

NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

BACKGROUND

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) contracted the Social Disadvantage Research Centre (SDRC) at the University of Oxford to produce new measures of relative multiple deprivation for Northern Ireland and to undertake a review of the Northern Ireland Measures of Deprivation 2001 (commonly known as the Nobel Measures) These will be the official measures of spatial deprivation and will be used across Northern Ireland Government.

Newtownabbey Borough Council has been asked to comment generally on the content of the document and the proposed domains, but specifically on the following:

- Are there any additional domains which should be included?
- Are there any domains proposed which should be excluded?
- The proposed Crime Domain?
- The proposed Living Environment Domain?
- Should issues like Weak Community Infrastructure be included in the new deprivation measures?

There are currently seven domains

1. Income Deprivation
2. Employment Deprivation
3. Health Deprivation and Disability
4. Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
5. Geographical Access to Services
6. Social Environment
7. Housing Stress

It is the intention that the first five domains will remain and that the Education, Skills and Training Domain will be split into two sub groupings which will specifically look at Education, Skills and Training for young people and adults. Additionally a new Crime domain is proposed, developed in part from the Social Environment domain, with the remainder of the Social Environment domain being combined with the Housing Stress domain to form a new Living Environment domain.

The proposed domains for the new NI Measures of Deprivation are therefore:

1. Income Deprivation
2. Employment Deprivation
3. Health Deprivation and Disability
4. Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
5. Geographical Access to Services
6. Crime
7. Living Environment

RESPONSE

The proposed domains and their subsequent sub domains and indicators clearly demonstrate an in depth study of deprivation across Northern Ireland. The Council does not recommend that any of the proposed domains should be excluded and other than the proposed Crime and Living Environment Domain no additional domains need be included.

Regarding Geographical Access to Services, the Council is concerned about the proposed changes to the Indicators in this Domain. The Consultation document suggests that a "centre of a certain size" would generally provide a range of key services (dentist, optician, pharmacist, library, museum, Social Security Office or a Training and Employment Agency), and as such proposes to exclude these Indicators from the new Measures. The Council is concerned that the phrase "centre of a certain size" is extremely vague. We require assurance that such centres should include a dentist, optician, pharmacist, library and Social Security Office as a minimum requirement. The Council also requires information about how the provision of mobile services will be taken into account.

In the past, the Council has been concerned that at enumeration district level, there are Housing Estates in the Borough which are located in Wards which also included extremely affluent areas. This means that Newtownabbey's *most* deprived areas are geographically located beside some of the *least* deprived areas. Therefore, the Ward by Ward based method of measuring deprivation for these areas has been inappropriate. With this in mind, the target population size of 2000 people (lower threshold 1300 and upper threshold of 2800) as proposed for the "Super Output Areas" (SOA's) would be more appropriate in such cases. The Council is content that, in splitting the larger Wards, the individual SOA's which make up each Ward should be similar in terms of population size and distinct in terms of tenure and household type. However, the Council has noted that a high percentage of properties in Northern Ireland Housing Executive estates are now owner occupied and that estates which were previously mainly privately owned, now have high percentages of rented accommodation occupied by people claiming a range of benefits and is concerned that these new trends will impact on deprivation indicators. Indeed, there are areas in Newtownabbey where similar problems can be identified across Ward boundaries and it may be appropriate to group these areas as an SOA. Given that the proposed SOA's will form the core geography for the revised NI Measures, the Council insists that it be consulted further in splitting any Wards in Newtownabbey into SOA's. The Council is supportive of the proposal to assess the feasibility of producing an economic deprivation measure at Census Output Area level.

The Council welcomes the creation of a new Crime Domain as this is complementary to the work of the local District Policing Partnership and Community Safety Partnership. The Council believes that, although it is proposed that some categories of crime are not appropriate for inclusion in measuring deprivation, a measure of total crime would still be relevant. We are concerned about the exclusion of Domestic Violence as an Indicator, the occurrence of Domestic Violence is often linked to other social problems including alcohol abuse. As significant levels of victims of Domestic Violence decline to prosecute, the Council proposes that the number of "Domestic Incidents" be used as an Indicator. The Council is also concerned about the exclusion of anti-social behaviour as an Indicator. Anti-social behaviour has consistently been identified as an important issue in Northern Ireland

and the UK as a whole and therefore the Council proposes that the number of "Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour" be included as an Indicator. It may also be appropriate to include the number of Anti Social Behaviour Orders issued as an Indicator. The Council has questioned the absence of a measure of "Paramilitary Activity" in Wards/SOA's as an indicator and believes that an indicator of this nature is relevant given NISRA's comments on Page 15 of the consultation document about fear of personal safety. In the NISRA DPP survey of 2004, respondents placed Paramilitary Activity as the second highest first choice concern.

The Council supports the creation of a Living Environment Domain but is concerned that an assessment of the quality of the outdoor physical environment may not provide an objective measure of disadvantage because most of the public housing estates (where most of the economically disadvantaged live) in Newtownabbey have more "green/open space" than the "better off" areas.

The Council supports the inclusion of a new "weak community infrastructure" Domain in the new deprivation measures but requires further details about how this would be measured before further progress is made on this matter.