



**Poverty in Belfast: What can the
Council Do?
Belfast City Council's Framework
to Tackle Poverty and Reduce
Inequalities**

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Introduction

One of Belfast City Council's corporate objectives is to contribute to reducing inequalities in Belfast. This Framework describes the role our services can play in raising awareness of poverty and inequalities in Belfast and in contributing to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast. It is not in the Council's power to end poverty in Belfast, but we can make our services more accessible and effective.

Purpose of the Framework

The purpose of the Framework is:

- To raise awareness of poverty and inequalities in Belfast;
- To improve access to, and delivery of, councils services;
- To better target existing council resources to contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast; and
- To use the council's statistical and performance management systems to monitor the levels of poverty across the city and in neighbourhoods and the council's achievements following implementation of the Framework.

The Framework defines clear and concrete actions the council is already taking and will take over the next 5 years.

Poverty in Belfast

Poverty remains one of the most persistent and significant issues facing Northern Ireland with the population in Belfast being particularly affected. The city has eight of the 10 most deprived wards¹ in the region and nearly half (48%) of the population in the Belfast local government district live in the most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland. The most recent deprivation measures from 2010 show that 57% of the most deprived SOAs in Northern Ireland are in Belfast.

In 2008 the council commissioned some exploratory research² from Dr Mike Morrissey into the issue of poverty in Belfast to assess the scale of the issue and its complexity. Some of the findings include:

- Around 20% of people in Belfast live in poverty which is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 18% and the EU average of 16%;
- 37.6% of children live in workless households – NI average is 21%;
- 11% of lone parents are in poverty compared to 8% for NI;
- Those groups who in poverty or who are most at risk of poverty include:
 - Older people
 - Children in workless households
 - Lone parents
 - People from minority ethnic communities
 - People with disabilities.

The NI Executive defines a household in poverty³ as having one that has an income that is 60% or less than that of the median household income in the year. This is equal to £115 per week for a single adult with no dependent children or £195 per week for a single adult with two dependent children under 14.

¹ <http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/>

² M. Morrissey, "Research on Poverty in Belfast", 2008

³ www.niassembly.gov.uk

The EU defines relative poverty as:

'People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live.

They may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted.⁴

The council has limited powers in terms of increasing income. However, we can have some impact on the disadvantages listed above that create poverty and inequalities. The Framework therefore adopts the EU definition of relative poverty and focuses on these wider determinants.

What can a local authority do?

Northern Ireland district councils do not have a direct statutory remit to tackle poverty and we recognise that we can't provide an additional income to households at risk of poverty. However, we can contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities by raising awareness; making services more accessible and better target our resources. Given the large number of services that we deliver at a local level, there are opportunities for the council to have a direct and positive impact.

For example, we offer a range of programmes at our leisure centres and in our community facilities. Decisions around the design of such programmes, their pricing, opening times and promotion will all affect how easy it is for those in poverty to get access to them. We can be more inclusive in our service delivery, focus on where the needs are and ensure that the resources we have are used in the best way and with high social impact to serve all citizens in Belfast.

The council also delivers economic development programmes and works with small and micro businesses to help them grow and build their capacity in obtaining contracts from the public sector. The work of our procurement and economic development work clearly demonstrates that small actions can make a big difference in providing opportunities for micro businesses or social economy enterprises. A full list of council's activities and services that have an impact on people in poverty is in **Appendix 1**.

Why create a Framework now?

Belfast City Council has decided to develop this Framework in order to:

- 1) Improve Belfast's urban competitiveness and encourage sustainable economic growth by addressing persistent social inequalities. Belfast can only become the leading world city if economic growth is followed by increase in social equality.
- 2) Align the council to the emerging regional and national policies in the area of poverty and social inclusion, including but not limited to OFMDFM's Lifetime Opportunities and its current work on developing a regional Child Poverty Strategy.

⁴ From The European Anti-Poverty Network's website (www.eapn.org) and adapted from, Joint Report on Social Inclusion, European Commission, 2004

- 3) Ensure that through joint working we achieve economies of scale and integrate people and place based approaches 'doing more for less'.
- 4) Reduce the cost to the economy (and to the council): New research⁵ estimates that child poverty costs £25 billion each year in costs to the Exchequer and reduced GDP. The latest research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that child poverty represents 71% of social services spend across the UK.
- 5) Raise the council's profile as a key city wide local service provider supporting citizens across the city.
- 6) Fulfil our existing obligation under the Corporate Plan: A Framework for tackling poverty and reducing inequalities will make a substantial contribution to fulfilling our strategic objective to reduce inequalities under the 'Better Support for People and Communities'.
- 7) Support communities to deal with the legacies of the conflict - The most deprived areas within Belfast are those areas that suffered most during the recent conflict and are also the areas where there are disproportionate levels of poor health, educational opportunities, job opportunities and social opportunities. These legacies need to be tackled in a coordinated manner in order to reduce overall poverty and inequality.
- 8) Build on the 2010 European Year of Social Exclusion: This is the European year against poverty and exclusion. The key objectives are to raise public awareness about these issues and renew the political commitment of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion. It is an opportunity for Belfast City Council to contribute to and support this work.

How does the Framework support the Council's corporate objectives?

The Corporate Plan sets out six strategic themes for the organisation (NOTE: Once new corporate plan is developed, these themes and goals will need to be revisited). These are based on our analysis of need in the city, the views of the public and future challenges and opportunities.

Below we describe how the Framework supports each themes:

1. City leadership - strong, fair, together

This is about 'place-shaping' and being ambitious for Belfast and its people through advocacy, partnership working and leading by practical example.

Related poverty aims:

- Improve poverty and inequalities knowledge base and awareness;
- Influence regional and national poverty and inequalities policy; and
- Enhance the council's role in reducing poverty and tackling inequalities in Belfast.

2. Better opportunities for success across the city

This is about wealth creation – supporting business, developing key growth sectors and securing investment within the city by supporting opportunity, skills, innovation and regeneration.

Related poverty aims:

- Increase the use of the council's assets to support employment and job creation; and
- Increase the growth of social economy projects.

⁵ Joseph Rowntree Foundation: 'What can we do to tackle child poverty?', 2009

- Reduce worklessness and improve skills

3. Better care for Belfast's environment

The council supports a clean, green city now and for the future by securing the long term viability of the city and its environment by creating a cleaner, greener and healthier environment and through education and protection.

Related poverty aims:

- Contribute to waste reduction; and
- Reduce fuel poverty.

4. Better support for people and communities

This is about finding ways to better connect with local people; building capacity to influence and address local issues, tackling inequalities and improving relationships; making the best use of local services to address the issues facing the city and its neighbourhoods and enhancing the city by making it safer, healthier, more inclusive, welcoming and enjoyable.

Related poverty aims:

- Improve the quality of life of people in or at risk of poverty;
- Effectively engage people in or at risk of poverty, particularly in areas in and around interfaces where the legacies of conflict are most stark; and
- Provide advice services for people at risk of poverty.

5. Better services

Making the best use of our resources to provide a range of services which best meet local need and improve quality of life; providing services to a high standard that are easy to access and that maximise their value for money and effectiveness.

Related poverty aims:

- Improve our service delivery to provide a better access for people in poverty.

6. Better value for money

Ensuring resources are fully aligned to our priorities; that our services deliver value for money; that we attract people who will work to deliver the best services and develop the organisation and lead the organisation through the RPA.

Related poverty aims:

- Maximise social impact of our procurement, project and regeneration spend.

To achieve the goals we have developed a detailed Framework that brings together many existing contributory strands of council work with a number of new initiatives which have been proposed by the relevant council services.

How will we achieve these aims?

A Draft Action Plan

Theme	Initiative	Outcome (linked to goals)	Council lead	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Budget
<i>City leadership</i>	Develop an online resource for sharing information on poverty and social exclusion for all partners	Improvement in poverty & inequalities knowledge base	Development (PBDU)	✓					£500 (Development)
	Integrate the new equality framework in corporate planning	Enhanced role in reducing poverty and tackling inequalities	Good relations	✓					Existing
	Ensure up to date poverty & inequalities data included in CityStats info	Improvement in poverty & inequalities knowledge base	Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Staff time
	Maximise investment and funding streams to support Council work on poverty & inequalities	Enhanced role in reducing poverty and tackling inequalities	Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Staff time
	Exchange best practise with European and national partners	Aligned regional/national poverty & inequalities policy	Development/HES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Existing
	Undertake any necessary research with external partners	Improvement in poverty & inequalities knowledge base	Development		✓				£20,000 (Development)
	Develop partnerships and build political legacy	Aligned regional/national poverty & inequalities policy	Chief Executive's		✓	✓	✓		N/A

Better opportunities for success	Utilising council assets and facilities to reach marginalised groups (community, open spaces and leisure venues)	Increased use of the council's assets to support employment and job creation;	Development (EDU & Com Serv), Parks and leisure	✓	✓				Existing
	Raising skills and reducing worklessness	Reduce worklessness and improve skills with our partners		✓	✓	✓			Existing and seeking ESF
	Actively support development of social economy projects	Increase the growth of social economy projects.	Development (EDU)/ Property and Projects	✓	✓	✓	✓		Existing
	Develop community tourism enterprises	Increased growth of social economy projects.	Development (CA&T)	✓	✓	✓			TBC
	Ensure full inclusion of marginalised people through the council's employment programmes	Reduce worklessness and improve skills with our partners	Finance and resources	✓	✓				
	Through Disability Action Plan ensure people with disability have full access to employment opportunities			✓	✓				Existing (DEL)
	Provide support to older people who seek employment opportunities			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Extend a cultural and arts skills development programme for marginalised	Reduce worklessness and improve skills with our partners	Development (CA&T)	✓	✓	✓			TBC
Better care for Belfast's environment									

Better support for people and communities	Assist in development of a regional food scheme to provide people in poverty with healthy food	Contribution to reduced waste	HES/ Dev PBDU support	✓	✓	✓		TBC	
	Fuel poverty	Reduced fuel poverty	HES/Dev PBDU support	✓	✓	✓		Existing	
	Participation in Smart Cities			✓	✓			Potential EU money	
	Continue fuel stamp initiative and aim to extend it to all households in need	Fewer people in fuel poverty	HES	✓	✓	✓		Staff time	
	Ensure maximum delivery of NR commitments	Improved quality of life of people in or at risk of poverty	Development (SNAP)		✓	✓	✓	✓	Staff time
	Increase access to cultural development and outreach initiatives across the city	Improve the quality of life of people in or at risk of poverty;	Development (CA&T)		✓				Existing/ Staff time
	Develop community gardens in the areas of need	Improve the quality of life of people in or at risk of poverty;	Parks and Leisure		✓	✓	✓	✓	Existing/ Staff time
	Support & fund advice provision infrastructure in Belfast	Provide advice services for people at risk of poverty Improved quality of life	Development (Com Serv)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	DSD
Community Support Development Programme in partnership with the Public Health Agency	Improve the quality of life of people in or at risk of poverty;	Parks and Leisure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	PHA	

Better services	Develop capacity building through Community Development strategy		Community across the council	✓					Existing/ Staff time
	Explore feasibility of a Belfast Pass at a reduced rate for people on low incomes	Improved access of people in poverty	Development		✓				TBC
	In partnership with the Public Health Agency provide free access to leisure facilities in the most deprived wards in Belfast	Improved access of people in poverty			✓	✓			PHA
Better value for money	Ensure all children have access to parks and playgrounds	Improved access of people in poverty	SNAP to support P&L	✓	✓				Staff time
	Explore development of ‘social clauses’ in our procurement, project and regeneration spend	Maximised social impact of our spend	Properties and Projects (PBDU to support research)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	£20,000 (Dev PBDU)
	Develop indicators to measure the impact of regeneration on health and poverty in Belfast (linked to health)	Maximised social impact of our regeneration projects	HES	✓	✓	✓			URBACT
	Ensure a maximum social impact of our regeneration projects	Maximised social impact of our regeneration projects	Development		✓	✓	✓		Existing. Staff time
	Regularly monitor, report, evaluate and improve the action plan	Impact on action plan increased as a result of learning	Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	£20,000 (Development)

How will we measure the success?

Over the past few years the council has placed much greater emphasis on creating effective performance management systems that allows the organisations to better to measure the impact of our services on the city.

The poverty action plan will utilise the approaches and data gathering techniques emerging from these systems to assist with measuring the impact of the action plan on poverty in the city.

With the design of the action plan we have attempted to describe the clear linkages between:

- the measurable reality of poverty in Belfast
- the many inter-connected factors that contribute to it
- the subset of these factors which the council can have a positive impact on
- the strands of council work which can contribute to this impact

Impact of the action plan

We will use a number of ways to measure the success of this action plan. These will measure both the specific outputs from the action plan and a more indirect measure of impact based on the longitudinal tracking of a core set of key indicators.

External indicators

We have identified four sets of such indicators classified under the following headings:

- **Low income & employment**
- **Children and young people**
- **Communities**
- **Adult wellbeing**

Details of each indicator are listed in **Appendix Two**.

Internal indicators

There are a number of internal indicators which while not directly measuring the impact of our work on poverty, will contribute to the direct measurement of the performance of the action plans' various initiatives. These include:

Corporate theme	Proposed Performance indicator	Frequency
City leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total amount of leveraged money targeted at social inclusion projects• Number of people using the web portal	Quarterly
Better opportunities for success across the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of young people long-term unemployed who went through council's programmes (HR)• Percentage of jobs through regeneration projects that are given to local people• Number of set up social economy enterprises	Annually
Better care for Belfast's environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of all housing stock in fuel poverty	Annually

A corporate action plan to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of people through environmental projects (food scheme, community gardens) 	
Better support for people and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total amount of claw-back benefits drawn by the advice services Percentage of people who feel the council's work helps them play a bigger role in decision-making 	Quarterly Annually
Better services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people satisfied with council's services 	Biennially
Better value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of the council's contracts with at least 5% of spend towards social clause 	Annually

There are a number of additional indicators that will offer complementary qualitative data:

Ongoing citizen engagement

While developing this action plan we have established partnerships with a number of anti-poverty NGOs whose beneficiaries are people experiencing poverty. We aim to utilise these partnerships and enhance dialogue with people in poverty in order to ensure their ongoing engagement.

How will we report the progress?

The Development Department will monitor the day-to-day progress of the action plan. It will prepare and/or commission the monitoring and evaluation reports. We will utilise internal and external reporting mechanisms.

Internal mechanisms

Council's interdepartmental Health and Well-being Work Group will act as the main internal reference group for the action plan. Every 6 months a Poverty Monitoring Report will be produced and brought to the group for consideration. Consequently, the Chair of the Health and Well-being Work Group (Andrew Hassard, Director Parks & Leisure) will act as a champion for the action plan,

A formal report on the progress of the action plan will be brought to the Development Committee (**Strategic Policy & Resources Committee**) annually by the Director of Development.

In terms of progressing the work in specific parts of the action plan, additional mechanisms may be used, such as:

- **Policy Officers Group** – regular updates will be provided to POG.
- **Internal Task and finish groups** – for larger projects we will set up Task and Finish groups with responsibility to lead and produce interim progress reports on specific projects.
- **Belfast Citystats** – we will use Local Information System and Data Observatory to monitor and report on all relevant poverty indicators mapped across Belfast areas, against council's service delivery. This will be updated annually and will provide us with a direction of travel reference.

External reporting mechanisms

We will use two main methods to report our progress externally: the council's poverty website and biennial events for our partners.

- As part of the action plan we will set up a poverty section on the council's public website that is open to all internal and external partners which will have all the statistical information, maps, research documents and information on all relevant organisations and projects. This will be a live and interactive forum for exchange of information and seeking partners.
- Every two years we will organise 'progress events' for all stakeholders which will be used to communicate the progress, seek new ideas, exchange views and find new innovative ways of working together on this important issue.

Biennial review

As with any other action plan this is a flexible and fluid process which depends on the progress, milestones and other external circumstances which might have an impact on it. Thus, every two years we are planning to undertake an internal review of the action plan, identify its successes and areas for improvements to be addressed. This will also include equality screening to ensure that equality of opportunity is fully promoted through the course of the action plan.

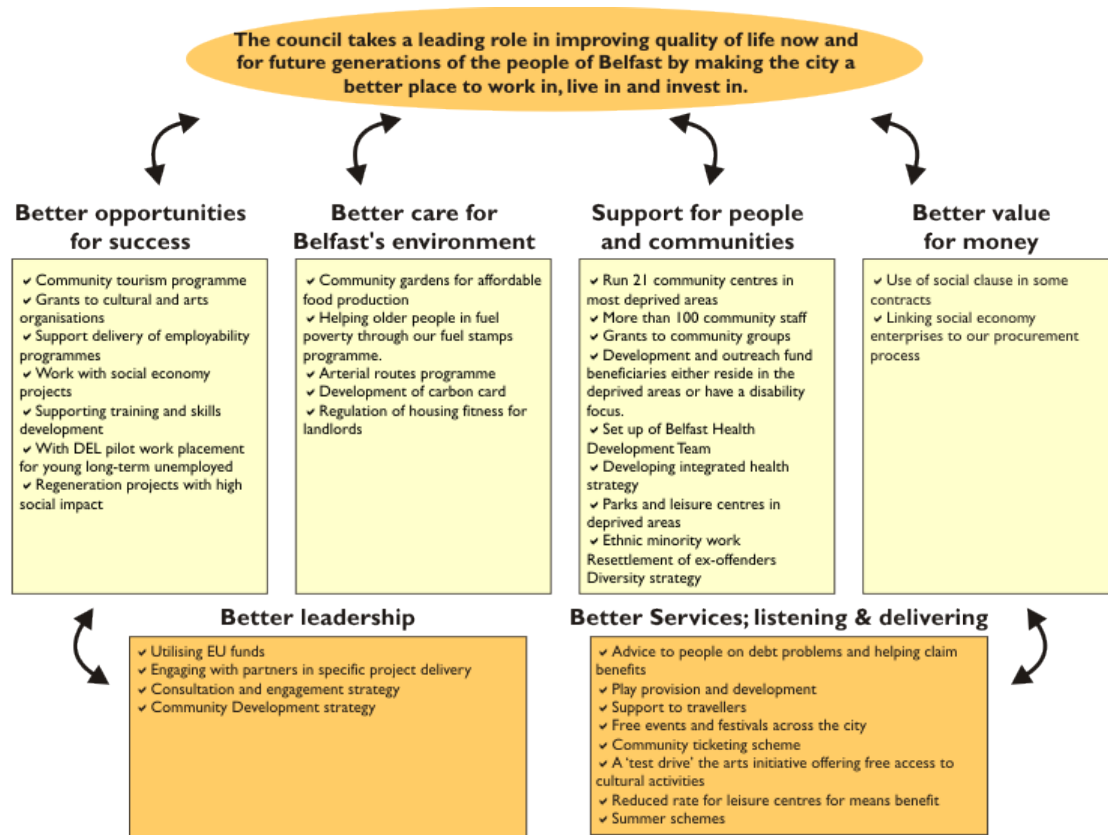
At the end of the five-year period of this plan, we are planning to commission an independent evaluation of the overall process to help us understand what went well and what needs to be improved in development of future corporate strategies.

What happens next?

This is a draft document that needs input from all our stakeholders – the more people and organisations we engage the more meaningful and effective this action plan will be. Thus we are planning a series of phases before we launch the final document:

- Public consultation November 2010 – January 2011
- Feedback analysis and redrafting of the document in January
- Final action plan to go to Committee in February 2011
- Publication on the final action plan in March 2011 (using internal designer)
- An event for our stakeholders to disseminate the final action plan in March 2011
- Development of a detailed action plan in March/April 2011
- Set up of Task and Finish groups
- Implementation to commence in April 2011
- First monitoring report to Committee in March 2012

Appendix 1: What is the council currently doing?



Appendix 2: Selection of detailed indicators

Risk of being in low income groups of individuals by various family and household characteristics			
Percentage of Individuals			
Local govt district (3 year average 2004-2007)	Before housing costs Below median 60%	After housing costs Below median 60%	All individuals (thousands)
Belfast	21	22	236.8
All individuals NI (thousands= 100%)	19	19	1,712.9
Percentage of children			
Belfast	25	28	53
All Children NI	22	23	430.2
Percentage of pensioners			
Belfast	23	15	41.7
All pensioners NI	28	21	269.9

Low income & employment	Low income	Percentage of households in Relative Poverty, unequivalised ⁶
		Percentage of households in Relative Poverty, equivalised ⁷
		Children in low-income households ⁸
	Income inequality	Pay inequalities between men and women ⁹
	Repossessions	Mortgage cases received and disposed ¹⁰
	Worklessness	Percentage of working-age adults unemployed ¹¹

Children and young people	Economic circumstances	Children in workless households ¹²
	Education	16 year olds not obtaining 5 GCSEs ¹³
		19-year-olds without a basic qualification ¹⁴
	Child health	Rate of infant mortality ¹⁵
		Teenage birth-rate ¹⁶
	Exclusion	16 to 19 year olds not in education, employment or training ¹⁷
Source: Small Area Income Measures (2003-2005)		
Source: Small Area Income Measures (2003-2005)		
Source: Labour Force Survey Local Area Database (2000-2008)	Percentage of workless households ¹⁸	
Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2004-2008)	Percentage disabled working age employed ¹⁹	
Source: Mortgage cases received and disposed (long term)	Percentage with long term illness ²⁰	
Source: Labour Force Survey Local Area Database (2000-2008)	Percentage of deaths to those aged under 75 ²¹	
Source: Labour Force Survey Local Area Database (2000-2008)	Standard Mortality Rates (2000-2008)	

¹³ Source: School leavers' survey (2005-2009)

¹⁴ Source: School leavers' survey (2005-2009)

¹⁵ Source: Demography Methodology Branch (2001-2009)

¹⁶ Source: Demography Methodology Branch (2001-2009)

¹⁷ Source: School leavers' survey (2005-2009)

¹⁸ Source: Labour Force Survey Local Area Database (2000-2008)

¹⁹ Source: Labour Force Survey Local Area Database (2000-2008)

²⁰ Source: Census (1991, 2001)

²¹ Source: Deaths (1999-2008)

		Percentages of households with limiting long-term illness ²³
	Access to services	Percentage of older people claiming at least one of the main benefits ²⁴
		Percentage of pensioners with no income other than Pension Credit ²⁵

Communities	Place	Percentage of households in fuel poverty ²⁶
		Concentrations of benefit recipients ²⁷
	Housing	Number of presenters that are Full Duty Applicant ²⁸ (FDA) ²⁹
		Percentage of dwelling tenure through Housing Association ³⁰
		Percentage of affordable houses ³¹
	Ability to travel	Percentage of households with access to a car ³²
	Crime	Violent crimes rate per 10,000 population ³³
		Percentage of persons 'worry about crime and personal safety' ³⁴

²² **Source:** Standardised Mortality Rates (1999-2008)

²³ **Source:** Census (1991, 2001)

²⁴ **Source:** Client Group Analysis Claimants (2002-2009)

²⁵ **Source:** State Pension Credit Claimants (2004-2009)

²⁶ **Source:** Northern Ireland House Condition Survey (2004 – 2009)

²⁷ **Source:** Client Group Analysis Claimants (2002-2009)

²⁸ **Full Duty Applicant (FDA):** this means the applicant is either homeless; eligible for assistance; in priority need or; unintentionally homeless.

²⁹ **Source:** Homelessness Statistics, Council for the Homeless NI (2005-2007)

³⁰ **Source:** House Condition Survey (2001-2006)

³¹ **Source:** Affordability (2001-2006)

³² **Source:** Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (2003-2008)

³³ **Source:** Recorded violent crime (2005-2009)

³⁴ **Source:** Perceptions of crime (2005-2008)