

Using and Improving Population and Household Statistics Local Estimates and Projections Workshop

Notes

This workshop was led by Paul Davison, Stirling Council.

There were two parts to this workshop – a presentation and a team task.

Presentation

Paul began by giving a presentation of his experiences of producing population projections for Stirling Local Development Plan area (Stirling council area minus the part within Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park), using POPGROUP.

The main drivers for the work were the local development plan and the local housing strategy.

Data zones were used as the basic building blocks for defining geographies. In most cases data zones were a good fit, but in other cases there were some difficulties for example, some data zones in the area around Killin straddle the national park boundary. He recommended that population projections should not be done on areas with less than 10,000 people.

Stirling Council looked at five scenarios for their population projections. The principal projection used the standard General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) assumptions for fertility, mortality and migration. Four other projections were produced using different assumptions. Some results were shown – comparison of the population projections using the five scenarios, comparison of household projections, and projected housing requirements.

Paul explained how he used POPGROUP to get the projections for each scenario. Most of the data is available from the GROS website. Additional local data can be obtained, on request, from GROS (and he found GROS very helpful in supplying this data). Some screen dumps from POPGROUP were shown to highlight some of the fertility, mortality and migration data that were required to run the projection model.

Task

The workshop delegates were divided into four teams and given the task of preparing a business case for a programme of local population and associated work for an imaginary council area, for which Paul had devised some vital statistics and issues. The teams were asked to consider four main questions. These, along with a summary of the main 'bullet points' raised by the teams, are given below.

1. What local estimates and projections would you undertake?
 - Data requirements – use data zone population estimates as building blocks for different geographies, communal establishment data (especially for university students), births, deaths, migration data.
 - Geography - produce projections for council area, main settlements, rural areas, school catchments, GP catchments, multi-member wards, local planning area, employment centres and areas with links to employment.

- Age – produce projections for 5-year age groups, working age, school age, retired, elderly/very elderly.
- Sex – separate projections for males and females.
- Assumptions – look at a few different scenarios to see how sensitive the model is (high migration, student growth, etc.). Decide whether to use different assumptions for different parts of the local authority or use the same ones throughout.

2. What would be the key benefits of the work?

- Planning ahead.
- Inform strategic thinking.
- Infrastructure planning.
- Geographic analysis.
- Scenario planning.
- Provision and efficiency of services.
- Ability to co-locate services.
- Ensure that services are in the right places.
- Identify housing needs.
- Inform education, NHS, police and social work planning.
- Boost employment.
- Superclinics.
- Locate areas with GP deficiencies.

3. What problems do you envisage and who would you engage with to help?

- University student numbers changing.
- Student retention.
- Need to isolate university students.
- Population churn.
- Access to other data sets.
- Being asked to provide information for very small areas.
- Constraints, particularly for transport.
- Jobs matching growth in population.
- Where are A8 migrants and what are their aspirations?
- Check what else has been done and what else can be used – surveys of local employers, Workers Registration data, National Insurance No. data, Sasines.
- Engage with peers, experts, data providers, GROS.
- Joint working with neighbouring authorities.

4. How would the funding be used to best advantage?

- Primary research.
- Staff – in-house, consultants.
- Software – GIS, Sim City style models.
- To improve data quality – use all sources, including administrative data.
- Prioritise health and education.