
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Sandra Tudor
Head of Profession for Statistics
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
(by email)

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Dear Sandra

ENGLISH INDICES OF DEPRIVATION 2019 STATISTICS

I am writing to you following our review of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) [English Indices of Deprivation 2019 \(IoD\)](#) statistics against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). The statistics were reviewed against the three pillars of the Code: trustworthiness, quality and value.

IoD statistics are an important tool for identifying the most disadvantaged areas and for supporting decisions about addressing local needs. They are widely used by central and local government and community organisations to target their services. The statistics have been considered as part of a wider review of the indices of deprivation statistics in Great Britain, alongside our compliance checks of the statistics produced by the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government.

I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics. We found several positive examples in the way that MHCLG produces and presents these statistics:

- The suite of products has been tailored to meet a wide range of uses and users. The [statistical bulletin](#) is detailed but easy to follow. The [technical report](#) is comprehensive and sets out the process for constructing the index of multiple deprivation in a clear and accessible way. The [FAQs document](#) complements the technical report by bringing out the key messages for less-technical users. The statistics team told us these products have reduced the level of requests they receive as users are now able to address their own queries.
- The team is committed to developing the IoD and has identified opportunities to use the statistics to support MHCLG policies. For example, several policies have come into action around Levelling Up¹ and Stronger Towns², which will benefit from regional analysis linked to deprivation. More recently, the team has responded positively to the challenges of the pandemic by providing guidance and assurance of outputs produced by the Office for National Statistics to allow it to explore the relationship between deprivation and COVID-19.
- MHCLG has worked with the University of Sheffield and MySociety to develop a new [mapping tool](#) which allows users to visualise the statistics at different geographical scales including new geographies that the statistics have not been presented by before – Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies and Travel to Work areas. These new

¹ The Levelling Up agenda is aimed at tackling regional inequalities and was announced following the December 2019 general election.

² The Stronger Towns Fund was announced in March 2019 and is targeted at towns to create new jobs, help train local people and boost growth.

breakdowns are designed to meet the user need emerging from the MHCLG polices highlighted above.

- The team spoke highly of its relationship with the devolved nations. The 'four nations group' meets regularly and works collaboratively to make guidance and presentation across the deprivation statistics more consistent. For IoD 2019, MHCLG extended its coverage for income and employment data to cover Wales which has enabled new comparable analysis for these two domains. The analysis has been carried out in partnership with the Welsh Government.

We have identified several areas where we consider that improvements could further enhance the public value of the statistics:

- The ability to combine and compare indices of deprivation across the devolved nations continues to be an area of interest for some users. Each of the producers we spoke to said they deal with queries relating to this on a regular basis, despite their joint effort to set out in the statistical releases how the statistics can and can't be used. MHCLG, as part of the 'four nations group', should look to ensure that appropriate resource is devoted to developing updated UK-wide guidance and insight.
- The construction of IoD is carried out by contractors and the team told us that it faced delays in 2019 as a result of needing to establish data sharing agreements with some data suppliers. To build resilience in the team, MHCLG should look to document the process of how access to the data was granted for the contractors so that this can be referred to in the next iteration of IoD.
- The statistical release contains some analysis of areas that have been 'persistently most deprived' across historic iterations of the IoD. To improve harmonisation and consistency across the nations' indices of deprivation, MHCLG could look to discuss and agree a common definition of 'deep-rooted deprivation', in line with the Welsh and Scottish Governments.

Our Labour Market and Welfare team will continue to engage with you and your team in the coming months to follow up on areas that have been highlighted for improvement. We would like to thank the team for its engagement and cooperation throughout the review process.

I am copying this letter to Bowie Penney, the responsible analyst.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont

Assessment Programme Lead