Family Hubs and Start for Life Package: methodology for pre-selecting the 75 local authorities

Introduction

In October 2021, as part of the Autumn budget, the Government announced £301.75m to transform Start for Life and Family Hub services in 75 upper-tier local authorities across England. This programme will fund a network of Family Hubs, Start for Life and family help services, including breastfeeding services, parenting programmes and parent-infant mental health support.

This note sets out the methodology used to identify the 75 local authorities pre-selected for the programme. Pre-selected local authorities are areas that will be eligible for funding subject to confirmation that the local authority can deliver the programme's requirements.

General Principles

The selection methodology was developed in accordance with the following core principles:

1. That the criteria used should target funding at areas with the highest levels of deprivation to support the Government's levelling-up agenda.
2. That the criteria used should ensure pre-selected local authorities have sufficient representation across the three high-level Rural Urban Classifications[1] (i.e. Predominantly Urban, Urban with Significant Rural and Predominantly Rural) to enable the government to build the evidence base around the programme's implementation and impact in different contexts.
3. That any data used should be robust and publicly available, so that the calculations behind our rankings are transparent.

Methodology

Step 1: Choice of metrics

In accordance with the above principles, local authorities were ranked based on Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices (IDACI)[2] – Average Rank.

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[1] 2011 Rural Urban Classification lookup tables for all geographies - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[2] English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) – (File 11)

This metric was selected to best align with the programme's focus of bringing investment to areas with the greatest need. IDACI shows the proportion of children in each area that live in families that are income deprived; those that are in receipt of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Universal Credit (where no adult is in 'Working – no requirements' conditionality regime), Pension Credit Guarantee or Child Tax Credit below a given threshold.

IDACI is also highly correlated to other deprivation metrics such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) [3].

The Average Rank summary identifies the average level of deprivation in the local authority, taking into account all Lower-layer Super Output Areas in the area.

The higher the Average Rank score, the higher the proportion of all children living in income deprived families in an area.

Step 2: Pre-select local authorities ensuring a minimum of 25% from each Rural Urban Classification

Using the IDACI - Average Rank scores, the highest scoring 25% of local authorities from each Rural Urban Classification were pre-selected for the programme.

This comprised:

- 28 out of the 109 Predominantly Urban local authorities.
- 6 out of the 22 Urban with Significant Rural local authorities.
- 6 out of the 21 Predominantly Rural local authorities.

The remaining 35 local authorities were pre-selected in rank order using the IDACI - Average Rank scores, irrespective of their Rural Urban Classification.

This approach was taken to ensure pre-selected local authorities have sufficient representation across the three high-level Rural Urban Classifications to enable the government to build the evidence base around the programme's implementation and impact in different contexts.

These pre-selected local authorities will not necessarily be the final list of 75 local authorities that deliver the programme. This is because a pre-selected local authority may choose not to take part or otherwise fail to proceed.

If the removal or withdrawal of a local authority causes the number of local authorities pre-selected in one of the Rural Urban Classifications to fall below the minimum of 25%, the next highest ranking local authority (using the IDACI - Average Rank scores) from that Rural Urban Classification is pre-selected to meet the minimum 25% requirement. Otherwise, if the 25% minimum requirement continues to be met for each of the three Rural

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[3] English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) – (File 11)

Urban Classifications after the removal or withdrawal of a local authority, the next highest local authority is pre-selected irrespective of their Rural Urban Classification. This continues until 75 local authorities are willing and able to participate in the programme.

Further details regarding the next steps of the process will be set out in due course.

Note on boundaries

Where local authority boundaries have changed since the IDACI datasets were published, we have constructed the Average Rank score using IDACI Rank[4] and Dependent Children aged 0-15: mid 2015 (excluding prisoners)[5] population data for the Lower-layer Super Output Areas in each local authority. This is in line with the methodology specified in the English Indices of Deprivation 2019: Technical Report[6].

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[4] English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) – (File 7)
[5] English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) – (File 6)
[6] English Indices of Deprivation 2019: technical report (publishing.service.gov.uk) - (Appendix N)