

HOUSEHOLD ANALYSES REVIEW GROUP UPDATE NOTE: NOVEMBER 2001

Introduction

1. Because of the work required to bring in the new Homelessness Electronic Data collection system it has not been possible to complete the preparatory work for the meeting of HARG which we had planned for the Autumn. This note is to bring members up-to-date with the progress which we have been able to make since the last meeting. We hope to hold the next meeting towards the end of January. A draft Agenda will follow shortly.
2. I would welcome comments on the note and will be happy to discuss on return from leave on 12 November.

Local authority needs for official household estimates and projections

3. The second questionnaire on requirements for household projections and views on the current arrangements and methodology was agreed following the last meeting and issued at the beginning of July . A copy of the pro-forma and covering letter are attached as Appendices for information.. We have had responses from all but 7 councils. (These 7 have informed us that they will not be completing the survey due to other demands on their time) . I'm afraid that it has not been possible as yet to analyse the responses.

Scottish Executive needs for official household estimates and projections

4. In June I circulated a paper to relevant Scottish Executive policy and planning divisions seeking views on the need for and priorities for the development of household estimates and projections. A brief summary of responses is set out below:-

Key policy drivers

5. The drivers of the need for household estimates/ projections identified were:-

Support for the planning process. National Planning Policy Guidelines state that official household projections are an important demographic factor in estimating housing need, but notes that other projections may be used provided councils can justify doing so.

Local housing strategies: Household estimates and projections - including estimates/ projections at a sub-local authority level (e.g. Housing Market Context Statement area) are seen as an important component of the suite of information to be used by councils in developing local housing strategies.

Monitoring Social Inclusion Partnerships: Household estimates and trends in

numbers of households at a neighbourhood level, set against numbers and trends in the wider area are potentially very useful in monitoring progress of social inclusion partnerships.

Supporting people etc: Estimates, trends and projections of numbers of elderly households - single persons and couples - are likely to become increasingly important in the context of monitoring the impact of policy in relation to care of the elderly.

Note that, in the main, the Scottish Executive policy need is to ensure that local authorities and other agencies (e.g. SIP partnerships) have a sound information base on which to plan and monitor.

Household types for estimates/ projections

5. There were no significant concerns about the range of household types (by size grouping and age of household head) for which projections are currently produced. It was generally felt that it would be useful to provide household estimates for the same split of household types.

Geographical levels

6. A number of the identified needs require reliable household estimates, and possibly projections, at lower geographical levels than local authority. For estimates, the ideal would be a flexible low-level geography which could be aggregated in different ways.

Timescale for projections

7. For general planning purposes a longer timescale would be desirable, but it is recognised that the reliability of projections will fall off significantly over longer periods.

Timeliness of estimates/ projections

8. For all uses, the faster production of estimates/ projections would be welcomed, but it recognised that it takes time to assemble the necessary base information, and the calculations are quite complex.

Methodology

9. As might be expected, there were no strong views about the present methodology. On the planning side it was felt that the use of stock estimates to derive household estimates limits their value in assessing the match between the supply of and demand for housing.

Conclusion

10. The above points will be presented in a little more detail in a paper for the next meeting of HARG. My initial conclusions are that the identified Scottish Executive policy needs chime in pretty well with the issues raised initially by members of HARG. Hopefully the local authority responses will tend to point in the same general direction:-

The methodologies and published estimates and projections should, if possible, support the development of sub-local authority estimates (and, where sensible, sub-local authority projections).

We need to consider ways of separating household estimates from housing stock estimates, but not at the expense of the timescale for the production of estimates.

For household projections there is no need to move away from the basic disaggregation of households by size and age of head of household.

Extending the period over which projections are produced is not a major priority, and for some purposes (e.g. Housing Strategies) the required time periods are much shorter.

Neighbourhood Statistics

11. Annex 2 is a copy of the text of letter which I sent to Norie Williamson - Director of Finance at COSLA at end July seeking COSLA's assistance in taking forward pilot work on the use of council tax billing data for neighbourhood statistics purposes. The letter sets out the needs and issues.

12. I hope soon to receive a formal response through COSLA. From discussions with council tax policy colleagues and informal discussions with two directors of revenue services I **believe** there are no legal constraints on the proposed use of billing information; although there are clearly practical problems. Revenues systems in use are not designed to readily provide the sorts of output needed. A key issue for development of use of this data will be to ensure that the extracted information can be placed in an analysis system in such a way that the data can only be used for statistical analysis purposes. We may be able to provide such a facility centrally through the wider neighbourhood statistics developments.

13. I will update HARG members once I have a formal response. If, a I hope, we can then move to pilot exercises I will copy a draft specification to HARG members for comment before I issue the invitation to councils. You will see from the letter that I think it would be useful to get joint bids from Revenues and Analysis teams in councils.

14. In parallel we have been progressing an exercise to obtain copies of Assessors'

council tax valuation lists, together with council tax band of house and complete address and post-code information. This information will be incorporated into the Scottish Executive Neighbourhood Statistics database and, I hope, updated annually. We now have fairly complete data base specifications from each Assessor, and full copies of the valuation list from most Assessors. All but one Assessors can supply the full post-code for addresses on valuation lists. We have yet to check for completeness/ accuracy but initial review of sample data suggests it is generally over 95% complete/ accurate. Address data is held in a wide variety of formats.

15. Potentially, valuation lists may also provide information on when a property was added to/ removed from the valuation list and, for those removed, the reason for removal. We need to explore these issues further with Assessors.

Resources

16. A part-time statistician has been recruited to the Executive to assist us take forward housing related neighbourhood statistics. She is scheduled to join us on 1 December. One of her key tasks will be to take forward the development of neighbourhood level household and housing stock information.

Duncan Gray
The Scottish Executive Development Department
November 2001

Annex 2: COPY of TEXT of letter to Norie Williamson, Director of Finance, COSLA

Dear Norie

NEIGHBOURHOOD STATISTICS INITIATIVE: PLANNED PILOT STUDIES INTO THE USE OF COUNCIL TAX INFORMATION

1. I am writing to ask for your help in obtaining the initial views of local authority revenues representatives to the development of these proposed pilots. This letter explains the Neighbourhood Statistics Initiative and sets out the initial assistance which I'm seeking to help prepare the ground for the pilot work which we hope to undertake.

Background

2. **Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics** is a major project to transform the data which is available for local areas. It runs for 3 years from 1 April 2001 and has a budget of £7 million.

It will

- make a major contribution to the social justice and area regeneration programmes
- include information on health, education, poverty, unemployment, housing, population, equalities and social/ community issues.
- collect information, wherever possible, on a unit postcode basis
- make information available for the smallest areas possible (subject to confidentiality constraints)
- make information accessible to a wide range of users, through the Web and in other ways, and
- provide tools to help users to analyse the information.

The project is overseen by a steering group, chaired by Rob Wishart SE Chief Statistician and with representatives of a wide range of bodies, including Health Boards, Scottish Homes, and local authorities. The enclosed background paper produced by the SE Neighbourhood Statistics team gives a fuller picture.

3. The overall aim is to assemble accessible, relevant up-to-date information which can be analysed at as low a geographical level, and as flexibly as possible. In the initial phases we are looking to provide data and analysis tools through the Scottish Executive Website – i.e. we would hold the data on a database and provide web based access to it.

4. The Neighbourhood Statistics Development Group considers that priority should be given to freeing up existing data from administrative systems. The Project can provide funding to:

- support pilot projects which demonstrate how a particular data source can be accessed and used
- pay for software development to facilitate extraction of data for use in the project
- improve the quality of data (for example the consistency of post coding) at source, to make it suitable for general access and use.

The need for council tax information

5. In the Social Justice context key indicators of change in an area are the numbers and types of houses and households in the area. The information which revenues departments hold within their council tax systems can give information on:

- Occupied and empty properties (through the exemption/ discount status).
- Broad value of properties (through council tax band).
- Properties with (mainly) one adult (through discount status).
- Households in receipt of council tax benefits.

6. For Neighbourhood Statistics purposes the information would ideally be held in a Scottish Executive database with one record per property, with the smallest level geographical reference being the **unit post-code** of the property. In particular our database would not hold names or addresses. We would aim to update the database annually.

Planned pilot work

7. We recognise that it may not be straightforward to obtain this information from revenues departments' systems; and that there is also a fair amount of work to be done in assessing how the information can be presented and interpreted. Pilot work would aim to establish the feasibility and likely costs of amending systems to extract the relevant information and assemble it into a form suitable for analysis; and provide guidance on data management to support Neighbourhood Statistics and interpretation and use of the extracted data.

8. From preliminary discussions with local authority analytical staff in the Household Analysis Group [a specialist group which I chair looking at methodologies for compiling national and local authority level household estimates and projections] there is a great deal of interest, and some limited experience across councils in obtaining and using this information for analytical use.

9. I am planning to invite councils to bid for resources from the Neighbourhood Statistics fund to develop and provide sample datasets with content along the lines of paras 4&5. A good pilot will need the support both of local authority analysts – to provide advice on use and interpretation and revenues departments – who hold

the data and understand the databases and administrative systems which support this. We would expect pilots to provide advice which would assist other councils in developing access to this data source. For example pilots could usefully identify the changes/ data extraction facilities needed to draw information from revenues databases.

Issues/ Conclusion

10. I would be grateful for your advice and reactions to the above outline before I write formally to councils seeking bids. From the background work on council tax collection there are 6 different IT systems used by councils in Scotland to manage council tax billing/ collection databases. Over half of Scottish councils use a system provided by First Software (now SX3 software I understand). Data extraction procedures/ routines developed in a pilot might be able to be rolled out across a number of councils.
11. I also understand that there may be concern in some revenues departments that present council tax legislation may limit the ways in which information collected for council tax purposes can be used and may prohibit the supply of the data as set out above. I have discussed this with policy colleagues in Local Government Finance and Performance Division, and we can't identify where there might be a problem. If there is a problem then we clearly to address this before inviting bids.
12. I would be happy to discuss this further with you or colleagues if any of the above isn't clear. This is an important exercise which is at the centre of the drive across Government to provide a firmer, factual basis to support the planning and delivery of public services. Any advice which you can offer to get the development off to a good start would be very welcome.
13. I have copied this letter to Graham Atherton at CoSLA to keep him in the picture.

Yours Sincerely

Duncan Gray

Appendix 1

HOUSEHOLD ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS**DRAFT USER SURVEY (PROJECTIONS ONLY)**

The Scottish Executive Housing Statistics Branch compiles and publishes biennial projections of the number of households in Scotland by local authority area, household type and age group of head of household. The projections are published by the Scottish Executive in 'Household Projections in Scotland', generally in August, two years after the base year for the projections and cover a period of 14 years. The latest projections (1998 based projections) are available on the Scottish Executive Website at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00019-00.asp>.

As part of the new consultation arrangements on National Statistics in Scotland we have recently re-constituted the Household Analysis Review Group – initially with representatives of Scottish Local Authorities, Scottish Homes and the Scottish Executive – to provide Executive statisticians with advice on the Projections and the related Scottish Household Estimates. The group has quite a wide remit covering technical methodological points and issues such as consultation on and release of projections and estimates.

As the starting point for its work the group felt that it would be useful to take stock of the present position by gathering information from users and potential users on the need for and current uses made of the statistics; and views on the current methodologies. In May of this year the group sent out the Household Estimate questionnaire that many of you kindly completed and returned. As promised in my cover letter for that questionnaire I am now writing on behalf of the group to seek your views on the **Household Projections**. I would be grateful if you would complete and return the attached questionnaire to me by **10 August 2001**. In completing the questionnaire I would be grateful if you would consult with all others in your organisation who make use, or may wish to make use, of household projections.

The papers and minute of the first meeting are now available on the Scottish Executive Website at www.scotland.gov.uk/housing/harg. Other background information and details of current methodologies can also be found on the same site. We plan to place the papers for the second meeting onto this site shortly and make future papers and meeting notes available at the same address as the work of the group progresses. A Word version of the questionnaire will shortly be available for download on the Website along-side the household estimates questionnaire which is there at the moment. Stevan Croasdale at the Scottish Executive can e-mail one to you on request and can be contacted either by e-mail stevan.croasdale@scotland.gov.uk or on the telephone (0131 244 7234).

We will maintain a list of those who wish to be kept in touch with the work of the group. Ideally we would like to do this through Email. Either Email us to note your interest or note your details at the end of the questionnaire.

Yours Sincerely

DUNCAN GRAY

Chairman

Household Analyses Review Group

HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS**Authority/Organisation:** _____**Introduction**

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out about the current and potential uses of household projections by local authorities; the extent to which the biennial official projections produced by the Scottish Executive are used and to seek your views on priorities for the development of the official projections. The Household Analysis Review Group will use the responses from local authorities and other users in setting its workplan for the next few years.

Uses made of household projections**1. Does your authority use household projections – either the official projections, or projections from another source - for any of the following?**

(Tick all that apply) (✓)

Possible uses:	Official projections	Other source
a) Assessments of Strategic Housing Requirements		
b) Assessments of Local Housing Requirements		
c) Assessments of Special Housing Needs (e.g. Sheltered, Amenity & Medium Dependency)		
d) Provision of Educational Services		
e) Provision of Health Services		
f) Provision of Social Services		
g) Provision of Leisure or Cultural Facilities		
h) Transport/Communications Planning		
i) Water/Sewage Facilities Planning		
j) Any other use		

Please give details of any other uses:

2. Which of the following published outputs use either official household projections or household projections from another source?

(Tick all that apply) (✓)

Published output:	Official projections	Other source
a) Statutory Housing Plan		
b) Local Development Plans		
c) Structure Plan		
d) Local Housing System Analysis (Scottish Homes)		
e) Other Plans/Strategy Documents		
f) Other published outputs.		

Please give details of any other uses:

3. Household projections might also be used for a range of more general purposes such as to support in-house research or analytical work. Please give details below of any additional uses which your council makes of household projections – either the official projections or projections from another source:

Any other uses:

Sources/ types of household projections used.

4.1 Does your authority/organisation undertake any more detailed household projections using the official data as baseline e.g. sub-Council area projections?	Y/N
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If yes, please say what additional detail is provided:

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4.2 Does your authority/organisation currently undertake its own household projections using its own methodology?	Y/N
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4.3 Does your authority/organisation currently use household projections provided by an external agency (other than the Scottish Executive)?	Y/N
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If so, please indicate why you don't use official figures e.g. timing, detail, geography etc

If yes to question 4.3 could you indicate the name of the external agency

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Priorities for development of household projections

5. The official household projections at present give, for each council and structure plan area, a 14 year projection (the 1998 based projections were from 1998 to 2012). These are shown in the bulletin for all households and each of 4 basic household types and further breakdowns by seven household types although not published, are currently made available on request to councils, provided that the numbers are not too small:

Basic Household Types	Seven Household Types
1 person; 1 adult and 1 or more children 2+ adults and 1+ children 2+ adults	1 person: male 1 person: female 1 adult and 1 child 1 adult and 2+ children 2+ adults and 1+ children 2 adults 3+ adults

Further tables are given for projected households by age group of head of household by household type (by five categories of household type – the four above but with single person split male and female) for Scotland as a whole and average household size. In addition for Scotland as a whole, a table is published giving a breakdown by each of the seven household types.

How useful would it be to breakdown these projections further?

	Very useful	Useful	Limited Use	Not Useful
5.1 For the full 16 year period of the population projections.				
5.2 For additional household types (other than the full seven which are currently available)				
5.3 Make them routinely available for more than the basic four household types				

5.3 If you have answered ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’ to question 5.2, or 5.3 please describe briefly the additional types of household for which would be useful to have projections and the sorts of uses which would be made of the figures:

5.4 Assuming the production of increased numbers of household types would increase the time taken for publication, could you indicate below which is of most importance to you:

Earlier publication of projections (1) or additional household types (5)?

Earlier publication	← please circle one of the numbers below to indicate a preference → (choose 3 for none)					Additional household types
	1	2	3	4	5	

Assessment of methodology

6. The Scottish Executive projects numbers of households by extrapolating headship rates from trends over one or more previous decades – using detailed information on headship patterns from the 10 yearly population censuses. [A full description of the methodology can be found on the HARG website at www.scotland.gov.uk/housing/harg]. Do you have any comments on and suggestions for improvement to the methodology? Please bear in mind that any methodology must be applicable to all areas in Scotland.

7. For the most recent - 1998 based - projections, projected numbers of households by size for each council were constrained to ensure that the number and pattern of households by size was consistent with the projected total number of adults in the population. [[See methodology note on the website for methodological details](#)]. Do you have any comments on and suggestions for improvement to this methodology? Please bear in mind that any methodology must be applicable to all areas in Scotland.

Release

8.1 Once released by the Scottish Executive, what is your main source for the household projections?

(Tick all that apply) (✓)

	Source
a) Housing Statistical Bulletin (printed copy)	
b) Housing Statistical Bulletin (on the internet)	
c) Direct from Housing Statistics Branch	
d) Other(s) (please specify below)	

8.2 Have you had any difficulty in recent years getting access to the biennial household projections.	Y/N
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8.3 Is there any other method of receiving the biennial household projections that you would prefer? (please specify)

Finally

9. The Household Analysis Review Group would welcome any additional comments/ suggestions on either the methodology or content of the household projections which would help to improve their quality/ relevance.

Additional comments/ suggestions:

Please return this questionnaire by **10th August** either by Email or post to:

Stevan Croasdale
 Area 1-G24
 Victoria Quay
 Edinburgh
 EH6 6QQ
 (Tel 0131 244 7234)
stevan.croasdale@scotland.gov.uk

Please indicate below a contact with whom we may discuss any of the points raised in the responses to the questionnaire. If you or anyone in your council wishes to be kept in touch with the work of the Household Analysis Review Group please provide contact details, if possible including Email addresses, below.

Council: _____

Contact Name: _____

Telephone/E-mail: _____

Interested in being kept in touch with the work of the Household Analysis Review Group.
 (please note, it is not necessary to fill in details here if they have already been given on the household estimates questionnaire)

Name	Telephone	Email

Alternatively information about the work of the group is posted on the Household Analysis Review Group internet page, along with methodological guidance and the latest estimates and projections publications (in PDF format) and tables (in Excel format). [www.scotland.gov.uk/housing/harg]