



Updating the English Indices of Deprivation 2004

Stage Two 'Blueprint Consultation Report'

Summary of Responses



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December 2007

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Summary of Responses to ‘Updating the English Indices of Deprivation 2004: Stage Two ‘Blueprint Consultation Report’

1. INTRODUCTION

This report briefly summarises the responses to the Stage Two consultation report. 103 responses were received from a range of interested parties, including local government, regional bodies and special interest groups.

Respondents welcomed the opportunity to comment on the proposals and were broadly in favour of the general principle of making minimal changes to the domains, methodology and geography to maximise comparability between the Indices of Deprivation 2004 (ID 2004) and ID 2007.

The Blueprint consultation report called for comments on a number of specific proposals and also for more general comments, on the understanding that the latter were unlikely to be taken on board for ID 2007. This report summarises the responses to the Blueprint proposals first and then looks at the other more general comments.

2. INCOME DEPRIVATION DOMAIN

Proposal to exclude pensioners in receipt of the 'Savings Credit only' component of Pensions Credit

73 responses were received. The majority (73%) were in favour of the proposal with 19% against and 8% who either had no strong views or felt they did not have enough information to take a view. Of the 14 who were against the proposal, five responded that it is not possible to differentiate between 'savings credit only' recipients who are/are not deprived. There were a further four responses that felt that 'Savings Credit Only' pensioners would also be deprived and so should be included.

Proposal to not adjust relevant indicators for the variation in the take-up of benefits

78 responses were received. This was supported by the vast majority (89%) with 6% not in favour and 5% making comments which were unclear whether they supported the proposal or not. There was agreement that further research was needed before adjustments should be made and a number felt that it would be essential to incorporate local level data in any adjustments. A couple of replies thought that a corrective process might actually introduce more error than it removes and would prefer unadjusted figures. The four replies against the proposal wanted adjustments to be made now.

Proposal to update the Income Domain using the ID 2004 methodology

66 responses were received, of which 97% supported the proposal to continue to base this domain on benefit data. Only one response was not in favour of keeping the methodology the same for this year and was disappointed that it was not being switched to one based on modelled incomes. A few expressed opinions about future methodology; of these, 16 supported the move to an income based model in the future and were keen to move away from relying on benefits data with the associated problems around take-up. Five would prefer to continue to use benefits data in the future.

Other suggestions included the use of 'after housing costs' income, the inclusion of asylum seeking unaccompanied children and the request for an Income Deprivation Affecting Working Age People Index to complement Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOP).

3. EMPLOYMENT DEPRIVATION DOMAIN

Proposal to replace unemployment claimant counts with counts of those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

77 responses received. 81% in favour, 13% against, 6% who did not have strong views or felt they did not have enough information to take a view. Reasons for not supporting the use of JSA were varied; including the concern that JSA does not fully capture unemployment, using all key benefits would give a more accurate picture and concern in one area that there was a significant variation between claimant counts and JSA counts. There were also some who thought that there was double counting of JSA claimants in the Income and Employment domains.

Proposal for all indicators to be averaged across four quarter time points

82 responses received, 95% in favour, 4% against. The suggestion was generally welcomed and it was felt to be worth the slight reduction in comparability with ID 2004. Some felt it should be applied to all indicators, not just those in the Employment Domain. The three who were against the proposal were all worried that it would hide seasonal variations which were a key feature of employment in their area and a cause of deprivation. A suggestion was made to subject the averaged figure to a comparison with the best and worst quarter and if greater than x% then use a different statistic.

There was some concern about a discrepancy in the age bands used in this domain, with 18-59/64 being used instead of 16-59/64 which is usual for 'working age'. Another concern was that New Deal for Lone Parents does not fully address employment deprivation among this group.

4. EDUCATION, SKILLS & TRAINING DOMAIN

Proposal to model an indicator of 'adults with no qualifications' using Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS) data

This proposal received the most responses (83) and was the most controversial. Slightly over half the respondents (58%) were against the proposal with 42% in favour. There was general agreement that more up-to-date data on adult skills was needed, particularly as this is the only indicator in this sub-domain and so contributes disproportionately to the Index.

However there was considerable concern over the robustness of the model due to shortcomings of the LFS/APS, particularly small sample sizes, large confidence intervals at local authority level and low response rates in some areas. Many of those who supported the proposal wanted reassurances of its reliability. A few were also concerned about the different categories of qualifications between LFS and the Census. Some felt that reducing the robustness of this domain would impinge upon the integrity of the whole index.

Proposal to retain the current Census indicator should the LFS and APS data not be made available in time

77 responses received. 61% of these were from those who were against using the model and so wanted to keep using the census data. 31% were in favour of the model and supported the proposal to use the census indicator if the model was not ready in time. 5% wanted to delay the ID 2007 until the model was ready.

Other suggestions for inclusion in the education and skills domain were fluency in English, children missing from state education and those 'not in education, employment or training' (NEETs).

5. DENOMINATORS & METHODOLOGY

Proposal to use Social Disadvantage Research Centre (SDRC) produced Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) population estimates should the Office of National Statistics (ONS) LSOA estimates not be available in time

65 responses received. 67% supported using SDRC estimates, 25% were against and 8% had no views either way. Those who were against felt that it was important to use ONS estimates and that if necessary JD 208 should be delayed to wait for the ONS figures. Of those in favour of using SDRC estimates, five felt that ONS estimates should be used if at all possible. There were a few who supported using SDRC estimates because they were concerned that ONS estimates were inaccurate in their area. There was a lot of support for publishing the estimates alongside the Index, whichever ones are used.

Proposal to retain the current weights until a fundamental review of the methodology is undertaken

73 responses received. 89% supported the proposal, 10% were against. There was a general agreement that the weighting should be considered as part of a fundamental review. The seven who were against the proposal wanted to change the weights for ID 2007 but there was no consensus on how they should be changed. Of those who made comments in support of the proposal, there was a feeling that the weightings should favour domains which have the most robust data but there was no overall consensus. There were some requests to allow users to adjust the weighting for their own area, while appreciating that nationally a standard weighting is needed.

There were a few respondents who pointed out that the Income & Employment Domains are biased towards large Local Authorities as they are based on absolute numbers of people rather than percentages.

6. COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER DOMAINS

As the Blueprint document did not ask specific questions about the other domains, there were fewer responses which mentioned them.

Health Deprivation & Disability Domain

There was some concern that the use of Comparative Illness and Disability Ratio (CIDR) would lead to double counting of individuals claiming Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance in the Employment and Health & Disability domains and also that there is too much reliance on benefits data in the Indices.

There were five responses expressing concern about the use of prescribing data. Some were worried about the way in which the data is assigned to LSOAs; whilst others were concerned about how accurate it is as an indicator of poor mental health, or whether it is more an indicator of how successful some groups are at obtaining prescriptions. There were also a few with similar concerns about emergency admissions data. Two others wondered why, if prescribing data is used to measure mood or anxiety related disorders, it is not used as an indicator of general poor health and why its use is restricted to those aged over 60.

Barriers to Housing and Services Domain

In relation to the Wider Barriers Sub-domain, nearly a quarter of all respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the modelled indicator for difficulty of access to owner-occupation. The majority of these were concerned that house prices relative to income are highest in affluent areas so the indicator is measuring affluence rather than deprivation. Some felt that the indicator produces contradictory results to all the other indicators. There were also concerns about the issue of second homes pushing up house prices in rural areas.

Some felt that the homelessness and overcrowding indicators were enough to assess the difficulty deprived groups experienced in accessing suitable accommodation and that the difficulty of access to owner-occupation indicator should be dropped.

However there was disappointment that the overcrowding measure would not be updated from the 2001 Census and concern that it is not in line with current definitions of overcrowding. There was also concern that the homelessness indicator appears to be changing from decisions to acceptances, which may be affected by allocations policies. Concern was also expressed about the use of district level data for the indicators in this domain and uncertainty about how it is allocated to LSOAs.

In terms of the Geographical Barriers Sub-domain, the move to road distances rather than 'as the crow flies' was welcomed but it was still felt to be an inadequate measure of accessibility. Improvements by incorporating car ownership levels and quality of public transport were suggested. Some recommended the Department for Transport's National Core Accessibility Indicators which measure access to seven key services by public transport, walking and cycling.

There were several requests to include access to other services such as hospitals, NHS dentists, cashpoints, banks and building societies, open spaces and petrol stations. It was also felt that road distance to GPs did not reflect actual accessibility especially where GPs have closed lists and that distances to supermarkets with five or more outlets would exclude many independent outlets.

A number of respondents were keen to see social, cultural and language barriers included. Electronic accessibility including access to the internet and digital television was also suggested.

This domain received the most criticism in the consultation from both urban and rural consultees, but for different reasons. The element of choice in where to live means that in some senses this sub-domain is measuring well-being rather than deprivation. Being negatively correlated with the other domains suggests it may not be measuring deprivation. Some suggested removing the domain altogether; while others suggested separating the two sub-domains into two separate domains. With a few exceptions, it was generally accepted that these major changes should wait for the fundamental review.

Crime Domain

There were a few respondents who thought that 2005/06 data in this domain would be inconsistent with other domains which are restricted to 2004/05 even when more up-to-date data is available. Some felt an average of 2004/05 and 2005/06 would be better as it would also smooth some of the fluctuations in crime data.

A number of London respondents were opposed to the denominators used for the theft and criminal damage indicators as they include residents and commuters although most of the commuters travel by public transport so are not affected by vehicle crime.

Some respondents were concerned that using 2001 Census data for the denominator for burglaries would not reflect the considerable amount of house building that has occurred in some areas. Alternative sources suggested included data from the Post Office and the Valuation Office.

Living Environment Domain

A number of respondents felt this domain was weak and insubstantial and felt that more robust indicators could be used. One respondent suggested that the housing condition indicator from this could be combined with the housing indicators from the Barriers to Housing and Services Domain to create a Housing Domain.

There was concern about the use of modelled data for housing condition and it was pointed out that changing to the number in decent condition rather than poor condition would bring it into line with stock condition surveys. The proportion of households in Council Tax Band A was suggested as a reliable and easily updated proxy indicator of poor living environment, and is available at output area level.

A number of people were disappointed that the central heating indicator would not be updated from the 2001 Census and suggested that it could be changed to a measure of fuel poverty.

There were a number of suggestions relating to fire data which could be used as indicators of deprivation, such as the number of deliberately started secondary fires or the number of dwellings without smoke alarms.

There were concerns about how the air quality data is collected and modelled. It was suggested that extra weighting be given to more serious pollutants and greater concentrations of emissions.

Other suggestions for indicators for this domain included graffiti and vandalism, empty properties, light and noise pollution and access to broadband.

7. GENERAL COMMENTS

There were a number of people who commented on the balance between using the most up-to-date data sources and keeping the Indices comparable over time. Of those who commented, 11 felt it was more important to use consistent data in order to create a consistent time series, whereas six felt it would be better to use the most up-to-date sources so that the Indices remain current for as long as possible, even though this would reduce the comparability with previous indices.

It was felt to be important that any changes in data or methodology from IMD 2004 are clearly indicated in the publications and guidance should be provided to prevent users making inappropriate or invalid comparisons. Some would have liked to be able to see the actual impact on the Indices by publishing them with and without the proposed changes. It was suggested that guidance should be given on how to distinguish real change over time from that caused by small modifications in data or methodology. One respondent wondered whether it would be possible to indicate how much change in the rankings is needed for statistical significance.

Nearly a fifth of respondents mentioned the need for user-friendly documentation in order to make the Indices more intelligible to a non-technical audience. This could include an explanation of how the data is derived and how to interpret it, balanced with technical detail. Best practice examples of how the Indices have been used and interpreted in real situations would also be appreciated.

Many would like flexibility in the geography used and a quarter would like to be able to combine the LSOAs into wards, for comparison with other datasets and for ease of understanding by councillors, etc. It was suggested that by providing the Index, or the means to generate it, at ward level would prevent the creation of spurious ward indices, thus saving time and money and creating a ward geography which would be comparable across local authorities.

There were requests for a greater choice of summary data in addition to the local authority and county summaries previously produced and the PCTs which are proposed. Wards, Parishes, National Parks, GLA, Police Authorities, Fire Authorities were variously proposed for summaries. However there were also those who opposed the use of summaries, as the different measures produce dramatically different results. The question was also raised whether it is appropriate to have a summary which compares shire counties with unitary authorities and metropolitan boroughs, particularly on local concentration.

A number would like more flexibility in the way the indices are constructed. Some would like to be able to combine the domains in different ways, for example to make an Index without the health domain, so would like guidance on how this could be done.

There were a number of respondents who were against the use of modelled data in general, believing that directly derived data would be more likely to be reliable although it might be less up-to-date.

There were a few requests for a top-level analysis of changes between 2004 and 2007 and possible explanations for these. A couple suggested a website, in collaboration with regional partners, dedicated to IMD and its analysis.

When thinking about future versions of the Index, there were a number of respondents who suggested that the fundamental review of the domains, methodology and weightings should wait until after the next Census, meaning that the next IMD would be produced in the same way as IMD 2007.