

**Findings of the Consultation
on Output Geography for the
Updated Multiple Deprivation Measure
(NIMDM 2017)**

June 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has been commissioned by the cross-departmental Statistics Coordinating Group to undertake an update of the current Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM 2010), which were last published in 2010 and which remain the official measures until the update has been completed. Throughout the remainder of the paper the updated measures will be referred to as NIMDM 2017.
- 1.2. One of the first activities of the deprivation team was to run a consultation on the output geography for the updated Deprivation measures. The Review of Public Administration (RPA) in Northern Ireland created 11 new Local Government Districts and a new administrative geography based on a reduced number of Electoral Wards (462 as opposed to 582). This negated the long standing relationship between statistical geographies and administrative geographies in Northern Ireland with the consequence that statistical geographies (Small Areas and Super Output Areas) no longer completely nest within Wards.
- 1.3. In line with the Principle 1 and Protocol 1 of the [Code of Practice](#), the consultation set out to identify user requirements to allow a balanced decision on the deprivation output geography to be taken.

2. CONSULTATION PAPER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

- 2.1. A [consultation paper](#) was drawn up to provide the background for the update of Deprivation measures and in particular the reasons for consulting on the output geography. It outlined the options for the geographical levels for which NIMDM 2017 could be produced and published, together with the advantages and disadvantages of both options.
- 2.2. [Option I](#) was to continue to base the primary outputs on the Super Output Area (SOA) geography, whereas [Option II](#) was to undertake a complete re-design of the underlying statistical geography with a view to developing a new set of small statistical geographies that nest within the new Electoral Wards. Annex A illustrates the hierarchy of administrative and statistical geographies in Northern Ireland.

- 2.3. The consultation paper described the advantages and disadvantages of each option. The only disadvantage of Option I was that there would be no precise read across from Super Output Area or Census Small Area results to the new 462 Electoral Wards that resulted from the Review of Public Administration. In contrast, Option II had several disadvantages, including (a) a considerable delay the release of the NIMDM 2017 results – potentially by more than six months – (b) a loss of data continuity over time, (c) the new sub-ward geography areas will not nest perfectly within the 18 Assembly Areas, (d) resource implications for data custodians, and (e) any real and/or perceived disclosure risks.
- 2.4. The paper concluded with the proposal that Option I is the most viable given (a) current circumstances and (b) the demands from key users within government to complete the update as speedily as possible.
- 2.5. Consultees were asked to:
- Consider and advise on the extent to which the proposal was fit for their purposes; and
 - Outline if they had a specific need for deprivation information for new Electoral Wards and, in that event, outline (i) why the information was important, (ii) what it will be used for, (iii) how it will be used and (iv) the implications should the information not be available.
- 2.6. These key questions were formally presented in the [consultation questionnaire](#) (see Annex B). Each individual question and its responses will be discussed in Section 5 of this paper. First though, Section 3 describes the evaluation criteria that were set in the consultation document, while Section 4 describes the consultation process.

3. EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 3.1. The consultation document outlined how NISRA would evaluate responses to the consultation, which was based on a combination of user requirements and operational considerations as outlined below.

User requirements

- Proposed purpose for which the updated deprivation measures will be used
- Need for information on lower-level geographical areas
- Need for information for the new administrative geographies arising from the RPA
- Assessment of need for comparability beyond Northern Ireland
- Need for continuity with previous Multiple Deprivation Measures

Operational Considerations

- Data availability and quality
- Public acceptability
- Burden on data suppliers
- Actual and perceived data disclosure risks
- Continuity of outputs over time more generally
- Timescales

3.2. The consultation paper also stipulated that the results of the consultation will be (a) presented to a meeting of the Steering Group, which will ultimately take a decision on the proposed way forward, and (b) will be made publicly available.

4. CONSULTATION PROCESS

4.1. The consultation ran from 10 February 2016 to midnight on 4 May 2016, a 12 week consultation period following the NI Government guidance at the time. Respondents were encouraged to use the online consultation portal, but there was also provision to download PDF and MS Word versions of the questionnaire that could be forwarded to the deprivation team by post or e-mail.

4.2. The online portal has several advantages, including the analysis of responses, the implementation of the [Moderation Policy](#), the publication of responses and the manual imputation of responses received through other media.

- 4.3. The dissemination of the consultation used several channels, as outlined in the Deprivation Communication Strategy, including the Executive Office's Section 75 Consultation list. An email was sent with links to the consultation document and questionnaire to 667 recipients, but 119 were undeliverable. For 15 of those, postal addresses were available, and hence they were added to the 136 recipients that did not have an email address. Out of those, 14 were returned undeliverable.
- 4.4. There were limited means to encourage responses in the latter part of the consultation period due to Purdah¹. A reminder was sent just before this period started from the NINIS Twitter account. Attendees to the Domain Expert Groups were reminded of this consultation during meetings.

5. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

- 5.1. There were 17 responses to the consultation on the output geography for the updated Multiple Deprivation Measure. The online portal was used by 12 respondents, and three completed questionnaires were returned by email. A further two letters were received by email, which did not follow the structure of the questionnaire, but from which responses to the specific questions were extracted.
- 5.2. Two responses were received from different individuals within the same organisation. Given the overlap between their responses, these will be treated as one response.
- 5.3. Respondents came from Local Government (6), Statutory Bodies (5), Central Government (3), a community organisation and a political party. This mix of organisations ensured a wider view on the issue at hand.
- 5.4. The first question of this consultation concerned views on the proposal.

“To what extent do you agree with NISRA’s proposed option to base the primary outputs of the Deprivation Update on Super Output Areas?”

¹ The Northern Ireland Assembly Elections took place on 5th May 2016; the associated Purdah period started on 29th March 2016.

Nine respondents agreed with the proposal, six disagreed and one respondent expressed no strong view. For those who agreed, the most common reasons were comparability over time, the identification of pockets of deprivation and the earlier availability of updated deprivation statistics. The proposed purposes of deprivation measures included monitoring change/improvement over time and resource allocation/service delivery.

- 5.5. For those who disagreed with the proposal – four Local Government Districts, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and one individual respondent – the most common reason was the lack of alignment with the new administrative geographies.
- 5.6. Regardless of the answer to the first question, respondents were also asked the following:

“Do you have a specific need for deprivation information for the new 462 Electoral Wards?”

Nine respondents indicated that they had such need, including all six respondents who disagreed with the proposal plus three of the nine respondents who agreed with the proposal.

- 5.7. The engagement with Local Government, including elected representatives and planning/policy officers, was the main reason given by the three respondents who agreed with the proposal but still required deprivation information for the new Wards. Table 1 summarized the responses to this consultation.
- 5.8. The consultation paper made reference to the evaluation criteria, including user requirements and operational considerations. Table 1 below summarized the responses to this consultation in respect of these criteria.
- 5.9. Comparability beyond Northern Ireland was not mentioned in any response. The proposed purposes for which the updated deprivation measures will be used – mainly resource allocation – are stated by nearly all respondents, regardless of whether they agree with the proposal.

Table 1: Stated user requirement by geography preference

Criteria	Preference of Output Geography		
	SOA /SA only	New Ward only	Both SOA / New Ward
Number of respondents	6	6	3
Purpose – resource allocation	2	6	3
Purpose – monitoring	1	3	2
Pockets of deprivation	3	1	1
Continuity over time	5	-	2
Data availability	1	1	1
Public acceptability/representation	2	2	2
Time scales	2	-	2

- 5.10. Timescales were mentioned by four respondents, all of whom agreed with the proposal that the primary outputs should be based on SOAs. Importantly, data custodians were not represented among the respondents, who would have been key in assessing data availability and quality, burden on data suppliers and disclosure risks. However, these concerns were aired by data suppliers represented in the various Deprivation Domain Expert Groups. In particular, they were concerned about the disclosure risks that can arise through the differencing of results for overlapping areas, as the new Wards are a relatively new geography.
- 5.11. Five of the 11 new District Councils submitted a response to this consultation. Only one agreed with the proposal and did not have a need for deprivation statistics for the new Wards. The four Districts who did state the need for new Ward information indicated that they would use it for identifying priorities, resource allocation and monitoring effectiveness of interventions. These reasons were mirrored by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, which has aligned its Policing Districts to the 11 Local Government Districts. In general, these organisations stated that the absence of Ward-level deprivation measures would result in less efficient resource allocation and priority setting.

- 5.12. The four District Councils and the Police Service of Northern Ireland indicated that they would use both the Multiple Deprivation Measure and the Domain specific scores/ranking. Only one District² indicated that it would use individual indicator data where available.
- 5.13. Only one Council³ highlighted the need to develop a sub-Ward statistical geography to adequately reflect neighbourhoods as a means to identify pockets of deprivation. This request was made despite the consultation paper indicating that this would delay the project by around six months, have resource implications and give rise to potential disclosure risks – the latter would be of concern to data custodians.

6. RECOMMENDATION FROM NISRA TO THE STEERING GROUP

- 6.1. In summary, while the majority of respondents agreed with the proposal to use Super Output Areas as the main output geography of the updated Multiple Deprivation Measure. However, the results also indicated a general need to produce deprivation statistics for the new Electoral Wards. The requirement by one respondent to create a new sub-ward geography was considered to be negligible compared to (a) the numerous calls for a timely release of new measures and (b) the considerable operational issues for all Northern Ireland statistics associated with creating a new sub-Ward geography at this time, particularly given the current Boundary Commission's review of the Parliamentary Constituencies.
- 6.2. NISRA therefore recommends to the Deprivation Steering Group to use Super Output Areas as the main output geography of the updated Multiple Deprivation Measure, to be published in mid-2017.

² Belfast City Council

³ This response came from Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council, and was received three weeks after the consultation period closed. This consultation was discussed at Council meetings:
<http://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Council-23-May-website.pdf#page=8>

- 6.3. NISRA recognises the user requirement for deprivation statistics for the new Electoral Wards. It is committed to work with the data custodians to collect information at the lowest possible geography (for example, postcode level), to identify disclosure risks and explore measure to mitigate those risks. It is also committed to engage with users to explore the best use of the available information for their specific purposes.
- 6.4. NISRA has recognised the user need for deprivation statistics for the new electoral Wards. It will endeavour to create deprivation measures for this geography that are internally coherent with those for Super Output Areas, but by necessity these will be on an approximated basis. Appropriate information regarding quality will be published alongside these ward level data so that informed and proper use can be made of them. The timeline for release will be slightly later than the main measures and NISRA will keep users informed as the project proceeds.

7. OUTPUT GEOGRAPHY FOR NIMDM 2017 – DECISION

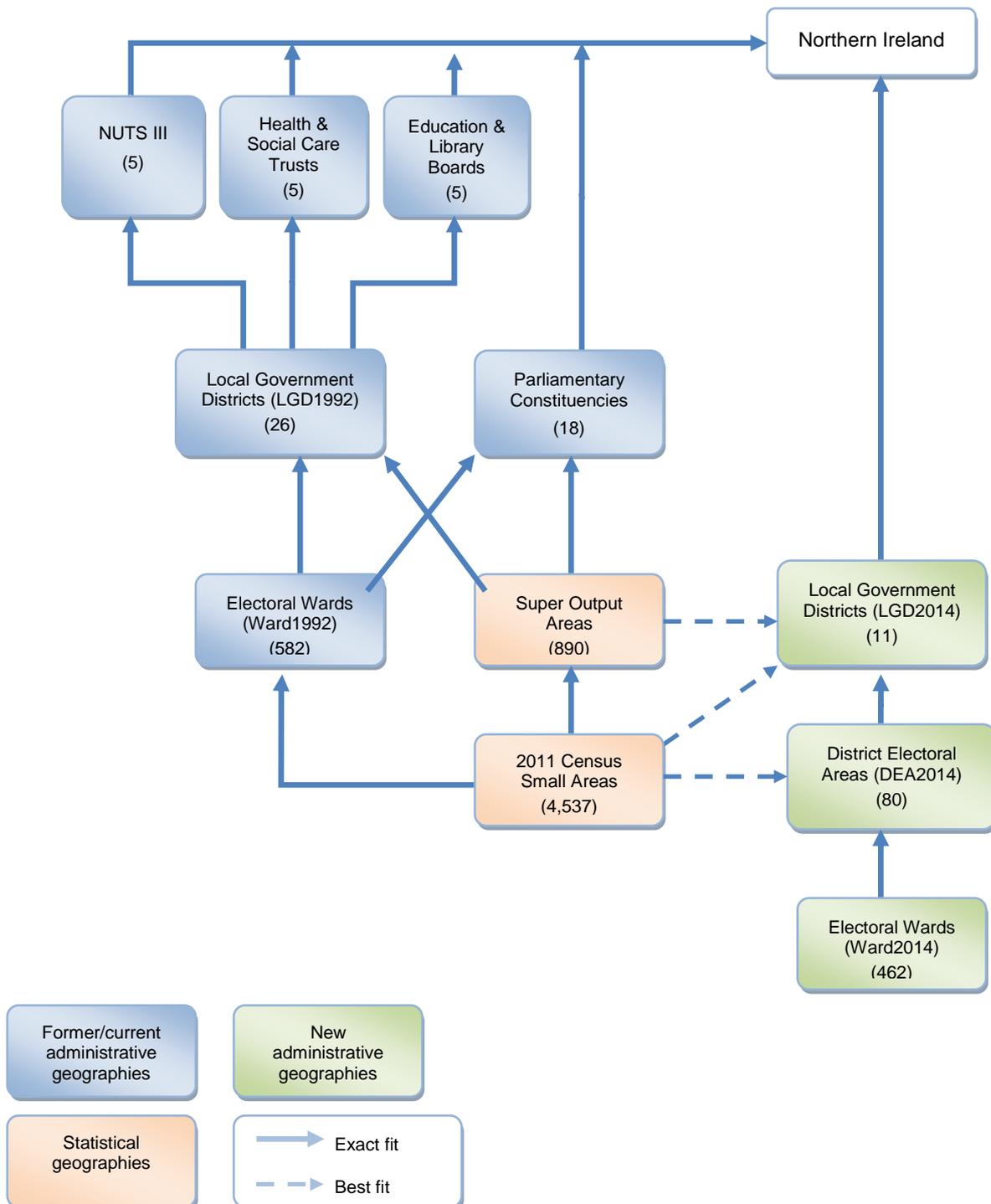
- 7.1. The results from the consultation and NISRA's recommendation as described above were presented to the Deprivation Steering Group when it met on 17th June 2016⁴.
- 7.2. The Deprivation Steering Group was in support of NISRA's proposal to use Super Output Areas as the main output geography of the updated Multiple Deprivation Measure, to be published in mid-2017. It also welcomed NISRA's commitment to create deprivation measures for the new Electoral Wards on an approximate basis at a later stage.
- 7.3. The decision of the Steering Group on the output geography for the updated Multiple Deprivation Measure, alongside the responses to the consultation, will be published on the NISRA website. Known users of deprivation statistics and members of the Domain Expert Groups will also be informed of this decision.

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⁴ The minutes of this meeting will be published at http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2017.htm.

ANNEX A: HIERARCHY OF GEOGRAPHIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The diagram below shows the hierarchy of administrative and statistical geographies in Northern Ireland. Figures in brackets indicate the number of areas. Arrows indicate if an exact (straight) or best fit (dashed) relationship is available and valid for all of the larger geographies.



ANNEX B: DEPRIVATION GEOGRAPHY CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Consultation Questionnaire

The purpose of this consultation is to consider the options for the geographical levels for which the Updated Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM 2017) will be produced and published. This consultation will close at midnight on 4 May 2016.

Our preferred way for you to respond to this consultation is [online](#).

Please note, for your response to be included in our analysis, you must answer questions marked with a star (*) in [Section 2: About you](#) and [Section 3: Consent](#).

If you wish to respond by email or on paper, please download the Consultation Questionnaire (PDF version or MS Word version). When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it:

Email: deprivation.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk

Post: Deprivation
NISRA
McAuley House
2-14 Castle Street
Belfast
BT1 1SA

Section 1: Response to the Proposal of Deprivation Output Geography

There are broadly two options for the output geography for NIMDM 2017. The proposed option (Option I) is to continue (as was the case with NIMDM 2010 and NIMDM 2005) to base the primary outputs on the Super Output Area geography, which has been in use for over a decade. The alternative (Option II) is to develop a new statistical sub-geography that nests within the new Electoral Wards – see Sections 6 and 7 of the [consultation document](#).

To help us understand your data needs and carefully assess those needs against other competing priorities, it is important that you provide as much detail as you can to support your response. This will ensure your view is fully considered in our evaluation.

1. To what extent do you agree with NISRA's proposed option to base the primary outputs of the Deprivation Update on Super Output Areas?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No strong view

Please include details in support of your views.

2. Do you have a specific need for deprivation information for the new 462 Electoral Wards?

- Yes
- No – continue to Section 2 (page 4)

3a. Please outline why the information is important for new Electoral Wards?

3b. Please outline what the information for new Electoral Wards is used for?

For example, resource allocation, target most deprived areas, policy monitoring, research, etc..

3c. Please outline how the information on deprivation for new Electoral Wards will be used?

For example, overall rank, domain-specific rank, individual indicators, etc..

3d. Please outline the implications if the information for new Electoral Wards will not be available?

Please remember to complete [Section 2: About you](#) and [Section 3: Consent](#) at the end of this document.

Section 2: About you

Please provide your contact details.

Your name *

Organisation (if applicable) *

Email address *

Telephone number

* Response required

Are you answering this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?

- Organisation
 Individual

Which of the following best describes the sector you work in?

This will assist us in monitoring the range of users the consultation has reached.

- Central government
 Local government
 Statutory body (for example, health, education, transport, housing etc)
 Private sector
 Social / Academic research
 Market research / Data analytics
 Charity / Community / Voluntary
 Utility provider
 Press / media
 Other – please specify: _____

May we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation?

This may be to follow up any specific points we need to clarify.

- Yes
 No

May we contact you in future about the Multiple Deprivation Update?

For example, to inform you of the results of this consultation, further consultations on deprivation or the final results of this project.

- Yes
 No

Section 3: Consent

To support transparency in our decision making process, all responses to this consultation will be made public (subject to our [Moderation Policy](#)). This will include the name of the responding organisation (if applicable). However, names of individuals will only be published if you give consent below. Please note that we will not publish your contact details.

- Yes, I consent to my name being published with my response**
- No, please remove my name before publishing my response**

(Please be aware that any information provided in response to this consultation could be made publicly available if requested under a Freedom of Information request).

Additional information

Do you have any further comments relevant to this consultation?