
Report of the Chief Regeneration Officer

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 25 February 2010

Subject: Leeds Neighbourhood Index

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the Scrutiny Board about the Leeds Neighbourhood Index. This is the product of work undertaken by the City Council with partner organisations to improve area profiling systems at the neighbourhood level.

1.2 The report contains:

- summary background information on the development of the Neighbourhood Index
- a description of the Neighbourhood Index and details of the annual standard outputs
- an outline of future development proposals

1.3 A presentation including samples of the outputs from the Neighbourhood Index will be provided at the meeting.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The need for this development has been created, in part, by the changing approach by central and local government to locality working and regeneration which requires ever more detailed information about community issues at the city and neighbourhood level. It is driven by the need to use current resources more effectively and efficiently and recognises the need for:

- Accurate baseline data about local neighbourhoods
- Accurate information that can be used to measure the quality of life in local communities over a long period of time – this allows for the impact of interventions in a specific area to be evaluated
- Informed targeting of resources

- Greater demand by third sector organisations for useful community level information to support their work in neighbourhoods
- Easier access to information for community members, partner agencies, elected members and council officers

2.2 In 2008, the Council's Corporate Leadership Team approved the brief to develop a Neighbourhood Index as a means of better understanding some of the key issues that impact on the City's communities and neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhood Information Working Group was then established to oversee the development of the Index within a partnership framework. This multi-agency group involved officers from Leeds City Council, the Safer Leeds Partnership, the Health Service, Education Leeds, Job Centre Plus and the Leeds Housing Partnership.

3.0 What is the Neighbourhood Index?

3.1 The Neighbourhood Index is a tool that brings together a wealth of information that paints a broad picture of an area and helps to describe local conditions. It is a multiple domain and indicator based system that measures outcomes rather than activities and inputs, and which can be used to measure the general "health" and the relative success of neighbourhoods across the city. The aim has been to provide a framework for the exchange, analysis and sharing of information amongst partners / project deliverers / local communities that:

- can consistently gather, collate, analyse and present information about neighbourhoods
- can identify areas of need and analyse relevant data on the critical issues facing target neighbourhoods
- provides an agreed mechanism for reporting progress in neighbourhoods and in particular in target areas, and that monitors success in meeting targets

3.2 The Index is constructed from 26 indicators that have been grouped into the following seven domains: Economic Activity, Low Income, Education, Health, Community Safety, Environment and Housing.

3.3 Middle Super Output Areas (MSOAs) have been used as the basis for the Index. There are 108 MSOAs in Leeds with an average population of 7,000. For the purpose of constructing the Index MSOAs provided a "ready-made" set of boundaries for which a range of data was already easily available and they were recognised by all partner agencies. They also met Government guidance that a "neighbourhood" should contain between 5,000 – 10,000 people.

3.4 The following standard outputs have been generated from the first run of the Neighbourhood Index:

- the production of an annual set of neighbourhood profiles to an agreed template
- set of tables showing the comparative position of neighbourhoods across the range of indicators and within each domain
- an Annual Report to summarise the headline results
- a set of city-wide maps (Atlas of Local Conditions)

These have been published on both the Council's intranet and on the Leeds City Council website.

3.5 It is anticipated that the Index could be used to:

- Provide a focus for the "Narrowing the Gap" agenda, seeking to narrow the gap between the richer and poorer parts of the city

- Identify the key issues facing neighbourhoods and help Area Committees determine the priorities for inclusion in Area Delivery Plans
- Help measure the impact of interventions and to monitor the change over time in neighbourhoods
- Help inform the commissioning of services and make the case for changes in service delivery in neighbourhoods
- Support funding bids
- Initiate other detailed studies and research programmes

4.0 Future development proposals

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Index has been developed as a means of using small area data to increase the understanding of some of the key issues that impact on the City's communities and neighbourhoods. Although it is just one tool in the "strategic intelligence tool-box" it is hoped that it will contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the problems and issues facing local communities and the people in those communities, and provide a framework to benchmark progress in key neighbourhoods over time.
- 4.2 During the course of developing the Index a number of other issues have been identified which will be addressed in the forward work programme. These include;
- the integration of equality and diversity data (partly addressed in this first year by the inclusion of "basic" data relating to ethnicity, faith and age in the area profiles and by providing an opportunity to reflect on any equality / diversity implications in the Annual Report)
 - the need to reflect rapid population change in areas including high levels of population turnover and the emergence of new communities
 - the need to incorporate additional datasets to reflect, amongst other things, economic enterprise, preventative health measures, adult social care, the well-being dimension and residents' perceptions data
- 4.3 The work has also highlighted a number of technical issues requiring an ICT solution, including the need to establish a corporate data warehouse that would link to a web-based area profiling capability. This work is being led by the Business Transformation team and has initially focused on the development of a proof of concept for an interactive website. The proof of concept site is being hosted by the developers until the end of March and following the conclusion of this stage these capabilities will be programmed into a development plan of BI applications.

Recommendations

Members of the Scrutiny Board are asked to note the contents of this report.

Background papers

None