

NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004:  
Consultation Document

Ballymena Borough Council's Response



Further to receipt of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004 Consultation Document and subsequent attendance of our representatives at the public consultation meeting in Lisburn on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2004, please find below our comments to the specific questions highlighted throughout the consultation report, which have been referenced in line with the consultation format.

#### **4. Domains**

1. Ballymena Borough Council considers the overall domain structure to be fair, however we feel that a separate expenditure domain would be beneficial (if this was practically possible) as well as a 'Community' domain, to measure weak community infrastructure.

2. We feel there are no domains that should be excluded. With regards to the domains mostly relating to benefit information we feel that quality of life should be measured. As all the domains are linked to each other in some way, the overall results will be dependent on the weights applied to each domain.

3/4. We believe the proposed Crime domain is very useful, however along with the proposed Living Environment domain, we feel these seem not to reflect deprivation but instead to be a consequence of deprivation in other areas such as income and employment. Due to crime not exclusively occurring as a result of an absence of money, we feel the causes of it should be looked at instead of its effects. We would have some concern over the availability of crime data as the only source seems to be that of the PSNI whereas these statistics don't truly reflect the experience at grass roots level as a result of a lot of crimes either not being reported or recorded. As the Crime and Living Environment domains overlap, these two domains should be combined, with the weighting being spread out over the rest of the domains.

5. We feel that information such as Weak Community Infrastructure should be considered as a separate domain under the title Social Capital. However this would be hard to measure as there is no common definition and it is constantly changing.

#### **5.1 Income Deprivation**

1. Taking the list of proposed indicators we feel that those people who are in low paid employment and are not eligible for benefits are being missed out. We feel that there is an indicator needed to compensate for this as well as for elderly people who are unsure of what benefits they are entitled to. If only benefit dependency is used as a measure of deprivation, additional indicators are needed to measure income – to include personal debt, household debt statistics, general information on debt, a fuel poverty indicator, an indicator on the utilisation of Inland Revenue data on earnings as well as an indicator of those in receipt of free school meals/uniform grants, tax band statistics and national insurance band statistics.

2. We feel that the indicators proposed should all be included.

3. Clarification is needed re method of combination to ensure that people are not counted twice.

4/5. We consider both the Children and Old People measures as very important from a health perspective. With regards to the income deprivation affecting children measure we feel that limiting this to children under 16 is not fully representational due to many children aged 17 and 18 still remaining dependent on their parents. In addition the indicators of those children entitled to free school meals and uniform grants could be included here.

#### **5.2 Employment Deprivation**

1. With regards to employment deprivation we feel that an indicator should be included for those young people aged 18-24 who are in the unemployment claimant count. We feel that



carers’ data should also be included as they are not “involuntarily” out of the labour market. (The uptake of Invalid Care Allowance (ICA) would be a possible source of this information). We feel that the inclusion of an indicator on the Black Economy is of great importance and to include some form of age related sub-domains. The rural/urban dimension to this domain should also be reflected in some way within these indicators and the indicators should be adjusted to reflect changes in pension ages.

2. We feel that it may be more appropriate to use the Labour Force Survey instead of the unemployed claimant count indicator.
3. As the indicators are all non-overlapping counts, we feel the proposed method of combination is acceptable.

### **5.3 Health Deprivation and Disability**

1. Although the new indicators proposed are an advancement on the MD 2001 indicators, we feel there are not enough indicators in this domain and that it could be strengthened by the inclusion of others. The indicators focus too much on physical illness and neglect a dimension on ‘well-being’ and so a census question on self-perception of health could be an additional indicator. Other additional indicators could include people caring for others, obesity, physical and mental disabilities, drugs and addictions, addiction (smoking/alcohol), child health statistics, heart disease, cancer, data on people with learning disabilities and registered diabetic statistics.
2. Should emergency admissions to hospital include road traffic accidents? and should elective admissions be included in the admissions indicator?
3. With this method of combination people may be counted twice and not enough information on the shrinkage technique and the Comparative Illness and Disability Ratio is provided.

### **5.4 Education, Skills and Training Deprivation**

1. Ballymena Borough Council agree that there should be two separate sub-domains as they are two distinct measures. It should also be that when it comes to output, elements of the two separate domains should not be lost and the results of the two separate domains as well as the overall domain should be made available. We believe it to be sensible and useful to split the group into young people and adults.
2. We feel that indicators which could be added include data on primary school performance, data on Key Stage 4 performance to supplement GCSE/GNVQ data, an indicator on literacy using data held by individual schools as well as adult orientated indicators, an indicator for GCE A Level attainment and one based on Key Skills, as well as information on 16-18 year olds in Jobskills/Apprenticeships, expulsions/suspension data, children in care educational statistics and also an indicator of lifelong learners or those learning into retirement.
3. We feel that absenteeism may not be a suitable measure. Absenteeism is reported at a global (school) level and may not be relevant, as it cannot be attributed to the address of the individual pupil. The grammar school indicator also presents itself as an issue due to the fact that in comprehensive education, there are no grammar schools. With regards to Key Stage data it is felt that teacher assessment is more reliable than test results and, with working age adults indicators, should be based more on essential skills. Higher education should instead be referred to as further education and those 17-20 year olds who have not been successful in their application should be taken account of as a proportion of those applying.
4. The proposed method of combination appears acceptable.
5. The weighting issues are fine providing raw data is made available to operators and that a heavier weighting would be given to the adult population.



## **5.5 Geographical Access to Service Domain**

1. Indicators not included which we feel should be included are - access to a library, access to schools, uptake of further education, take up of broadband/internet access, journey time to A+E hospital, distance to main town, location of ATM/Banks in NI, SSA offices, nursing homes, access to parks/open spaces, distance to GP practices and pharmacists. We feel that those indicators which were dropped from the NI MD 2001 need to be reconsidered.

2. We feel that distance to a Post Office is no longer so relevant an indicator due to recent closures. We welcome the keeping of the Geographical Access to Services domain to measure rurality, however access to services is not necessarily a geographical issue as there are also non-geographical barriers to access to services, so possibly the current noble indicators referring to access to GP surgeries and dentists would be a more appropriate measure. With regards to the indicator of road distance to a general food store it is necessary to have a definition of 'general food store' (supermarket vs. petrol station)

3. The proposed method of combination appears acceptable.

4. The proposed weighting appears acceptable.

## **5.6 Living Environment Domain**

1. Ballymena Borough Council feels that there are a number of indicators not included which could be, and these are the number of vacant properties in both the private and the public sector, access to 'green' space, an indication of fuel poverty, air quality information, the quality of living conditions of the travelling community, reference to graffiti and territorial markings, housing density, population density as well as an indication of how many people there are in temporary housing and also a measure on environmental health. The outdoor physical environment indicator is also supported.

2. In relation to the Local Area Problem Score we feel that housing quality is a minimal issue as the standard of housing is now fairly good. However housing access is still an issue with multiple immigrants in some areas sharing rooms and so this should be included in the overcrowding domain. There also appears to be a problem with homelessness figures in that they are often underestimated in rural areas where individuals are less likely to present themselves as homeless.

3. The proposed method of combination appears acceptable.

4. We feel that more information is required on the weighting of the indicators within the sub domains.

## **5.7 Crime Domain**

1. We believe that the two domains of Living Environment and Crime are interconnected as anti-social behaviour affects the quality of the environment, however we would support the concept of a separate Crime domain. With reference to its indicators we feel that more could be added including suspensions and expulsions due to school based crime, ethnic or racially motivated crime, intimidation, offences, paramilitary type crime, public order offences, an indicator of anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, drugs related crime, drug seizures as well as an indicator on the perception or fear of crime. A measure of total crime could be included as well as an indication of displacement due to crime.

2. We believe there are some problems with the existing indicators in that the hotspots where crimes occur do not accurately reflect deprivation in the area from which those who commit crimes actually live. The sources of crime data tends only to come from the PSNI, however not all crimes are reported to the PSNI or even recorded. We would question the definition of



criminal damage on whether to use the PSNI’s or the Fire Brigade’s definition in that these differ.

3. The proposed method of combination appears acceptable.

## **6. Data Time Point, Denominators, Geography and Spatial Scale**

1. It is thought that the proposed time point for the data would lead to a lack of consistency between administrative boundaries as well as a lack of comparability with 2001 in that a difficulty in measuring the changes in deprivation may occur.

2. Taking the proposed denominators from estimates for 2003 from the 2001 Census appears acceptable.

3. We feel that the lower the geographical disaggregation the better and that SOA’s will be easy to understand and local pockets of deprivation for targeting resources can be easily identified. SOA’s should be made up of areas of similar population size as well as providing better mapping to local communities, however there may be an issue if SOA’s are known by numbers rather than names as so they will be hard to remember. We propose it would be better if they were named to reduce confusion with another geographical area. Small rural areas will be lost in the sense that deprivation may not be identified.

## **7. The Methodology**

1. The proposed methodology appears acceptable.

2. The proposed weighting principles appear acceptable.

3. The B weights are favoured as they are more balanced however as crime and the living environment are given greater weights in this option we feel they will be more difficult to measure. The one drawback of Weights B is that education is played down. The education weighting should be increased as education is considered to be the major gateway out of deprivation. Geographical access to services should be attributed a greater weight also.

## **Annex A: Super Output Areas**

### **2. Creating SOA’s for Northern Ireland**

1. Ballymena Borough Council feel that yes there is a need for SOA’s in Northern Ireland as they would assist with analysis of borough issues.

2. We feel that a target population size of 2000 people is not appropriate because rural areas may be lost as 2000 people represent a vast area within rural communities and so deprivation in rural areas may be hidden.

3. With the ward-by-ward based method of creation, pockets of deprivation in some areas may be hidden within more affluent wards, however in other areas the opposite may happen in that pockets of deprivation may be more easily identified.

4. We are unsure how the method of building up SOA’s based on housing tenure and household type would actually work out.

5. There are no additional/other constraints that should be used to create SOA’s that we can identify.



6. The methods that should be used to disseminate SOA information should include primary statutory communication channels and through community and voluntary support networks e.g. Local Government and North Antrim Community Network and where applicable through local individual community and voluntary organisations.

#### **4. Use of SOA's to report Deprivation Measures**

1. We feel that people may get confused with using another geographical area and so SOA's should not be the core geographical unit to report Deprivation Measure but instead should be used alongside wards.

2. Yes, the economic deprivation measure is definitely still required.

3. No, the summary measures cited in the consultation document are not enough to meet users needs and we feel clarification and further information is needed on the impacts of using the new geography for urban vs. rural areas.