



Targeting resources and interventions in deprived areas using small area level indices of deprivation in the UK and South Africa: Michael Noble



Since 1999, Noble and his team have undertaken a programme of research to produce small area level indices of deprivation in the UK and South Africa. The indices are widely used in these nations by central and local government, regional bodies, civil society, academics and others.

These measurements are used 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, enabling governments and other bodies to target their resources more effectively.

In England, a new methodology for the creation of small area deprivation indices was developed in 1999, commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions to inform distribution of regeneration funds.



The new conceptual model of multiple deprivation is based on the idea of distinct uni dimensional domains of deprivation (e.g. income, employment, health, education, housing and crime) that are measured separately. The domains are combined, with appropriate weighting, into a single measure of multiple deprivation. The index differed markedly from previous measures in use since 1981.

This was not only because of the methodological innovations, but also because of the use of administrative data rather than Census data, including a ground-breaking use of recorded crime data from all police forces in the country (data that no other researcher has been granted access to before or since).

Building on recognition afforded to the research by Universities UK (as one of the top 100 discoveries and developments in UK universities), in 2008, the UK government gave formal recognition of the impact of the various UK indices by awarding Professor Noble a CBE for services to research on poverty and deprivation, in particular his work on the English Indices 2007.

There are many examples of uses of the indices of deprivation in the UK, including:

- Targeting funding: £1.5 billion (2008-09 to 2010-11) Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) allocated to local authorities on the basis of levels of deprivation in their constituent neighbourhoods (2007 Indices).
- Funding formulae: the NHS has used the English Indices as part of its weighted capitation funding formulae to allocate funding to primary care trusts and deprivation-weighted additions to GP salaries e.g. £85 billion allocated in 2011-12.
- Targeting programmes: the Community Energy Saving Programme (2009-2012) contributes to the government's Fuel Poverty Strategy by targeting geographical areas.
- The indices also appeal broadly to charities, voluntary organisations, businesses and the general public. For example, many National Lottery grants are targeted at deprived areas using the indices, as are other charitable funds, such as the Church and Community Fund.

The South African indices were undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders in South Africa (Human Sciences Research Council, Statistics South Africa, and the national Department of Social Development) who contributed to the development of the research.

The indices have been used to inform and target a range of strategies and programmes, including the government's anti-poverty strategy (2009 onwards), the Social Grants Outreach Programme (2007-2010) improving take-up of social assistance in deprived rural areas) and the National Development Plan (2013).

