Describe the fieldwork and research you undertook to investigate rural inequalities in a named area

In March 2015 I conducted an investigation to measure rural inequalities within West Somerset, comparing two locations; Exford (a rural village) and Dunster (tourist hotspot). This was completed through research, using maps and online sources, alongside fieldwork which consisted of measuring the index of rurality, participating in an interview and completing a vehicle/ services survey. Moreover I enhanced the validity of my findings, leading to reliable conclusions during analysis, by supplementing my primary data with secondary data.

Before carrying out fieldwork, I had to research what was meant by the term 'rurality' and how it was measured. The site www.geography-fieldwork.co.uk/rural/inequality, indicated rurality to be calculated through Cloke's index which took into account ten different indicators, such as time to get to the nearest A&E, mobile phone network etc. According to the Office of National Statistics, a rural areas was one which had a population below 10,000. After finding this, I researched the population size of both Exford and Dunster with the aims of identifying whether these areas were 'rural'. Both Dunster and Exford were sparsely populated with the number of residents being 817 and 405 respectively (2001 census data on neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk).

To support this, I began researching land use, using Google Earth, to find Exford was surrounded by large green fields whereas Dunster, also being surrounded by greenery, had greater communication links due to main road connections. I also found that the tourist destination 'Butlins' was located six minutes away from Dunster, possibly providing employment to locals. Although both locations are rural areas, my research allowed me to predict that Exford would have fewer services than Dunster.

Such a hypothesis was supported as I primarily measured the index of rurality within the village centres. This was subjective, leading to possible bias, as I measured each category; employment, infrastructure, land use and environmental quality (factors found in Cloke's rural index) using my own opinion. I broke each category into three sub domains which I ranked from 1-5 to get an overall estimate of rurality. For example, to measure infrastructure I observed to see whether there were good quality pavements, whether I could receive mobile reception and whether access was good/poor (e.g. country lanes). I totalled up all this scores, divided by 75 and then multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. Sure enough, Exford's rurality index was 37% lower the Dunster's.

Following this, I interviewed a village agent in Exford and a Met Exmoor National Park Education Manager in Dunster. I asked open questions, such as 'what forms of transport are available in your area?' In doing so, I was educated about local facilities and community programmes. My final piece of fieldwork involved a vehicle survey where I viewed 15 parked cars during a walk in both Dunster and Exford. I created a tally, marking the age (using number plate) and quality (depending on rust, model). As it was harder to find cars in Exford than Dunster, this suggests car ownership is lower in Exford, perhaps due to factors such as low income, shorter distances to travel etc.