

2. Darlington: The Place

2.1 Urban/rural classification

Darlington is situated in the North East of England and forms part of the Tees Valley sub-region which as a whole comprises five unitary authorities and has a population of around 650,000 people. Darlington borough is a compact area of some 76.2 square miles, comprising the town of Darlington and a number of surrounding villages. The borough has a population of around 100,500 people living in 46,000 households (Office for National Statistics 2009).

The borough retains its market town character and functions as a sub regional centre for employment, shopping and culture. The town has a wide catchment area of up to 20 miles from the town centre and attracts people from neighbouring North Yorkshire and South Durham.

Geography affects health. The imagined “rural idyll” can in reality mean expensive housing, fewer jobs and training opportunities, and poor access to a range of services from schools and shops to pharmacies and hospitals. In urban areas other issues such as air pollution, poor housing, and road traffic accidents are more common.

There are many different ways of classifying rural/urban areas but this report uses work from the Rural and Urban Definitions Project, sponsored by the Office for National Statistics, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Countryside Agency and the National Assembly for Wales. Two types of classification were produced. The first classifies small areas on the basis of the settlement form (urban and fringe, small town, village, hamlet and dispersed dwellings) and the second on whether the area is included in the 5% most sparsely populated areas of England. The second classification provides categorically grouped summaries for larger areas, such as local authority districts. In addition to the population density and settlement form, this classification also considers the extent to which small towns serve a rural hinterland. Table 2.1a describes the urban-rural geography of Darlington, the North East and England.

Details of the classifications can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm>

Table: 2.1 Urban-rural geographies**

Area	Darlington	North East	England
Total Population	97712	2514681	49142130
Major Urban Population	0	879415	15999121
Large Urban Population	0	365422	6741824
Other Urban Population	85917	513097	13175513
Total Urban Population (excluding Large Market Town population)	85917	1757934	35916458
Large Market Town Population	0	280549	3716896
Rural Town Population	5381	312651	4449015
Rural Town Population (including Large Market Town population)	5381	593200	8165911
Village Population	4825	105963	3533650
Dispersed Population	1589	57584	1526111
Total Rural Population (including Large Market Town population)	11795	756747	13225672
Rural% (including Large Market Town population)	12.07%	30.09%	26.91%

Source: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, April 2009 (with data from the 2001 Census)

2.2 Access to services

Access is a key issue in relation to health and social care and in its broadest sense would cover physical access, communication problems, social and cultural barriers, and psychological issues.

Almost 90% of the population lives in the urban area, however there are 10% who live in rural areas. Accessibility to primary health care is a target in the second Local Transport Plan and currently 94% of the population of Darlington are within a 15 minute bus journey of a GP surgery (including the Walk in Centre), 2% are more than 4km from a supermarket. The Social Exclusion Unit report, *Making the Connections: Report on Transport and Social Exclusion* identified several barriers to accessibility, including:

- Long travel times
- Remote location of facilities and services
- Poor quality and level of public transport services
- Limited travel horizons (not having enough confidence to travel)
- Lack of physical accessibility
- Affordability

An integrated area-based approach to the planning and delivery of services is being developed across Darlington. This is being facilitated by the sharing of data between partners, helping to identify particular areas of need and informing decisions about

the use of any additional resources. The Refreshed Darlington Children's Trust Locality Profiles, available from Darlington Borough Council, www.darlington.gov.uk, aims to improve access to services through integrated care teams.

2.3 Access to transport

Transport has major health and social impacts through levels of physical activity undertaken, social networks, accidents, effects on air pollution and access to services. As noted in "*Making the case: improving health through transport*" (published by the Health development Agency in 2005, http://www.healthandtransportgroup.co.uk/articles/makingcase_health_transport.pdf transport can also have a significant impact upon health inequalities both directly (e.g. children from the most deprived social class are five times more likely to die as pedestrians than children in the least deprived social class, and exposure to air pollution is more common in the most deprived areas) and indirectly (e.g. through the influence of planning decisions to accommodate car access).

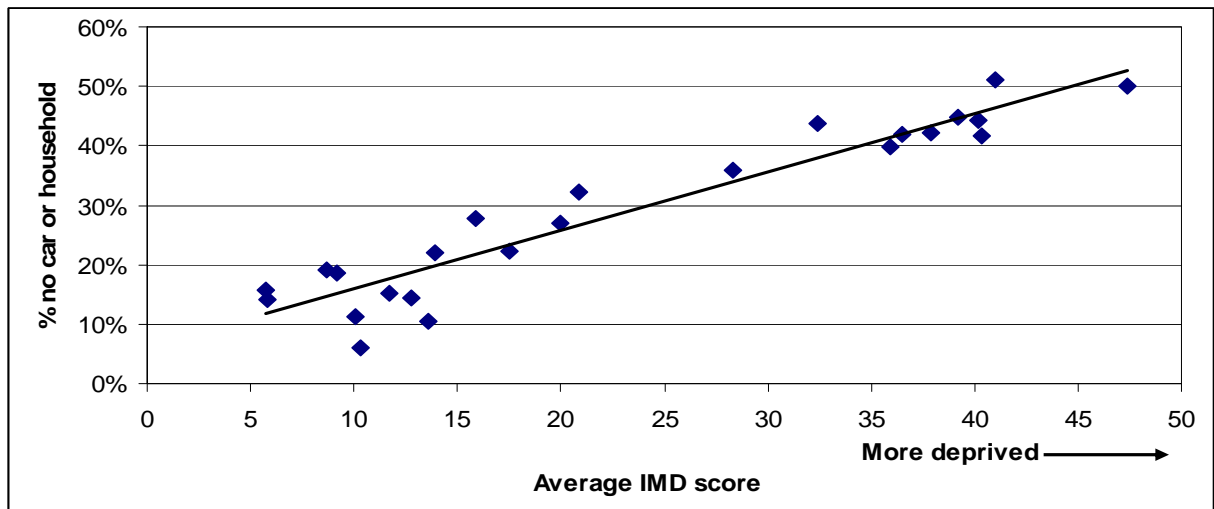
Darlington was one of three UK locations chosen by the government to promote sustainable transport through its Local Motion scheme. The programme has been producing positive outcomes that buck national trends, for example:

- single occupancy car trips have been reduced by 9%
- cycling has increased by 65%
- walking has increased by 15%
- the use of public transport has increased by 2%.

The condition of roads in Darlington has significantly improved and we are on track to meet or surpass statutory targets for road casualty reduction.

At 31%, Darlington has more households without access to a car than the national average (27%) and people in these households will find it more difficult to travel to shops, employment, healthcare and social services. Figure 2.1a below shows that people in the more deprived parts of Darlington are significantly more likely to live in households with no car or van.

Figure 2.1a: Comparison of car ownership and level of deprivation across Darlington by level of deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivation – IMD score)



Key messages:

- Darlington Borough comprises the town of Darlington and a number of surrounding villages
- 88% of the population live in the urban neighbourhoods, and 12% live in rural areas
- Nearly a third (31%) of Darlington households have no car or van, and this is much more common in deprived areas
- As a result of Local Motion, there has been a substantial increase in cycling and walking

Local agencies should ensure that accessibility to services is an early consideration before decisions are made on the location of key services.