



Children **in** Northern Ireland

Response to

**Northern Ireland Statistics and Research
Agency**

Consultation on

**Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation
Measure 2004: Consultation Document**

Introduction

Children in Northern Ireland is the regional umbrella body for the voluntary child care sector in Northern Ireland.

To our membership of over 90 organisations CiNI provides representation and support in their work to enhance the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland. CiNI provides a policy service to enable member organisations to inform the development of policy relevant to children and young people in Northern Ireland.

CiNI welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency on Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004.

CiNI attended the consultation meeting and workshop convened by NICVA and welcomed this opportunity to hear a range of views on the consultation proposals and share some of our preliminary thoughts on the proposals.

CiNI is particularly concerned with the multiple deprivation experienced by children, young people and their families and is keen that measures of this specific deprivation are included in the overall multiple deprivation measure for Northern Ireland. The deprivation experienced by children is particularly acutely experienced as is illustrated in a forthcoming research report commissioned by Save the Children entitled 'Severe Child Poverty in Northern Ireland' (extracts drawn from the seminar paper produced for Save the Children and Queen's University Seminar Series entitled 'Righting the Wrongs' Autumn 2004). The report authors revealed that 8% (32,000) children in Northern Ireland were severely poor and described children who were living in severe poverty to be 'most likely to be living in households with no workers (70%), living with a lone parent (51%), living in public sector housing (57%), whose parents have no qualifications (54%), living in large families (24% of severely poor children lived in families with four or more children), have parents with health problems and disabilities (27%) or be disabled children (14%).'

OFMDFM's Children and Young People's Strategy

CiNI chairs the NGO Forum, which operates in an advisory capacity to OFMDFM's Children and Young People's Unit on the development of the 10-year Children and Young People's Strategy. The strategy aims to put children and young people at the heart of policy development across all Northern Ireland Government Departments. The strategy will set high level strategic outcomes to improve the life circumstances of all children and young people in Northern

Ireland. These strategic outcomes will be supplemented by actions to be carried out by each of the Government Departments and strategic indicators to measure progress toward achieving outcomes. Child poverty is a key action area of the strategy; draft action areas have been identified and indicators will be developed from potential areas for monitoring and evaluation. These may usefully inform the development of the domains within the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure.

Child Poverty Research (OFMDFM)

In addition to inform the development of child specific indicators of deprivation CiNI believes that the NISRA commissioned research team should refer to OFMDFM's Analysis of Child Poverty in Northern Ireland, due to report in January 2005, which has as one of its research objectives to identify suitable measures for strategic indicators on child poverty. These indicators are to be considered for use in the OFMDFM's Children and Young People's Strategy and will also be relevant to the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Below are some of the views on the domains and indicators which are proposed as components of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004.

Income Deprivation

While CiNI welcomes the recognition of child poverty as a measure of multiple deprivation, its current placement as a subset of the income deprivation measure does not reflect the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and its impact on all the other deprivation domains, hence we would advocate for the development of child specific indicators across all other domains with reference to the research referred to above.

The proposal to rename the measure the 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children Measure' more accurately captures what is being measured. It has been informative in terms of examining the characteristics of children and households in the 20% most deprived wards compared to Northern Ireland as a whole.

Indicators

CiNI appreciates that domain indicators should be 'measuring major features of that deprivation (not conditions experienced by a very small number of people or areas'. However there is widespread evidence that some of the most severe deprivation is experienced by a very small number of people, for example, Travellers, and, refugees and asylum seekers in Northern Ireland. Therefore, this must be captured and included in measures of multiple deprivation and we welcome the suggestion within the consultation document that 'the feasibility of

producing an economic deprivation measure at output area level is explored in order to identify very small pockets of economic deprivation,' and would welcome further information on this feasibility study.

Education, Skills and Training Deprivation

CiNI welcomes the splitting of this domain into the two separate sub-domains of children/young people and working age adults and would advocate that this model should be considered in relation to other domains with a view to identifying the specific deprivation experienced by children and young people.

The consultation document states that a number of other indicators were explored but rejected primarily on the basis of very small numbers. CiNI would contend strongly that the possibility of adopting such indicators is kept under review. In terms of special educational needs statements there is a strong correlation between such statementing and deprivation experienced by children and young people. School exclusion data was also rejected partly due to the fact that such data is dependent on local school policy. CiNI believes that this decision should be reviewed in light of future reforms of the procedures on school suspensions and exclusions which have proposed that all schools should use the same scheme for the suspension and expulsion of pupils.

Living Environment

In contributing to this response NIACRO gave its support to the living environment indicator stating that it is appropriately situated alongside the crime measure, as both are likely to be highly correlated. NIACRO added that the measure should be presented in the context of targeting social need, and developing partnership programmes to reduce crime such as Community Safety policies and plans, and policing plans.

CiNI would advocate that the Living Environment sub-domain of 'outdoor physical environment' should look at the deprivation experienced by children and young people in terms of accessing and using play, leisure and other facilities. Save the Children's 'Severe Child Poverty in Northern Ireland (extract drawn from seminar paper produced for Save the Children and Queen's University Seminar Series entitled 'Righting the Wrongs' Autumn 2004) highlighted particular concerns at the exclusion experienced by severely poor children from a range of vital children's services. 37% of severely poor children did not have access to safe play areas in their local communities.

Crime Domain

CiNI welcomes the creation of the new crime domain. However, we have concerns that it may be of limited value in these early stages of its development

as it 'focuses solely on the risk of personal and material victimisation as measured by police recorded crime data,' failing therefore to capture unreported crime, commonly domestic violence incidents and racially motivated crime. CiNI believes that further investment should be made in accessing appropriate victim data and offender data to give a fuller picture of crime deprivation at local area level.

In responding NIACRO also referred to the purpose of the crime indicator – 'to measure the likelihood of personal and material victimisation,' and advocated that the emphasis on the purpose of this measure would be more aptly situated in the context of indicating and targeting social need; or informing problem-oriented policing plans, and Community Safety partnership programmes.

Geography and Spatial Scale

CiNI welcomes the development of Super Output Areas from the Output Areas used in the 2001 Census. These are clearly more advantageous measures than the 'ward' boundaries in that they will have relatively even sized populations.

Weighting the Domains

CiNI supports the weighting of domains based on theoretical considerations which draws on the available research evidence. While income deprivation and employment deprivation remain the prevalent domains, we support a more equal weighting distribution for the remaining domain, with the exception of the crime domain which we believe should be further developed and all encompassing prior to it being weighted equally with the remaining domains.