

The 21 September meeting of the needs and redistribution technical working group focussed on four main topics.

There were good discussions following the presentation of a paper from the County Councils Network and the Rural Services Network on the topic of **the additional service costs associated with rurality** , and a paper from SIGOMA and the Core Cities on **population concentration**. The discussion focussed on the evidence base for density and journey times to account for factors affecting the cost of provision of services. MHCLG will continue exploring this through statistical analysis ahead of the autumn consultation.

The group received a paper from Paul Woods on the costs of **concessionary travel** and the potential of a specific formula for this area within the relative needs assessment. The Government will consider this carefully ahead of the consultation.

Finally, the group received a paper from MHCLG on the potential to use **population projections** in the relative needs formulas wherever possible, to make the assessment more future-proof. This mirrors a policy suggestion from the LGA. Following a good discussion, on balance members of the group were in favour of the use of population projections. MHCLG will reflect on the conversation when drafting the consultation paper.

This was the last meeting of the Group in 2018, with MHCLG officials now focussing on publishing the consultation and then delivering the local government finance settlement.

Once the consultation is published, officers are planning to coordinate another set of MHCLG/LGA regional consultation events. Due to the timing of the consultation and the local government finance settlement, it might be the case that there are fewer but larger events organised than the previous model of 6 smaller events.

When the technical working group reconvenes in 2019, items for consideration are likely to include:

- A review of the responses to the consultation, including considerations behind the choice of notional council tax level in the resources adjustment; and
- A more detailed consideration of various options on transition mechanisms.

In the meantime, it is proposed that any emerging matters are covered by the members of the group electronically. For example, the Association of Directors of Public Health are considering providing a paper on a relative needs formula for public health services. Members could receive and review the paper electronically instead of convening a meeting.