

CONSULTATION FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION MEASURE 2009

1. Thank you for providing us with a copy of the consultation document and for giving us the opportunity to comment on the proposed update of the NI Deprivation Measures. I have circulated the consultation document among my Departmental colleagues and have collated their views on the update proposals.
2. In general, DETI was content with the procedures used to construct the 2005 Multiple Deprivation Measures and since the 2009 Measures will be limited to a broad update of these, there were no major issues raised in relation to the proposed content of the 2009 indicators. There were, however, some comments made in relation to the reference period used for producing the indicators and in relation to output geographies, as follows:

Reference period for indicators in Income & Employment Domains

3. The consultation document states that the indicators in these domains will be based on data for the period 2008/09, but doesn't give details of the exact time frame to be used. In order to fully reflect the differential geographical impact of the current economic downturn, we would suggest that the indicator data is based on the latest data available at the time of production.
4. The case for using the most up-to-date data is outlined by the following example. During the year September 2008 – 2009, the highest proportional increase in unemployment benefit claimants was in Cookstown DCA (+151%), with the lowest increase in Strabane DCA (+42.5%). The effect of the recession on the geographical dispersion of economic deprivation is therefore better reflected by the use of the latest available data (i.e. the latest data for Cookstown would show it to be relatively more deprived in employment terms than the data for one year earlier). Failure to use the most up-to-date information may lead to criticism of the measures.

Output geographies for the 2009 MDM

5. The introduction of Super Output Areas (SOA's) as the core geography for the 2005 measures was a useful addition and we agree that they should be kept for the 2009 update. However, SOA's are sometimes considered too finite for the monitoring of DETI policies and district council or parliamentary constituency area measures have been used in preference. We would therefore be grateful if you could ensure that the 2009 measures will be available at higher levels of geography, including those geographies that emerge from the current Boundary Commission review (e.g. new Electoral Ward, PCA and Super Council areas).

Consultation questions

6. DETI are in favour of the changes proposed in the consultation document to both the Income and Employment deprivation domains. However, we do not have any strong views on the questions raised in relation to the other 'non-economy' related domains. We would therefore be happy to accept the Steering Group's view on these issues.