



Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004

Consultation

Response by Omagh 2010 Taskforce

Omagh 2010 Taskforce welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the review of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004.

The Taskforce recognizes that the review of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004 is a vitally important initiative and is of the view that its findings and implementation should complement any research currently being undertaken in relation to New Targeting Social Need and Section 75.

The Omagh 2010 Taskforce has been in existence since 2001 with the remit to drive the Omagh 2010 Vision – the economic and infrastructural strategy for the town of Omagh. The Taskforce is a unique body, in that it comprises representation from central government, Omagh District Council, Omagh Local Strategy Partnership and representatives of business and community sectors in Omagh, along with independent members.

General Introduction

Omagh District Council has, according to the NI Census 200, a total population of 47,952 and covers an area of 113,045 hectares giving it a population density of 0.42 persons per hectare compared to the Northern Ireland average of 1.19. Omagh is ranked third in terms of low population density of all the district councils in Northern Ireland. This is a strong indicator of the rurality of the Omagh district.

The Taskforce would like to ensure that equity is a key consideration in this consultation exercise and that any outcomes are rural proofed to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between rural and urban areas, in particular that they are treated equitably. Rural areas are more likely to be disadvantaged than urban areas due to their peripherality and lack

of access to vital services and any review of the indicators of multiple deprivation should reflect this.

The Taskforce would make a number of observations which are discussed in more detail throughout this response. These are listed below:-

- A clear distinction should be made between urban and rural deprivation
- Sub domains for child poverty, elderly, gender, disabled and ethnic populations should be examined for inclusion
- Accessibility to services should not just be measured by road distance but should also take into consideration the condition of roads and traffic congestion
- Affordability of housing has not been considered.
- Weightings need to be reviewed to give an increased priority to accessibility to services.
- Health indicators should consider alcohol abuse and smoking as there is a direct link to these and causes of premature death
- There is a clear need for statistical rigour with guidance on the use and usability of outcomes of the Index – for example there needs to be consistency in data collection for all statistics across Northern Ireland.
- The crime domain should be included in the living environment domain as a sub domain – would question the robustness of the information at the moment
- Need to ensure that indicators selected demonstrate that there is a direct relationship to deprivation

Domains

It is proposed that there should be seven domains in the new NI Measures of Deprivation which are as follows:-

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
- Geographical Access to Services
- Crime
- Living Environment

The document asks for comments on the two new domains – crime and living environment which replace the Social Environment and Housing Stress domain of the 2001 measure. Whilst the Taskforce recognizes the

value of these in terms of measuring deprivation it is not sure if the data available for crime is sufficiently robust as to warrant an entire domain. There has been and still remains inconsistencies in terms of recording crime statistics across Northern Ireland. Furthermore the level of reporting crimes varies between urban and rural areas. Many crimes in rural areas are left unreported for a variety of reasons.

The Taskforce would suggest that the crime domain be incorporated within the Living Environment domain given the fact that current crime statistics are not sufficiently consistent or robust enough to warrant a domain in its own right.

The consultation document also asks if information on weak community infrastructure should be included as a measure of deprivation. The Taskforce would, however, be of the opinion that if there does not exist a clearly defined and consistent method of measuring weak community infrastructure it should not be included. It would however propose that measures of weak community infrastructure should be examined for future consideration.

Indicators

- **Income Deprivation**

There would appear to be four main changes to this domain from the 2001 measure. This includes the inclusion of Working Families Tax Credit, Disabled Person's Tax Credit, adults and children living in rented accommodation in receipt of housing benefit and adults and children living in owner occupied households in receipt of rate rebate.

The Taskforce supports the recommendation that in the absence of quality data for the new tax credits – WTC and CTC, which became effective in April 2003, data on Working Families Tax Credit and Disabled Person's Tax Credit should be utilized as an indicator for people in low paid work. The fact that both these are available to people further up the income threshold as their predecessor the Family Credit is welcomed by the Taskforce. It firmly believes that the income threshold for the Family Credit was too low and many families on low incomes were not eligible for it.

The Taskforce welcomes the introduction of two new measures of income deprivation which are renters claiming housing benefit and owner occupiers rent rebate.

The introduction of a Child Poverty measure and an Older person's deprivation measure are also supported by the Taskforce. These are important indicators for an area such as Omagh with an above average population aged under 16 and a rapidly growing elderly population. Consideration may also need to be given to measuring income deprivation in terms of gender and ethnic populations.

The Taskforce would suggest that some measure of declining agriculture incomes be utilized. This will provide a balance between rural and urban areas. Over the past number of years farm incomes have been steadily declining and this should be reflected in any measure of income deprivation (Stats available from DARD).

The Taskforce would also suggest that where information is only available at a district council level and not at a small area level it should still be utilized.

- **Employment Deprivation**

This measure proposes the following indicators:-

- Unemployment claimant count (JUVOS) of women aged 18-59 and men aged 18-64 averaged over quarters (2003, Source DETI)
- Incapacity benefits claimants women aged 18-59 and men aged 18-64 (2003, Source DSD)
- Severe Disablement Allowance claimants – women aged 18-59 and men aged 18-64
- Participants in New Deal for the 18-24s who are not in the claimant count
- Participants in New Deal for 25+ who are not included in the claimant count
- Participants in New Deal for Lone Parents aged 18 and over

The Taskforce noted that the proposed new indicators did not include New Deal for 50+ nor did it include those people aged 16-18 in receipt of benefits as there is evidence of younger people having access to this benefit. It would recommend that these indicators are also included.

The Taskforce recognizes that this domain is to reflect those people involuntarily out of work, however it does not attempt to measure those people deprived of work due to problems with access to affordable childcare or lack of transport. This is a problem which is more pronounced in rural areas and for people on low wages.

Furthermore this domain does not reflect those people who are underemployed – for example in rural areas where farming is in decline many farmers now work on a part time basis. Many people also chose to work on a part time basis to protect benefits.

This domain does not reflect those voluntarily out of employment, in particular carers. This includes people looking after elderly relatives or parents caring for children. These people may not appear on any registers as they may not be in receipt of any benefits.

- **Health and Disability**

This measure proposes the following indicators:-

- Years of potential life lost (1993 to 2003, Source: Mortality Statistics, NISRA)
- Comparative Illness and Disability Ratio (2003, Source IS, AA, DLA, SDA, IB, DSD)
- Measures of emergency admissions to hospitals, derived from Hospital Inpatient System records (2001/2002 to 2003/2004, Source: DHSSPS)
- Measure of individuals suffering from mood or anxiety disorders, based on prescribing (2003, Source CSA), Hospital Inpatient System records (2000/2001 to 2003/2004, Source DHSSPS) and suicides (1999 to 2003, Source: NISRA)

The proposed measures vary considerably from those in the 2001 measure. The Taskforce is of the opinion that the number of emergency admissions is an important indicator and is convinced that this will be even more important in the future in an area, such as Omagh, that will be deprived of its main Accident and Emergency facility.

The Taskforce recommends that the measures should also include smoking, alcohol abuse and incidence of coronary heart disease as it is generally recognised that these relate directly to deprivation. These are also strong indicators of health risk.

Likewise the Taskforce would argue strongly for the retention of the measure for dental health as again this is an indicator of health risk in the young and in a recent survey of oral health Omagh was ranked at the top. This domain should attempt to directly capture those people at heightened health risk.

- **Education, Skills and Training Deprivation**

It is proposed that this domain will be split into two sub domains – children/young people and working age adults. The proposed indicators are listed below:-

Sub Domain: Children/Young People

- GCSE/GNVQ points score
- Key Stage 3 data
- Proportions of those leaving school aged 16 and not entering Further Education
- Absenteeism at secondary level (all absences) (2002/2003 Source; School Performance Survey, DE)
- Proportions of 17-20 year olds who have not successfully applied for Higher Education (1999/2000 to 2002/2003, Source: UCAS and DEL)
- Proportions Of Year 11 and 12 pupils not in a grammar schools (2003, Source: School Census, DE)

Sub Domain – Working Age Adults

- Proportions of working age adults (aged 25-59) in the area with no or low levels of qualifications.

Firstly, the Taskforce supports the view that in some areas there might be a reasonable level of performance at school level but the absence of suitable local employment opportunities might mean that the skills profile of the adult population is very much disadvantaged as skilled and qualified people move to other areas in search of work. This is also true at third level where many young people leave an area to go to college or university and many do not return. An area such as Omagh which does not provide third level education is thus being deprived of it educated young people.

The Taskforce is not sure of how useful the proportion of years 11 and 12 not in a grammar school is as a measure of deprivation. It would feel strongly that there are many non grammar schools providing high quality secondary level education and performing well at both GCSE and A Level. Indeed many young people choose not to go through the 11 plus selection process.

It should also be noted that many young people (particularly males) choose not to go on to further education or higher education, rather they go straight into employment. Many, whilst having no formal educational qualifications, have established successful careers in the

trades – building, plumbing, electricians or joiners. Some thought should be given to the usefulness of this as a measure of deprivation.

The Taskforce would also recommend that some consideration should be given to measuring numeracy and literacy within working age adults.

The sub domain – working age adults should be extended to include to 20-64.

- **Geographical Access to Services**

The Taskforce would be of the opinion that this is one of the most important indicators as it directly relates to rural areas.

This domain proposes 5 indicators whereas the 2001 measure had 9 indicators. The new indicators are listed below:-

- Road distance to a post office (2003, Source: Post Office Ltd)
- Road distance to a GP premise (2003, Source: CSA)
- Road distance to an Accident and Emergency hospital (2003, Source: DHSSPS)
- Road distance to a general food store (2003, Source: Census of Employment, DETI)
- Access to transport (2003, Source: DVLNI Vehicle Registration; 2004 Translink bus stop audit)

The Taskforce notes the proposal that the barriers to access of essential services will be measured by road distance. It would however recommend that consideration be given to the conditions of roads and their classification. Whilst the road distance will remain the same irrespective of an urban or rural area, journey times will most certainly be lengthened due to poor roads infrastructure and/or traffic congestion. This is important in relation to access to an accident and emergency hospital where the quality of roads will increase access times. Consideration should also be given to those areas who may be deprived of A&E services and where people will have to drive some distance to access these services. As a result this will and should be a fundamental measure of deprivation. Traffic congestion in and around towns should also be a factor.

The Taskforce felt that the accessibility of local services on foot or by public transport is also important for the young, people with disabilities, non drivers and people with no cars. These people will be more disadvantaged in rural areas compared to those in urban areas.

This domain proposes to look at the number of bus stops but no consideration is given to how often these are actually utilized in rural areas. More importantly consideration should be given to the quality of the public transport service in rural areas as opposed to urban areas, in particular its frequency and timing. Many bus services in rural areas may only operate once or twice a day.

This measure also takes into consideration car ownership as a measure of deprivation. In rural areas car ownership is a necessity compared to urban areas.

Whilst access to a general food store is recognized as being important it should be noted that the range and quality of these will vary between rural and urban areas and this should be reflected in some way, maybe by size of store.

The Taskforce that the other indicators that were included in the 2001 Measure should be retained in this new measure, that is,

- Access to a dentist
- Access to an optician
- Access to a pharmacist
- Access to a library
- Access to a museum
- Access to a Social Security Office or a Training and Employment Agency

The Taskforce would also recommend the introduction of a further indicator access to schools and further and higher education.

- **Living Environment**

It is proposed to have three sub domain within this domain. These are listed below:-

- **Sub Domain – Housing Quality**

- Ward level housing stress (2001, Source: SDRC and NIHE, modeled NI Housing Conditions Survey)
- Houses without central heating (2001, Source: Censu, NISRA)

- **Sub Domain – Housing Access**

- Household overcrowding (2001, Source: Census, NISRA)
- District level rate of acceptances under homelessness provisions of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 and the Housing

(Northern Ireland) Order 2003, assigned to the constituent areas (2001 to 2003, Source: NIHE)

Sub Domain – Outdoor Physical Environment

- Pedestrian and cyclist casualties resulting from road traffic accidents (2001 to 2003, Source PSNI)
- Local area problem score (2001, Source: SDRC and NIHE, modeled NIHCS)

The Taskforce agrees with the above three sub domains along with the proposed indicators and would support their retention. The Taskforce however would be concerned that the use of pedestrian and cyclist casualties would skew the domain in favour of urban areas. It would also recommend that the affordability of housing is measured and suggests that ways in which this can be linked to low incomes be examined.

- **Crime**

It is proposed that there are four indicators included within this domain and these are:-

- Burglary
- Violence
- Theft
- Criminal Damage

Whilst the Taskforce recognizes the value of these in terms of measuring deprivation it is not sure if the data available for crime is sufficiently robust enough as to warrant an entire domain. There has been inconsistencies in terms of recording crime statistics across Northern Ireland and the level of reporting crimes varies between urban and rural areas. Many crimes in rural areas are left unreported. This needs to be taken into consideration when utilising this data.

Fear of crime has not been included in the above domain and this has a significant impact on community safety. Many older people living in isolated rural areas suffer from the fear of crime.

Common assault was included in the 2001 measure and does not appear to be included in the new measure, the Taskforce would recommend that this is retained. The Taskforce would also recommend that there is some method proposed for capturing information in relation to anti social behaviour as this can contribute significantly to the fear of crime.

The Taskforce would recommend that the crime domain is a sub domain of the living environment domain, given that the data may be not be entirely robust due to inconsistencies in terms of data recording and capture.

Methodology – Weightings

The Taskforce considered the methodology, the proposed weighting principles and the proposed weights and felt that the weightings should be adjusted. It is of the opinion that Geographical Access to Services should have a higher weighting given its significance to rural areas and how it directly relates to deprivation in these areas. The Taskforce also felt that crime should be included in the Living Environment domain and hence weighted accordingly.

The consultation document proposes two weighting systems which both give priority to income and employment and as such these have been given the highest weighting. The Taskforce agrees with this but is convinced that geographical access to services should get equal weighting education. It would also suggest that the health domain get a higher weighting.