

**simd**

Scottish Index of  
**Multiple Deprivation**



# Quick Reference Guide

How to use SIMD effectively

## Quick Reference Sheet – Questions to ask yourself



**Know the Purpose** – does the purpose of SIMD help achieve your aims?

SIMD is the official tool of the Scottish Government to identify concentrations of multiple deprivation in Scotland.

	<b>It is appropriate for SIMD to be used for...</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identifying areas where individuals may experience multiple deprivation</li><li>• identifying areas of greater need for support and intervention</li></ul>
	<b>It is <u>NOT</u> appropriate for SIMD to be used for ...</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identifying all individuals who are deprived in Scotland</li><li>• labelling individuals as deprived based on an area they live in</li></ul>



**How to use the data** – does it provide answers to your questions?

The background data that makes up SIMD can help identify aspects of deprivation which are known to affect the quality of individuals' lives. Explore the data and get to know how it is put together to help you with further analysis.

	<b>The SIMD and background data can be used...</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to provide area-based data for further analysis</li><li>• to say whether one area is relatively more or less deprived compared to another</li></ul>
	<b>The SIMD and background data <u>cannot</u> be used...</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to provide an absolute measure of deprivation for an area</li><li>• to say how much more or less an area is deprived over time</li></ul>

**Other Sources** – is other information available to use along with SIMD?

SIMD identifies concentrations of deprivation where these concentrations exist. Good practice is to use SIMD alongside other data sources. This is especially important in rural areas or other areas where deprivation may be hidden.

	<b>Other sources of evidence and research can be used with SIMD...</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to provide enhanced analysis to identify local issues and need</li><li>• as a basis for decision making as part of a basket of tools</li></ul>
	<b>The SIMD on its own <u>cannot</u> be used...</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• as the only source of identifying where support is needed in all localities</li><li>• to assume all individuals in an area are not deprived</li></ul>

# Ayrshire College – Best Practice Case Study 1

Ayrshire College has used SIMD to help identify challenges faced by students and to reduce student drop-out rates. This led to the College being shortlisted for a Times Educational Supplement (TES) Further Education Award for 'Supporting Students'. The College's success is due to implementing a strategy informed by SIMD evidence.

Bernadette McGuire, Vice Principal of Learning and Skills described how the College used SIMD with other research to help achieve this.

## **SIMD as a part of a 'basket of tools'**

SIMD was used in conjunction with other resources to understand the reasons for students dropping out and to establish what would help improve outcomes for students.

The strategy put in place to support students was underpinned by a range of information sources including the College's own management information, as well as research from its student services and finance departments.

## **Identifying problems using SIMD with other evidence**

SIMD is useful at understanding problems associated with small geographical areas. While College staff were aware that a proportion of their students came from deprived backgrounds, the tools provided by SIMD made it easier to identify those individuals.

Ayrshire College also looked to its own management information, such as student attendance, and investigated the reasons why students had historically dropped out. Bringing together the student services and finance departments, and holding student focus sessions, the College began to understand the factors affecting drop-out rates.

Deprivations that mattered ranged from those living in over-crowded houses where study space was not readily available, to those who had financial problems due to income deprivation.

By monitoring attendance, early interventions were put in place which helped individuals overcome barriers to a successful learning experience at college. Students often experience a variety of problems, from funding issues to lack of interest in courses. Deprivation was one of many variables impacting on drop-out rates.

In conclusion, while SIMD can be used to identify students at risk of dropping out, identifying all students at risk requires SIMD to be used in conjunction with other evidence sources.

## **Avoid labelling students as 'deprived'**

Although SIMD played a key role in developing the College's strategy, the deprivation aspect is always played down.

Bernadette is keen to avoid labelling students and indeed the word 'deprivation' is never used when talking to students. She said the College's policy was to support all students equally. "At Ayrshire College we treat everyone the same, but we are very aware that some people will need targeted support. We know that some from deprived backgrounds are likely to drop out, but stigmatising students does not help."

## The Scout Association – Best Practice Case Study 2

The Scout Association wanted to ensure that when their leaders target an area for additional support, that they are targeting the most appropriate areas.

### **SIMD data can replace assumptions with facts**

The Scouts were interested in two things. Were they targeting the correct areas and not just where grant applications were being applied for; and were local groups providing support for the areas they needed to.

They identified that the best way to answer these questions was to look at SIMD.

### **Visualise SIMD your own way**

To help leaders identify for themselves if support was being targeted to the correct areas, Programme and Development Officer, Brian Morrison, wanted something easy for his leaders to understand.

He identified the data most suitable to his problem. The solution was to merge the corresponding SIMD data into Google's 'Fusion Tables' with his own data. This allowed him to visualise deprivation exactly how he wanted for the Scouts purpose.

The Scottish Government is committed to making data open for all to use, whether you are a government organisation, private enterprise or third sector volunteers. The data behind SIMD is made publically available through the Government Open Data License. More details can be found on the Scottish Government website.

### **Mapping SIMD at the Scouting Level**

While the Scottish Government provides mapping tools through the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) website, and other analytical papers to support SIMD, this format didn't work for Brian.

Through the 'Fusion Tables', Brian could overlay his own geo-tagged data to look at where Scout Troops were operating against known deprived areas. He generated a 'Heat map' that could be sent to local volunteers, helping them to visualise for themselves if they were supporting areas with the greatest need.

Brian said "having full access to the SIMD data was instrumental in being able to visualise deprivation for our purpose."

"I generated a map showing green for least deprived areas through to red for most deprived areas, which was easily understood by our volunteers."

"It allowed us to very quickly see where our gaps in provision were."

### **Future work using SIMD**

Brian is hoping to use his 'Fusion Tables' and possibly expand them in the near future for other purposes as the Scouts develop a new strategy to help them take their next steps positively.

By identifying the questions needing answered and selecting the right data, Brian was able to provide an innovative solution to his organisations problem.