

HOUSEHOLD ANALYSIS REVIEW GROUP  
NEIGHBOURHOOD STATISTICS IN SCOTLAND

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1. This note for the information of members of HARG provides an update on progress in the development of housing related neighbourhood statistics in Scotland.
2. The Scottish Executive is managing the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics Project. A Neighbourhood Statistics Development Group (NSDG) has been set up to oversee the development of the neighbourhood statistics workplan and priorities. Membership of the NSDG includes representatives from Local Authorities, Health Boards, Government Agencies and Voluntary Sector.
3. The Neighbourhood Statistics project covers a wide range of policy areas, including health, education, property, unemployment, population, equalities and community of social related issues. Work to develop and improve the availability of neighbourhood statistics on specific topics will be taken forward by appropriate theme groups (Annex 1). In addition, the NSDG will have the power to set up working groups to look at specific issues e.g. neighbourhood definitions, Information Communications Technology, Deprivation Index.
4. In terms of the Built Environment, a Neighbourhood Statistics Housing Working Group (NSHWG) has been set up to develop and take forward a strategy for improving housing related neighbourhood statistics. (Membership of group is listed in Annex 2)
5. The objectives of the strategy are
  - to assess priorities and subsequently to make available a high quality, comprehensive range of housing related statistics at unit postcode or neighbourhood level that meet the strategic information requirements of housing policy makers and practitioners
  - develop cost-effective arrangements for building up information over time so that changes in the housing system and neighbourhoods can be tracked consistently across the country
  - extract maximum benefits from data and records already sitting in administrative systems
  - where necessary supplement the collection of data with statistical estimation at neighbourhood level
  - Promote potential benefits of the Neighbourhood Statistics project to a wider housing community and encourage suppliers of data, including local authorities and RSLs to regard statistics as a resource to be shared and used

- Provide operational support to ensure data provided by a range of different housing bodies are harmonised across or throughout Scotland, through various means including training
- Promote good practice amongst housing bodies in the use and interpretation of data for planning and policy development and monitoring purposes.

6. The working group has met on three occasions and is currently close to agreeing a strategy. In the interim it has agreed a number of data development projects which are outlined in the table below.

Data domain	Description of project
HOUSING STOCK - Dwelling count by council tax band	An exercise is underway to obtain an extract of information held by Assessors on dwelling address and council tax band. These data will be investigated for the potential of generating dwelling counts and council tax breakdown within small areas.
TENURE CHANGE – Local authority right to buy sales	Information on Right to Buy sales by local authorities from 1993 is currently being geo-referenced to allow geographic analysis. The exact format of the output from these data has not been agreed and will be informed by analysis to look at policy requirements in the light of confidentiality and data reliability.
SOCIAL RENTED STOCK – key characteristics of dwellings owned by social landlords	Research is currently being commissioned to look at the feasibility of establishing a social landlord database. This will incorporate dwelling information on all stock owned by local authorities and housing associations. The feasibility study will pilot the capture and ongoing maintenance of social landlord property data in a number of LA areas. In addition it will demonstrate the potential strategic and business uses of the data by providing example analyses.
HOUSING STOCK INFORMATION FLOWS – new build, conversions, demolitions	Research in England has reinforced strong suspicions that the various data sources used to track changes in residential property over time are not of a high standard. The working group therefore is making an application for funding to commission research to identify areas for improvement with a view to generating stock flow data based on

	<p>consistent definitions and to identify scope for geo-referencing. Relevant groups involved will include local authority functions of council tax collection, planning, housing, building control, other social landlords, Scottish Executive. Communities Scotland, Assessors, Post Office.</p>
HOUSEHOLDS – vacant/occupied dwellings	<p>The working group has identified the Council Tax billing system as a valuable source of information on occupancy of dwellings and a potential input into household estimates at both the small area and national level.</p> <p>The Scottish Executive is obtaining advice on the potential for using Council Tax information for these purposes as there have been a number of instances where councils have refused to allow use of Council Tax data for purposes other than those set out in the initial legislation. Depending on the response, there may be a need to ask Ministers to provide a regulation to allow this use.</p> <p>In the meantime, pilots are planned to investigate the IT developments required to allow extraction of appropriate data from billing systems</p>
TURNOVER OF RENTED STOCK – SCORE system	<p>Currently most housing associations take part in the SCORE data collection system which records key characteristics of new tenants. This provides information on flows into the social rented stock, and can inform identification of areas of low demand. In addition, it can inform studies of affordability as it collects information on rent levels and economic circumstances of the household.</p> <p>The working group have agreed to seek funding for SCORE to cover LSVT community landlords and investigate a possible GB wide system for all LA tenants.</p>

7. A communications plan for the Housing working group is currently being developed. Any suggestions for networks or fora to use in disseminating the work of the NSHWG would be appreciated.

8. Developments in the area of small area population estimates under the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics project will be of particular interest to the HARG group. In April 2001, General Register Office Scotland (GROS) published an experimental set of small area population estimates (SAPE) using information from the Community Health Index (CHI) controlled to the Registrar General's 1999 mid year estimates. (Similar estimates for mid-2000 were completed in November 2001). A new project has been set up to evaluate and further develop the methodology used to produce these estimates, and will implement agreed changes in the production of 2002 SAPE in Spring 2003.

Annex 2

NEIGHBOURHOOD STATISTICS HOUSING WORKING GROUP

Membership

Heather Koronka - Communities Scotland (Chair)  
Maggie Bochel - Highlands Council Planning Department  
Glen Bramley - Heriot Watt University  
Alan Ferguson– Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland  
Wendy Hayhurst - East Lothian Council  
Jim Hayton - South Lanarkshire Housing Department  
Craig McCorrison – West Lothian Council  
Sheena Stevely – Renfrewshire Council  
Jill Stewart - Moray Council  
Cecilia Macintyre – Scottish Executive  
Duncan Gray - Scottish Executive  
Deborah Pegg - Scottish Executive  
Pamela Johnstone - Communities Scotland  
Tony O’Sullivan - Communities Scotland  
Marlene Walker - Communities Scotland.  
Gillian Young - Communities Scotland  
Barbara Noble –Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)