

News release from Scottish Borders Council: Monday 5 September 2016

Tools of the trade to tackle deprivation

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) is welcoming the publication of the Scottish Government's statistics on deprivation.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, known as SIMD, is the official tool for identifying concentrations of deprivation across the country. This year sees the fifth edition since 2004.

SBC uses this tool as well as a range of others to identify where resources should be targeted. This is challenging across a large rural area with a dispersed population.

Chief Executive of SBC Tracey Logan said: "While the tool works well for urban areas and self-contained settlements of over 500 people it doesn't work so well for rural communities of under 500 people and as such, deprivation can be hidden.

"That's why it's important that as a Council, and with our partners, we use a range of tools to get to grips with the main issues affecting our communities. For example we have data from our schools, from our police and health colleagues, and we use this to plan services and to target resources appropriately, and SIMD is one part of our tool box.

"As well as using statistical tools we need to plan our services with communities, listening to what they tell us, and harnessing the skills and resources that we know are out there that could help us deliver services in the future.

"A new approach to locality planning will see plans tailored to suit local areas and are being piloted in the Cheviot area (Jedburgh and Kelso). Information from SIMD can be a useful starting point for our discussions with communities, but it would never be used in isolation.

"Given the economic context over the last four years, and the reduction in public sector budgets, we are delighted to see improvements in some areas that, using SIMD, are defined by the Scottish Government as 'deprived'.

"Burnfoot in Hawick and Langlee in Galashiels fall into this category but we know locally that they are thriving communities with good quality housing, reasonable transport links, good infrastructure and a very strong community spirit. There has been much support in these areas over the last few years, for example, public sector support for the Burnfoot Community Hub Project; investment in our early years centres; a focus on closing the attainment gap in many schools; and adult learning delivered by our Community Learning and Development service.

"We know that this work is improving outcomes for people on the ground and to an extent this is filtering down into the statistics but many of the issues highlighted by SIMD require a long-term approach. That's why SBC and partners are committed to reducing inequalities right across the region, including the rural areas that can be missed by SIMD."

The SIMD uses neighbourhoods of around 800 people called datazones to measure Multiple Deprivation. There are 6,796 datazones in Scotland and 143 of these are in Scottish Borders.

The Index is divided into seven domains, or topic areas: Income, Employment, Health, Education, Geographic Access, Crime and Housing. For each datazone, the SIMD gives a score of how relatively deprived the neighbourhood is for each domain. The domains are then boiled down to a single SIMD Multiple Deprivation score. Local Authorities can then say how many of their datazones fall into the 15% or 20% most-deprived in Scotland.

Overall, Scottish Borders is the fifth least-deprived mainland Local Authority area in Scotland, but pockets of relative deprivation do exist, and these are highlighted in the technical report. There is widespread deprivation in the Access To Services domain. This shows that Scottish Borders residents are not able to enjoy the easy access to services that many other Scottish people take for granted.

The SIMD is not a perfect measure of Multiple Deprivation. For example, the Housing domain is not able to measure the housing issues facing many residents in the Scottish Borders and analysts need to use other means to measure housing deprivation. The SIMD is constantly improving and it is hoped that measures such as Housing Quality and Fuel Poverty may be included in future editions. Also, the SIMD does not adequately measure settlements of under 500 people so rural deprivation in small communities may not be picked up at all.

For more information on any aspects of SIMD email
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