

Response to the “Northern Ireland multiple Deprivation Measure (NI) 2004: Consultation Document” July 2004.

RESPONSE

The documentation provides a potentially comprehensive study of deprivation across the province. Overall, the Council accepts the revised seven indicators as outlined. It is therefore strongly welcomed that the suggested methodology shows a clear understanding of the complexity of measuring issues of deprivation and inequality.

The following comments are applicable to the proposed sections:

- Section 5.1 - Income

Council is agreeable to the approach however would seek clarification that proposed indicators include consideration of the proportion of pupils receiving free meals. Also, with regard to levels of debt, how does eradicate the factor of high mortgages? For example, individual residents within the most affluent wards/areas in the borough may hold the highest mortgages whereas some less deprived estates will not offer many privately owned properties. Does this potentially mislead the data?

- Section 5.5 – Access to Services

Road distance is an improved measurement for this indicator but proximity to said services provides an incomplete picture. The travel time to get to services is an important factor e.g. although rural areas have less public transport, it may bring users to the service quicker than an urban dweller who must go through endless congestion and speed limits (never mind the health issue of pollution).

- Section 5.6 – Living Environment

The Council supports this new domain but seeks assurances that the quality of the outdoor physical environment provides an objective measure of disadvantage. Issues of concern relate to the fact that most of the public housing estates (where most of the economically disadvantaged live) tend to have more “green/open space” than more affluent areas. Council has invested many resources in the past 10 years for green developments such as play parks and green spaces. Is pollution of air, land and waterways not a factor especially in the current pressures of EU ‘green’ legalisation?

- Section 5.7 – Crime

This would also complement the work of the local District Policing Partnership and Community Safety Partnership. However, there should be consideration for the ‘fear of crime’ and /or identifying drug-related crime? These are major issues apparent within the Carrickfergus Community safety Audit (2004).

The exclusion of anti-social behaviour and domestic violence must be reconsidered as an Indicator. The response from the Carrickfergus Community Safety Partnership delves into this matter in greater regard.

Will statistics consider seasonality and points of transit, recreation and commerce?
Also many social issues also seem to be left disregarded in the proposed methodology. Perhaps many social disorder / breakdown indicators can be reflected in this or future studies, e.g. sole parent families, children under care, teenage pregnancies.

- Section 7 - Weightings

Determined by policy relevance – what happens when policy changes or priorities are re-directed?

Comments by:

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