

## Tackling deprivation in Rotherham

By Michael Hellewell, Research and Statistics Officer, Rotherham MBC; Tom Smith, Director, OCSI.

### How detailed analysis can make the difference in identifying inequalities at a local level

The Rotherham Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) sets out how the Strategic Partnership is tackling deprivation and exclusion across the Borough. As part of the strategy, Rotherham's own local 'Neighbourhood Statistics' project has developed information about Rotherham that enables the identification of inequalities at a small area level within the Borough. This has included the creation of a bespoke 'Local Index of Multiple Deprivation' at Output Area level. This approach has contributed greatly to the understanding of Rotherham's population at a much more local level than previously possible.

The "Deprivation in Rotherham" study was commissioned by Rotherham as part of the process to review and refresh the NRS, and to develop a wider and deeper understanding of the deprivation trends and patterns across Rotherham. The Council commissioned Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) to carry out the study. OCSI, a spin-out consultancy from the University of Oxford team that developed the Indices of Deprivation 2004 and 2000, have carried out a number of local studies analysing the social and economic deprivation evidence-base.

The project carried out a wide range of analysis, including: identifying how Rotherham and its most deprived areas were "closing the gap"; developing an atlas of deprivation; validating the Rotherham NRF targeting strategy; and helping update the way Rotherham monitors the impact of programmes.

Data sources that were used in the project included the Indices of Deprivation 2004 (ID2004), Census 2001, DWP benefit datasets, and DfES pupil attainment data (from the residential-based PLASC dataset). Detailed datasets from local partner agencies were also used in the study, including Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit information, LEA datasets, life expectancy and mortality rates, teenage pregnancies, Higher Education applications, and crime and housing datasets.

The sections below represent just some of the key findings from the Study.

### Tackling deprivation

The high multiple deprivation levels across Rotherham are mainly driven by Income, Employment, Health, and Education and Skills deprivation, with the Borough ranked among the most deprived 20% of Districts in England on these domains. Education and Skills show the highest levels of deprivation, with Rotherham ranked in the most deprived 10% of English Districts and more than one-quarter of its SOAs among the most deprived 10% in England.

Although multiple deprivation levels across Rotherham are high, the Borough made progress in reducing deprivation between the ID2000 and ID2004 time points<sup>1</sup> in the context of other Districts across England. This change appears to be due to improvement in levels of Education and Skills deprivation, and to a lesser extent Income and Employment deprivation.

## Tackling deprivation in Rotherham cont...

### Helping target unemployment and worklessness programmes

The study showed that employment rates across Rotherham increased at a faster rate than England, the region and the other NRF areas in recent years, from 66% in 1997/8 to 73% in 2003/4. This was also reflected in unemployment levels, with large falls in people receiving Jobseekers Allowance benefits. However, not all groups are benefiting equally from the increase in employment opportunities across the Borough - employment rates among older people, lone parents, those with no qualifications, and non-white female groups show significantly poorer levels and rates of improvement.

The most deprived areas across Rotherham show some of the best progress in reducing unemployment levels, but the picture is very different when looking at sickness levels. Across Rotherham, people on sickness benefits (such as Incapacity Benefit) outnumber those on unemployment benefits by four to one, and in some areas this ratio is even higher. The numbers of people on sickness benefits was fairly static over recent periods, with the most deprived areas showing increases in the numbers and rates of people receiving sickness benefits.

### Improving adult skills in BME groups

Although adult skills are low across Rotherham, with 37% of all adults having no qualifications (compared with 29% across England and 33% across the region), both employment-related training and working age qualification levels are increasing across the Borough, likely to be linked to the rise in employment levels.

However, there is evidence of an adult skills generational effect in the BME groups. Older age groups (those aged 50 and over) are not significantly less qualified than the same age white groups. But the difference is striking at the younger age groups, in particular the 25 to 49 year olds, who are significantly less qualified than the same age white groups. This points to an increasing disengagement with education and training among the younger BME groups across Rotherham, and Rotherham is targeting additional NRF support to BME groups.

### Targeting the right areas and communities

The OCSI study found that the Local Index of Multiple Deprivation was an effective and accurate method for identifying the geographical target areas for neighbourhood renewal resources. Additionally, there was a strong match between the LIMD and national deprivation datasets including the ID2004 and key benefits datasets.

Evidence from the study and the validation of the Targeting Strategy supported two extensions to the way neighbourhood renewal support was targeted:

- The NRS target areas (see map over page) were extended from the 20% to the 25% most deprived areas, resulting in the identification of 13 Target Areas.
- The study further highlighted that geographical targeting alone would not tackle multiple deprivation in Rotherham, and four target groups have been highlighted for NRF support:
  - Minority Ethnic Communities and Asylum Seekers
  - Disabled People and their Carers
  - Vulnerable Older People and their Carers
  - Deprived Children and Young People

## Tackling deprivation in Rotherham cont...

### Future Benefits

The study has provided a robust analysis of the trends and patterns across Rotherham, helping the Rotherham Partnership tailor the revised Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and programme commissioning to the needs of local communities. And monitoring the success of the strategy over time will enable additional support to be directed to those areas and groups that are doing less well across the Borough, as well as evaluating the impact of the NRF programmes in helping Rotherham close the gap.

**Michael Hellewell can be contacted directly on [Michael.Hellewell@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Hellewell@rotherham.gov.uk). Tom Smith at OCSI can be contacted directly on [tsmith@ocsi.co.uk](mailto:tsmith@ocsi.co.uk), 0870 240 1474.**

<sup>1</sup> Analysis took account of differences in methodology between the ID2004 and earlier ID2000

### Rotherham Local Index of Multiple Deprivation (LIMD)

