ensure appropriate public services and public order, as well as to build a positive image of newcomers and create a welcoming climate for them'.⁴⁹ In Scotland's recent experience of preparing communities for the arrival of individuals and families under the Syrian Resettlement Programme this aspect of informing local people in advance and preparing the ground for a positive experience was given considerable attention.

In the context of an RRMS similar work would need to be done in advance, so that host communities were aware of the specific issues the RRMS seeks to mitigate in their area, and the benefits and advantages the programme might bring in both the more immediate and longer term. Recent research by British Future into attitudes to and fears regarding migration across the UK found that demographic arguments for migration were particularly poorly understood or acknowledged by the general population.⁵⁰ This underpinning rationale and the focus on strategic mitigation rather than population replacement within the RRMS should therefore be well communicated and discussed, undergirded with clear and relatable locally-grounded examples (e.g. local services under threat of closure due to lack of people), prior to its implementation.

That family migration and longer-term settlement are a specific goal of the RRMS is likely to be helpful in this respect. Studies of migration to rural areas in many parts of Europe have found that opportunities for family migration and migrants' perceptions of the prospects for their children in a new setting are crucial to decision-making about longer term stays. Importantly, it is also noted that such longer-term migration and the lasting, and beneficial, social change it brings may be more palatable to other residents than the constant churn of more temporary schemes. A study of labour migration to rural Greece found that:

Locals show greater acceptance of migrants living permanently in one region together with their families, as opposed to seasonal and irregular labourers travelling without families... Migrants and the local populations have overlapping opinions about the prospects for integration. Both groups believe that the prospects for integration are much better for migrants who live legally with their families in the countryside.⁵¹

Studies of international migration have found that family migration and particularly the presence of children can help to promote integration because children engage more in the local milieu than their parents,⁵² through school attendance, after school activities, friendship circles and so on. However, children of migrant families also need support, and this requires input from, but also resources and information for, schools and social and leisure organisations (for example sports clubs, or scouts/guides). Children may need additional language support and help adapting to the national curriculum at school as well as forging friendships and connections. Children also bring benefits to the school community, especially when integration is viewed as a

two-way process of learning and adaptation, where locally-born children benefit considerably from the different experiences, language skills, insights and cultural perspectives of international peers.⁵³

Whilst we acknowledge that local authorities will likely have limited resources available to support a pilot scheme in designated areas, the RRMS also offers a potentially unique opportunity to develop a holistic approach to migration, adapted to the needs and resources available within specific areas, thinking about migrants' needs and experiences as a key aspect of developing a successful approach. Of the three approaches suggested, a partnership scheme would have specific advantages in this respect, especially if partners, including local community groups and representatives are involved from the outset in thinking about ways to make available locally specific 'cultural, historical and civic knowledge to help migrants adapt to their host society',⁵⁴ and to develop flexible approaches to facilitate the forging of local connections and two-way processes of learning.

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