



How can Herefordshire retain 18-35 year olds in the County and attract them to it?

March 2007

**For presentation to the Community
Services Scrutiny Committee**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Review was to establish the reasons why 18 to 35 year olds leave the County. The common perception was that people from within this age range were moving outside the County or, if already living outside, did not consider Herefordshire a viable location to live.
- 1.2 In addition the Review would consider what measures the Council could put in place to retain 18 to 35 year olds within the County, or attract them to it. The Review also considered what role the Council's partner organisations, and the County as a whole could take to assist in the achievement of the above aim.
- 1.3 The Review's aim was to propose a range of options for Cabinet to consider that would retain or attract 18 to 35 year olds to the County.
- 1.4 A scoping statement for the Review, including Terms of Reference, was approved by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 13th June 2005. It was agreed that all Members of the Committee would form the Review Group. A copy of the Review Groups scoping statement is attached at Annex 1.
- 1.5 The Review was undertaken between August 2005 and June 2006. This report summarises the key findings of the Review, details to the processes followed, and contains a number of recommendations.
- 1.6 The report would focus on a number of themes deemed most likely to affect the retention and attraction of people aged between 18 and 35. The main themes were – Employment; Housing; Leisure; Education and Skills; Transport; and Image. Initially it was decided to concentrate efforts on the first three of these themes.

2. Method of Gathering Information

i. Statistical Data

2.1 The Review Group commenced the Review with a brief overview of the statistical data pertinent to the age range and focus of the Review. This was enhanced at the following meeting with a more detailed explanation of the current statistical information and population trends, this document can be viewed at Annex 2. Much of the statistical information was provided by the Herefordshire Council Research Team, using a variety of sources, but primarily demonstrated through their reports on "Herefordshire's Population Trends" published in July 2005, and the West Midlands Regional Lifestyle Survey undertaken by the West Midlands Regional Observatory in 2005.

2.2 Additionally the Review Group were able to obtain statistical information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency which provided specific information with regard to the locations of Universities attended by Herefordshire students and where they chose to work after finishing their degree courses.

ii. Focus Groups

2.3 To obtain an indication of the reasons behind the apparent outward migration of young people from the County the Review Group felt it important to canvass the views and opinions of people from within the 18 to 35 year old age range. All Herefordshire Council employees within the age range were invited to join a series of focus group meetings aimed at obtaining direct evidence on their opinions on the Reviews themes. From this invitation a Focus Group comprising of 16 staff members was formed and fed their views into the process.

2.4 Additionally the Review Group called a meeting of several employers of varying sizes, education providers, and business support agencies to gain evidence relating to the Employment theme of the Review.

ii. Written evidence

2.4 Written comments and views on The Attraction and Retention of 18 to 35 Year Olds were invited from members of the public at the beginning of the Review via articles in the local press and interviews, and news items on BBC Hereford & Worcester radio.

3. The Statistical Position

i. General Population figures

3.1 Population figures were analysed from a variety of sources including the West Midlands Regional Observatory, and the Herefordshire Council Research Department. Census and survey data gave absolute figures that could be used to represent a particular point in time. Combining these figures with an analysis of population trends could produce forecasted predictions on future population trends and figures.

3.2 In 2004 the estimated population of Herefordshire was 177,800. Although between 1991 and 2001 Herefordshire's population had grown faster than the national average, this growth in population was due to inward migration rather than an increase in births in comparison to deaths.

3.3 Herefordshire is currently underrepresented in the 15 –24 age range and over represented in the 50+ age ranges. The population figures show that 15 – 24 year olds represented only 10% of the County's population compared with 13% of the population of England and Wales as a whole.

3.4 Taking into account current migration trends and applying them to future forecasts, the 15 to 24 age range was set to increase by 13% by 2011, 17,800 people in 2003, to 20,000 people in 2011. Even with this increase, the County would still be underrepresented in this age range when compared with the average for England and Wales. In 2011, 20,000 people would represent 11% of the County's population, compared with 12.9% of the population for England and Wales.

3.4 Using NHS re-registration data it was possible to demonstrate that in the 15 to 24 age range Herefordshire showed a net loss of people – approximately 450

people. This represents 3% of the population within that particular age range in the County.

3.5 Using the same data it was demonstrated that all the other age ranges showed a net gain of people into the County. The largest net inflows were in the 35–39 and 55–59 age ranges, where the County had a net gain of approximately 200 people in each age range. In addition these inward migration figures did not take into account people who had moved into the County from outside England and Wales.

3.6 In July 2005 the Herefordshire Council's research team produced a report detailing Herefordshire's population trends. The report concluded that:

- Herefordshire had an older age structure than England and Wales as a whole.
- Negative natural increase (i.e. there are less births than deaths) means that population growth is entirely fuelled by net in-migration, and that the largest proportion of these immigrants come from London and the South East.
- Despite popular opinion, not all immigrants were retired, the annual net increase of people over 65 being approximately 200.

ii. Comparison Authorities

3.7 The net loss of young people from the County was not a problem that was unique to Herefordshire. For example Rutland, Malvern Hills, West Dorset, and Kennet District council's all experienced a higher percentage of outward migration from within the 15 to 24 year old age range than Herefordshire.

3.8 In comparison, Local Authorities whose young person population increased included Westminster, Wandsworth, Hammersmith, Fulham and Islington, all inner London Boroughs, and Nottingham from outside London.

3.9 From the data available, it is obvious to conclude that rural Authorities are losing young people, whereas the larger cities experienced a net gain. Rather tellingly census data records people at University as resident in their location of study rather than at, for example, their parents address.

iii. Information from HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency)

It was suggested to the Review Group that one reason why young people left the County was to study at a higher education institute.

3.10 HESA supplied information regarding the chosen University of those Herefordshire residents entering Higher Education. In addition further interrogation of the information demonstrates how many of these students returned to Herefordshire when in employment.

3.11 This information can be viewed in Annex 3 (tables 1 through to 3) demonstrating the most popular destinations for Herefordshire based students and how many of them returned to work in the County.

3.12 It is apparent that the vast majority of the most popular University destinations are within cities and towns that could be deemed to be located

close to Hereford, with Worcester, Cardiff and Gloucester being in the top 3 most popular locations in at least 2 of the 3 years.

- 3.13 Within the top ten results in all tables, only Exeter (in 2003/04) is outside of a 2-hour car journey from Hereford, and the majority of these most popular destinations, across all three years, are within an hour to an hour and a half journey time by car.
- 3.14 It is also evident that a higher percentage of people from the smaller cities return to work in the County. For example in 2004/05, Worcester (61%), Newport (67%) and Gloucester (43%) had high levels of people returning to work, while Cardiff (14%), Bristol (17%) and Birmingham (36%) saw relatively low levels of people returning to the County.
- 3.15 Over time the amount of people returning from University to work in the County has increased. In 2002/03 240 of 853 (or 28%) people returned, by 2003/04 this figure had increased to 260 of 900 (29%), and had further increased in 2004/05 to 296 of 926 (or 32%).

v. Economic Data

- 3.17 The 2001 Census showed that Herefordshire had a lower percentage than the national average of people with degree level qualifications and people in higher-level occupations. In addition there is a shortage of skilled and semi skilled workers.
- 3.18 A separate survey of employers showed that 31% of employers felt that there was a significant gap between school leaver's qualifications and the qualifications that were required for work.
- 3.19 A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that Herefordshire was one of the least affordable areas in the Country for first time buyers.
- 3.20 This study had shown that in the West Midlands on average 3.8 times the average income was required by a first time buyer to buy a home. In Herefordshire this figure was 4.8 times the average income, and again, in London the figure was 4.7, although here the average wage was much higher.

4 The Factors Influencing the Figures

- 4.1 It is apparent from the statistics that Herefordshire has a problem retaining its young people within the County. Large numbers of them move away to University and fail to return, with large cities proving to be the most popular destinations.
- 4.2 Although the statistics identify the scale of the problem they do not identify the reasons behind the problem. The Review Group undertook a number of focus groups to identify the issues behind the migration out of the County and to determine whether there was one single factor, or a collaboration of factors responsible.

4.3 In addition to the focus groups the Review Group used a Survey conducted by the West Midlands Regional Observatory, which was produced during the lifetime of the Review, as further evidence as to the reasons for the outward migration. This report, the Regional Lifestyle Survey 2005 (RLS 2005), was undertaken to explore the attitudes of adult residents (18 years old and over) towards lifestyle, environmental and wider quality of life issues.

4.4 The first question asked in the survey was ‘**When making a decision about where to live, which three things are most important to you?**’. An analysis of this report was conducted by the Herefordshire Council Research Team and included an analysis of the responses to this question from young people (18 to 34 year olds) in Herefordshire compared with the responses across the region and for all ages.

4.5 Please see Annex 4 for a copy of this report, the main findings appropriate to this Review are summarised below.

4.6 Respondents to the survey were asked to choose 3 factors (from a list of options), which were the most important to them when making a decision about where to live. Table 1 shows the ‘top 10’ options for Herefordshire among those aged 18 to 34.

Table 1 – Responses from the 18 – 34 year old age group in Herefordshire.

Most important things when deciding where to live	Percentage	Rank
A safe area with low crime	37.9%	1
Close to family or friends	31.9%	2
Close to where you work	29.0%	3
Affordable housing	27.8%	4
A quiet area	21.5%	5
Good local schools	20.2%	6
A nice, clean environment	19.9%	7
Accessible to the countryside	17.4%	8
Knowing the area	16.1%	9
The right type of housing	12.6%	10

4.7 The main points from this research can be summarised below:

- A safe area with low crime and proximity to family and friends is the most common factor in the county and the region for 18 to 34 year olds
- A significantly greater proportion of 18 to 34 year olds respondents from Herefordshire consider a quiet area and accessibility to the countryside to be amongst the most important aspects when deciding where to live compared to regionally for this age group.

- However proximity to place of work was the 3rd most common response for Herefordshire's 18 to 34 year olds (29%), higher than the proportion from this age group in the region (21%, 6th most common response).
- Affordable housing was important for this age group in Herefordshire and the region, with a higher proportion of 18 to 34 year olds choosing this in Herefordshire (28% compared to 22% in the region).
- Good public transport links was one of the most common 10 factors for those in the region as a whole (14% of respondents) but ranked 12th for those from this age group in Herefordshire (8%).

Responses from Focus Groups.

4.8 The Review considered a number of themes that might be important factors in a young persons decision whether to remain in, or relocate to Herefordshire. In particular it was the view of the people participating in the Focus Group that the themes concentrating on Employment, Education and Skills, Housing, and Leisure should be given most consideration.

4.9 The following paragraphs give an indication of the main points brought out from discussions held within the Focus Groups. The responses are grouped loosely into the different themes determined at the beginning of the Review.

4.10 Employment

4.11 Evidence gained from employers stated that they had employees who had left for better paid jobs elsewhere once they were more experienced. One public sector organisation stated that they had no trouble recruiting trainees, the problem was retaining them.

4.12 This evidence from employers was backed up with evidence from the Staff Focus Group. Comments from members ranged from stating that they intended to 'move out of the County due to low wages and lack of career progression'; through to that 'it was difficult to gain a similar salary to that which they could earn elsewhere'. The responses were wholly negative towards local salaries.

4.13 One public sector organisation felt that organisations and businesses needed to offer progression to young people to prevent them moving away to progress themselves once they had received training. Another organisation was of the opinion that graduate employment would need to be developed in order to retain those people who did actually study within the County.

4.14 From an employee's perspective, one member of the Staff Focus Group mentioned that they had never seen an advert for a Graduate Placement post for a local firm. Although perhaps a generalisation the other members of the Group recognised that graduate placements within Herefordshire were very rare positions.

4.15 The issue of training, both vocational and academic, was pertinent to both employers and young people. The employers recognised that a higher skilled workforce would help to encourage other employers into the County. It was commented that large local employers needed to work with local

training providers so that courses reflected the needs of the local employment market.

- 4.16 Herefordshire is lacking in 'knowledge industries' such as allpay.net. The current employment pool in Herefordshire is considered too small by major employers to consider locating to the County. Combined with poor road infrastructure and a shortage of people with NVQ's at higher levels, Herefordshire is an unattractive location option for firms looking to relocate.
- 4.17 Evidence from both employers and employees indicated that people were prepared to move out of the County in search of better-paid employment once qualifications had been gained, or training courses completed.
- 4.18 Although there is a need for an enhanced training provision, there is currently much good training work being done within the County by organisations such as Herefordshire Group Training Association, much of which is being directed towards addressing the current problems in the manufacturing sector.

4.19 Housing

- 4.20 The Review Group looked at the various elements of the housing sector that would impact on young people. This included both the affordability of buying houses and the availability and quality of the rental market.
- 4.21 It is generally accepted that individually young people find it virtually impossible to buy a house within the County, even those properties at the bottom level of the housing market. At the time of the Review the average house price in Herefordshire was £196,000, this was a higher average than Shropshire or Worcestershire. Against this figure, income levels in the County were 20% below the regional average.
- 4.22 House prices are relatively cheaper than some other areas of the Country, especially the South East, this may explain why the proportion of inward migration was so high from this region, 65% from London and the South East. Despite the relative cheapness of Herefordshire's housing compared to other areas, Herefordshire does lack affordable low cost housing.
- 4.23 Young people in Herefordshire are making a conscious decision to rent rather than buy houses due to affordability issues. Mortgage costs when compared to renting costs were considered prohibitively expensive.

4.24 Leisure

- 4.25 The general opinion of people between 18 and 35 who were interviewed as part of the Review was that the County's Leisure facilities were of mixed standards. They also linked leisure provision with how the County was promoted and it's image to those within the 18 to 35-age range.

i. Sports and Recreation

- 4.26 Sports facilities within the Country were not considered to be very good. Training facilities, depending on the type of sport, might not be available within the County.

4.27 Herefordshire has an outdoor image, and this has been promoted extensively through certain mediums, Herefordshire's Walking Festival for example, however it was young people's opinion that no outdoor culture actually existed.

ii. Music and the Night-time Economy

4.28 It was considered by the people interviewed that the County needed additional live music venues. It was noted that various pubs did often host "live" acts but this prevented people under 18 attending. Hereford Leisure Centre had hosted nationally renowned "live" bands in the past and there was a general agreement that the recommencement of this capability would be widely appreciated by young people.

4.29 It is considered that Hereford has a limited offer, in terms of nighttime entertainment, with much of the offer being traditional pubs and clubs. This contributed to a lack of variety in the type of places people could go out to with a comparatively low level of contemporary bars, restaurants, and clubs.

4.30 Most people in the 18 to 35 year old age range travelled to other Cities such as Birmingham and Cardiff for a night out, often just to experience a 'different' night out.

4.31 Whilst young people wanted more choice in terms of leisure and entertainment facilities, it was widely acknowledged that this would not necessarily constitute large-scale changes. Those interviewed realised that changes to the nature of the City Centre would be unacceptable to many, and indeed were not necessary. A small increase in types of venue would provide the choice and variety that could be found in some of the larger cities.

4.32 Good leisure facilities were not seen as enough of a pull factor, on their own, to encourage young people to stay in the County, or indeed attract them in, it was however felt that they would be a contributing factor.

4.33 Education

i. A Herefordshire University.

4.34 The Review Group considered the concept of a University in Herefordshire. It was widely thought that a University would attract young people to the area. In addition, a University can act as a regeneration catalyst, especially when an element of a wider regeneration strategy, Lincoln is one such example where a University has helped to revitalised the City.

4.35 Despite the perceived benefits a University would bring to Herefordshire, due to the current surplus of University places a new higher education facility is not considered a viable option.

4.36 Without a University for the foreseeable future, it was essential that the Hereford Learning Village should be supported to develop the range of degree and NVQ qualifications available within the County. The best method of gaining a 'University of Herefordshire' was to encourage all local higher education providers in the County to join together in forming a 'Virtual University'.

4.37 Even with a University, Herefordshire would experience difficulties in retaining students, as employment opportunities within the County are not likely to meet the aspirations of graduates.

4.38 Image

4.39 There is a general perception among young people that the County has an “old” feel to it with not many things for young people to do. This has contributed to the decision for some people to move on from the County once other opportunities presented themselves.

4.40 The lack of leisure opportunities was detrimental to the County in terms of retaining young people. With one theatre and a one screen cinema, the City does not compare favourably with the competing towns of Worcester and Shrewsbury, or other larger cities such as Birmingham and Cardiff.

4.41 Road entrances to the City were considered to portray a negative image. Combined with recurring traffic problems, the City is seen as stagnating and backward in it’s efforts to reduce congestion.

4.42 Hereford has a number of under utilised resources that could be used to enhance the image of the City. The river borders the south of the City Centre although almost no use of it is made, either for business or leisure activities. In addition Castle Green could be used for a variety of activities but is currently seen as little more than a park.

4.43 Connected to employment issues, the fact that Herefordshire has little or no ‘young’ industries, for example IT, electronics’, or media based, gives the impression that the County is not forward thinking in it’s approach to business and employment. This was felt to be a huge missed opportunity for the County to capitalise on it’s natural advantages.

5. Conclusions

5.1 At an early stage in the course of this Review it was apparent that the factors and influences impacting on exactly why young people decided to move away from, or indeed move into, the County were many and varied. Many of the points coming out of the Focus Groups and from the statistical information were related to central government policies or determined by national economic factors.

5.2 This can be ably demonstrated by examining the Housing situation. It was identified through both statistical data and Focus Groups that local house prices were preventing young people from getting on the housing ladder. However this is a national problem and one that would only be alleviated by increasing the supply locally of lower priced accommodation. To accommodate this would involve developer agreement, possibly the release of land not currently zoned for housing, and probably be driven by a public sector organisation with associated costs.

5.3 Despite identifying factors out of their control, the Review Group were keen for the Review to uncover as much statistical information as possible to determine any patterns or trends that could help rectify the problem of

outward migration. As a consequence this has resulted in bringing forward the information from HESA.

5.4 It also became apparent that to identify the reasons behind young people moving out of the County the Review would need to contact these people. This presented severe constraints around exactly how these young people could be identified and contacted. It was determined that to pursue the identification and surveying of young people would prove to be a task outside of the scope of this review given the cost and resource implications.

5.5 Despite the reduction in the scope of the information gathering exercise and the identification of factors outside the Councils sphere of influence, many important conclusions were able to be drawn from the Review.

i. Statistical Conclusions

5.6 Herefordshire “lost” 450 people aged between 15 and 24, each year to outward migration.

5.7 In contrast the County “gained” 200 people aged between 35 and 39 each year from inwards migration.

5.8 The loss of young people is not a problem unique to Herefordshire but prevalent across most rural areas.

5.9 Universities within cities and towns geographically close to Hereford are the most popular locations of choice for Herefordshire students.

5.10 The larger cities retain more of their Herefordshire originated students compared to smaller towns.

ii. Variations in the 18 to 35 year old age range

5.1 It is apparent that there are at least two distinct sub divisions of the age range the Review is considering. There is a net outward migration for those young people under 25, yet there is a net inward migration of young people aged between 25 and 35.

5.2 The suspected explanation is that the net outflow of people aged between 18 and 25 is caused by these young people going to University and being counted as resident in their location of study. It is thought that these people study away from Herefordshire, perhaps start a career outside the County and then move back into Herefordshire when looking to start a family, thus explaining the net inward migration from 25 to 35. This would indicate that lifestyle choices are important to those looking to come back to the County.

iii. No overall push factor

5.3 The evidence would suggest that there is no one factor behind the unpopularity of Herefordshire as a location for young people to live, rather, all the reasons studied by the Review Group form part of the overall negative perspective for young people; low wages, high cost of housing, no career progression, lack of leisure and entertainment facilities.

5.4 Together these issues form a reason for a young person to decide not to stay in the County, or not to relocate to Herefordshire, separately they are not significant enough to influence someone's decision to move.

iv. Little Changes

5.5 It is apparent that small scale changes, both physical and in people's attitudes could make significant differences to the lives, or opinions of young people. Herefordshire's image is not good with young people, many seeing the County as a backwater with little or no change. Simply by encouraging 'new' industries to relocate in the County would send out the signal that the County was attempting to be proactive and forward looking.

5.6 Similarly small scale changes to the leisure and recreational facilities would prove beneficial. More choice in terms of night time entertainment, not in terms of numbers of venues, but in terms of style and type, would provide young people with a range of opportunities.

5.7 The provision of a multi screen cinema is again an example of a small change that would make significant differences. Not having a multi screen cinema not only has a negative impact for film viewers but again, sends out a negative portrayal of Hereford's image.

6. Recommendations

- (a) That young people are involved in the shaping of major regeneration schemes and developments, specifically looking at how these can incorporate their recreational, cultural, and employment needs. This should include detailed and targeted inward investment promotion and working with property agents and developers to influence private investors and brand name companies.**
- (b) Due to the over provision of University places generally within the Country, avenues exploring other methods of retaining and attracting college graduates and young people to Herefordshire are pursued.**
- (c) Given that the figures demonstrate that there is an outflow of young people aged between 18 and 24, yet a net influx of people aged 25 to 35, available resources are concentrated on improving the County's Social and Economic offer to this age group.**
- (d) That the Business Start-Up programme is promoted to young people to support entrepreneurship within the age group.**
- (e) That the Council continues a programme of affordable housing linked to major developments.**