

Northern Ireland
Multiple Deprivation Measure 2009:
Consultation Document
Belfast City Council Response

1. Introduction

Belfast City Council welcomes the intention to update the Multiple Deprivation Measures 2005; it is important that the most current information possible is used to inform policy development. This paper outlines Belfast City Council's response to the update of **Multiple Deprivation Measures for 2009**. The Council's central premise is that areas of deprivation must be effectively and efficiently identified across Northern Ireland.

Multiple Deprivation Measures are used to identify those deprived areas most in need and, accordingly, will heavily influence regeneration spending and intervention activity. As such it is crucial that MDM accurately measures real deprivation.

The Council recognises that this is a timely review of the data given the changes in the economic climate of Northern Ireland since the last review. People across Northern Ireland are feeling the effects of the economic downturn and it is likely that this will continue for the foreseeable future and may be exacerbated by proposed cuts in government spending.

We would concur that a fuller methodological review of the measures is needed post RPA and the 2011 Census.

Belfast City Council acknowledges that using 2003 data and prior for the purposes of planning and intervention is limited and believes that every attempt should be made to use 2008/09 data where available.

The Council notes that the consultation document, does not detail the impact that the proposed changes to the domains is likely to have on the indices and would welcome further clarification with respect to this.

The Council would highlight Belfast's unique position in Northern Ireland as the capital city and regional driver. The resident population of Belfast is approximately 16% of the total Northern Ireland population. Belfast has been disproportionately impacted by the years of conflict which affected the region. Large concentrations of multiple deprivation exist in the north and west of the city and there are pockets all across Belfast including 8 of the 10 most deprived wards in Northern Ireland in terms of Multiple Deprivation. In light of this the Council would propose that consideration should be given to representation by Belfast City Council on the Steering Group for the next review of the measures.

Impact of RPA

The Review of Public Administration is gathering momentum with key decisions to be taken in the coming months; including decisions on the boundaries of local government. The Council seeks clarification on what mechanisms will be put in place to take account of the future proposed changes to boundaries brought about by the Review of Public

Appendix Two

Administration. We would also seek clarification that the data can be aggregated up to the new proposed District Council Areas

The Council would stress that it is important that the SOA and OAs can be aggregated to align with the new Belfast boundaries and the local, ward and district geographical area as this will be critical in ensuring that appropriate statistical intelligence can be captured to inform both service planning and delivery at the local level. This is also important in relation to the community planning process and ensuring that future delivery of public services meets local needs.

Funding allocation

In response to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2004 Belfast City Council highlighted the potential impact on funding streams following the update of the measures. It was stressed that where a commitment had been made to support projects or activities under the measures this should continue without prejudice to potential funding allocations resulting from the output of the measures. The Council would again highlight that consideration should be given to the impact on current funding streams of any adjustments to the measures at this time.

Concluding remarks

Belfast City Council's comments are intended to be constructive and positive and the Council looks forward to working with NISRA to ensure that the update of the measures will effectively identify those people in Belfast living with deprivation.

Although social and cultural divisions are prevalent throughout Northern Ireland they are most evident in Belfast. The segregated patterns of life in the city are marked at all levels. In many areas there is little cross-community contact or interaction between Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist communities, with neighbourhoods side by side in geographical terms but often living parallel lives with little in common. Of the 52 built interface barriers throughout Northern Ireland, 42 of these are in Belfast. The Council would again highlight comments made in the 2004 response that a measure of distance to a service is not necessarily a measure of accessibility of that service given the community geography of the city. Measuring access to services on a geographical basis only will not provide a true reflection and distort the index. The domain for proximity to services should also take into account other barriers to access to services including segregation and perceptions of territory and safety.

Comments concerning each domain are included at **Appendix 1** in the question template.

Appendix 1

Consultees are invited to comment on the following:

Income Deprivation Domain

Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?

Specifically

1 Whether Adults and Children in Households in receipt of Housing Benefit should be included in the domain?

1. Belfast City Council notes that Tax Credit data from HRMC is no longer available to NISRA for the purposes of this domain and we would be concerned that this would have a detrimental effect on the overall measure. We acknowledge that administratively this data is not currently available to NISRA however we would welcome the inclusion of this data should it become available.

The Council would note that the Income Deprivation measure relies heavily on benefit data which is somewhat limited in that it cannot accommodate a number of groups specifically pensioners in low-income households, low income families (working) and poverty due to debt. We would draw attention to the recent report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation '*Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2009*' which highlights these issues.

We support the inclusion of adults and children in receipt of housing benefit. The link between income and health inequalities is well established. We feel that it is beneficial to include data on both rent and rates elements of Housing Benefit as proposed.

The Council would also highlight that, given the restrictions imposed on migrant workers in terms of accessing out-of-work benefits, this domain may fail to take account of the income deprivation experienced by those in that group.

The Council notes that the Equality Directorate, OFMDFM has considered the final proposal to create a child specific multiple deprivation measure and considered it outside the remit of the current update. Given the levels of child poverty in Northern Ireland and the current political focus on child poverty-related issues we would strongly recommend that this measure is given full consideration when the review of the measures take place post the 2011 census.

The Council highlighted in the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004 response that an income deprivation affecting older people measure could be created. With the increasing importance of this issue Belfast City Council again recommends that a measure be fully incorporated in the next review of the measures.

Whilst acknowledging that the domains are weighted in line with previous NIMDM, this domain is critical and the weighting given to Income Deprivation needs to reflect that all other domains are directly or indirectly related to available incomes.

Employment Deprivation Domain

1 Whether, given the recommendations and changes to data availability, the proposed updated domain is acceptable?

1. Belfast City Council acknowledges that this domain seeks to identify all those of working age involuntarily out of the labour market. It is unfortunate that a specific indicator relating to hidden unemployment as recommended in the previous report will not be included. It is appreciated that the possible sources of information for this indicator namely the Labour Force Survey and the Family Resources Survey have too small a sample size to produce robust results at the small area level. However The Council would propose that further consideration is given to the inclusion of these surveys in the future possibly with a larger sample size that would lend itself to the small area level given the increased number of migrant workers in Northern Ireland.

Because of restrictions placed on some migrant workers in accessing out-of-work benefits, this section of the population may be disproportionately impacted by not including a measure on hidden unemployment.

The Council notes that the Steps to Work programme subsumes the main New Deal programmes and as yet has not been operating across Northern Ireland and will not be included in this domain. The Council is concerned that this may have a negative impact upon the robustness and completeness of determining employment deprivation. The Council would emphasise the need to include this data as soon as it becomes available across Northern Ireland in order to ensure that this domain is more robust.

Health Deprivation and Disability Domain

Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?

Specifically

- 1 Whether an Emergency Hospital Admission indicator should be included in the domain?
- 2 Whether Mental Health Hospital Admissions should be included in the Mental Health Indicator?
- 3 Whether a Children's Dental Health indicator should be included in the domain?
- 4 Whether a Low Birth Weight Indicator should be included in the domain?

1. The Council supports the inclusion of the Emergency Hospital Admission indicator as a welcome addition to the Health Deprivation and Disability domain.

2. Mental disorders and problems have a direct major impact on health and wellbeing, as they typically affect all areas of life, including social relationships. The Council welcomes the inclusion of Mental Health Hospital Admissions in the Mental Health Indicator as there currently is limited information available on mental health issues in Northern Ireland. The Council supports the proposal that this information is gathered alongside mood and anxiety prescription information and suicide data to form a mental health indicator which will in turn provide a more robust domain.

3. Good dental health is important in its own right, and also contributes to general health and wellbeing; therefore the inclusion of a Children's Dental Health indicator is considered a welcome addition to this domain.

4. It has been reported that smoking and poor nutrition during pregnancy are known to increase the likelihood of a mother giving birth to a baby of low birth weight. It is believed that there is a link between social disadvantage and higher risk of low birth weight. In light of this the Council supports the inclusion of this indicator in the domain.

Overall the Council welcomes the above additions to the Health Deprivation and Disability Domain and considers that the combination of these additions will enhance and strengthen the domain.

Additional Comments

When considering future revision of the domain, the Council would welcome consideration of other data, such as:

- GP referrals to mental health services e.g. psychiatric nurse;
- Alcohol/ drug misuse and smoking statistics;
- The length of waiting times for outpatient appointments.

Education, Skills and Training Domain

Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?

Specifically

- 1 Whether Key Stage 2 performance data should replace the 'proportions of children aged 11 and 12 not attending a grammar school'?
- 2 Whether primary level absenteeism rates should be included in the domain?
- 3 Whether the proportion of primary school age pupils with Special Education Needs should be included in the domain?
- 4 Whether the destination of school leavers indicator should include those not entering Further Education or training?
- 5 Whether three sub-domains should be introduced, decreasing the importance of 2001 Census data in the overall domain?

1. In line with the Council's response to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2004, Belfast City Council welcomes the replacement of the 'proportions of children aged 11 and 12 not attending a grammar school' with Key Stage 2 performance data. In line with the previous response, the Council would also recommend that data from Key Stage 1 is also included as an indicator in this domain as actions to address educational deprivation can prove more effective if identified at an early stage.

2, 3, 4 and 5. The Council is supportive of any enhancements which mean a more robust understanding of the extent of education, skills and training related deprivation. Alleviating the reliance on 2001 Census data is welcomed. Development towards a more spatially and temporally dynamic deprivation measure should be the aim.

Proximity to Services Domain

Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?

Specifically

- 1 Whether cross border service centres and accident and emergency hospitals should be included?
- 2 Whether a general service indicator should be included?
- 3 Whether the food shop indicator should be broadened to include convenience stores?
- 4 Whether dentists, opticians and pharmacists should be combined into a single indicator?
- 5 Whether council leisure centres should be included?
- 6 Whether the service centres should be based on service provision rather than having a population of at least 10,000?
- 7 Whether the calculation of proximity be based on time rather than distance?

In preface to the specific comments below, the Council would highlight as mentioned earlier, that although social and cultural divisions are prevalent throughout Northern Ireland they are most evident in Belfast. Therefore, Belfast City Council would highlight that proximity to a service be it based on time or distance is not necessarily a measure of accessibility of that service given the community geography of the city and Northern Ireland generally. As outlined in our Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004 response, the domain should take into account other barriers to access to services including segregation and perceptions of territory and safety.

The Council would also highlight that whilst a measure of travel by public transport cannot be included at this stage, we would strongly recommend that the Department of Regional Development works with Translink to allow this information to be gathered, in advance of the post 2011 Census.

In Belfast, there is a heavy reliance on public transport and this has a direct impact on access to services in the city. In research commissioned by the Council, the significance of transport and connectivity was stressed in terms of promoting access to shared spaces in the city. In particular, deprived communities tend to lack mobility and the diseconomies of segregation are borne disproportionately by the most disadvantaged communities in the city.

Poor access to job opportunities is exacerbated by low car ownership, low travel horizons, poor public transport connections across the city and perceptions of risk to personal security. There is a heavy reliance on public transport or local taxi services within these communities and therefore there are restrictions on the areas to which they can freely travel.

Appendix Two

It is therefore critical that a domain is developed before 2011 in order to measure the linkages between mobility, access to public transport and deprivation.

1. The Council would welcome further information as to whether the proposed change will have any impact in the Belfast context.

2, 3 The Council agrees in general with expansion of the indices where this will give a fuller understanding of deprivation, but would refer you to our earlier comments about proximity not equalling access in the Belfast context.

4. The Council would recommend that pharmacies should be considered exclusively due to the development of the Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership

5. The Council would wish to point out that to focus purely on leisure centres is to take a narrow view of the definition of "access to leisure" and this will need to be addressed in any future review.

An important issue with respect to accessing leisure centres in Belfast is that geographical proximity to a centre does not necessarily make the facility "accessible", since there are barriers to access which are economic, social, physical and cultural. In developing its new leisure strategy the Council is examining the issues impacting upon access to leisure across the city and would hope that this can inform a future review of the statistics. The Council would therefore like further clarification around the definitions that would underpin any proximity indicator and the gradation that would apply.

It is an accepted industry standard that "proximity" to a leisure "facility" (not specifically a leisure centre) would be rated as good if a resident was based within 20 minutes travel time (i.e. 1 mile walking or 3 miles driving) of that facility. In the Belfast context however, it should be noted that, historically, the purpose of the 1986 Recreation and Youth Service order was to develop a number of leisure centres, many of which were located in areas "of need" and which are not particularly geographically dispersed from one another or the areas of significant deprivation.

6. The Council would support the recommendation to revert to service provision as opposed to population scale in relation to service centres.

7. In terms of proximity calculated on time rather than distance, neither necessarily gives an accurate picture of accessibility of services. In a city as divided as Belfast, there is evidence to suggest that many residents, particularly those in the most segregated areas of our city, make decisions to access services on the basis of safety and the location of interfaces. While it may be difficult to factor in some of the perceived 'boundaries' in the city, it is possible to quantify the interfaces as identified by

the Northern Ireland Office and the NI Housing Executive. This overlay would give a more accurate picture of the complex access patterns in the city.

Living Environment Domain

Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?

Specifically

- 1 Whether Central Heating information from the 2001 Census and SOA level housing stress should be replaced by the Decent Home Standard?
- 2 Whether the Housing Health and Safety Rating System should be included?
- 3 Whether Household Overcrowding information from the Census should be excluded?

1, 2 and 3 Belfast City Council would highlight that whilst probably less robust than the Census data, the Decent Home Standard will aid the dynamism of the measure.

The Council acknowledges that the Household Overcrowding information is now somewhat out of date given that the only data available is the data from the 2001 census and because of this it is proposed to be excluded. Given the considerable migration into Northern Ireland as mentioned earlier, the Council would recommend that the household overcrowding indicator is considered for inclusion in the full review of the measure when new data is available.

Additional Comments

The council would be interested to learn how the presence of litter is measured and subsequently categorised as a score. In order to give an accurate and consistent assessment, the approach would need to be objective, structured and with relatively detailed criteria guidance for scoring, such as the Tidy NI methodology for scoring the presence of litter. This may be something for consideration as part of the methodological review, which the consultation indicates will be carried out in the future.

Other suggestions for inclusion in the domain in the future include:

- Including Energy scoring ratings for households in the future.
- Considering the number and length of time void properties are present in local SOA.
- Number of registered private landlords or buy to let mortgages for properties in SOA are potential indicators that may be developed.

Crime and Disorder Domain

1 Whether, given the recommendations and changes to data availability, the proposed updated domain is acceptable?

1. Belfast City Council supports the extension of the number of years data included is a welcome development. The new measures will be very useful, particularly in developing the Vulnerable Localities Index as a third of the index is based on deprivation statistics (employment and income) which will inform the work of the Belfast Community Safety Partnership.

It is recommended that incidents of hate crime across the 5 groupings as recorded by PSNI are included as a measure, alongside monitoring anti-social behaviour.

The Council would suggest that it may be more beneficial to weight neighbourhood crime/ disorder with greater priority – for example Anti-social Behaviour.

Any other comments

Another issue we would like to raise relates to access to the data. While we appreciate that much of the data is already available from the NISRA site, we would appreciate as much access as possible to as many of the data sets as NISRA can allow, while maintaining the confidentiality restriction place upon them. Ideally these data would be available in standard formats such as .csv, xls, etc. It would also be useful if geo-coded datasets could be made readily available in a format that makes them easy to add as layers to mapping software such as MapInfo

We would strongly recommend that a domain is developed before 2011 in order to measure the linkages between mobility, access to public transport and deprivation. Separation and lack of safety will continue to produce nodes of hyper-growth and ongoing areas of concentrated deprivation and disillusion; it is therefore critical that the complex and interwoven relationship between deprivation and segregation in Belfast and appropriate resources can be appropriately targeted.

This page has been intentionally left blank.