Abstract: David McLennan

Multi-dimensional indices of deprivation at small area (i.e. 'neighbourhood') level can provide an important contribution to the evidence base informing policy decisions concerning poverty, deprivation and wellbeing.

Indices of deprivation are well established in the UK. The current conceptual and methodological model for UK indices was first introduced in the year 2000 with the publication of the English Indices of Deprivation 2000, with the model rapidly also being adopted by Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Each country within the UK has updated its indices on a regular basis since that point. The model of multiple deprivation is based on the idea of separate dimensions of deprivation which can be recognised and measured separately. These are experienced by individuals living in an area. The area itself can be characterised as deprived, relative to other areas, in a particular dimension of deprivation on the basis of the proportion of people in the area experiencing the type of deprivation in question. In other words, the experience of the people in an area gives the area its deprivation characteristics. Having attributed the aggregate of individual experience of deprivation to the area, it is possible to say that an area is deprived in that particular dimension. Having measured specific dimensions of deprivation, these can be understood as elements of multiple deprivation. The overall Index of Multiple Deprivation is constructed by combining the component domains of deprivation into a composite multi-dimensional measure.

The UK indices were initially developed as a means of identifying the most deprived areas in England to inform the targeting of regeneration programmes, and have since been used within government and more widely to analyse patterns of deprivation, to identify areas that would benefit from special initiatives or programmes and as a tool to determine eligibility for specific funding streams. Examples of policy uses from the English indices (with similar examples for the other UK indices) include allocating funding to the most deprived areas through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Working Neighbourhoods Fund; informing the locations of Sure Start Children's Centres which provide integrated services for young children and their families; targeting Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative funding to expand childcare provision in the most disadvantaged areas in the country; and identifying deprived areas to benefit from reductions to stamp duty.

In recent years similar indices have been produced for developing countries, including South Africa and Namibia. In South Africa the indices have been and continue to be used in a variety of ways by South African national government, for example by the Presidency to target anti-poverty strategies for the War on Poverty Campaign, and by the Department of Social Development (DSD) to inform the Expanded Public Works Programme (temporary work for the unemployed) and to target areas to improve take up of social assistance.

This presentation will discuss the development of the indices in the UK and South Africa and present some examples of policy impact.