data zone reVIEW

**Paper TAGRA(2013)12**

purpose

To inform TAGRA members about the planned data zone boundary redraw and accompanying public consultation. The planned data zone redraw is of interest to TAGRA as the NRAC formula is derived from calculations at data zone level for Hospital & Community Health Services (HCHS).

introduction

Data zones are a statistical geography used for the dissemination of small area statistics. Data zone boundaries have remained static since they were introduced in 2004 and there has been considerable population change and a number of Local Authority boundary changes since their introduction.

Data zones will be redrawn with the **key aims** of:

* Standardising data zone populations, i.e. all data zones should have a population of between 375 and 1,125;
* Realigning data zones to Local Authority boundaries;
* Aligning data zones to 2011 Census Output Areas.

Other aims, in order of importance:

* Allow comparisons over time;
* Align to settlement and other boundaries of local significance;
* Compactness of shape.

Due to population growth since 2001, it is anticipated that **the redraw will increase the number of data zones** from 6,505 to around 6,800.

**TIMETABLE**

Once the Small Area Census data become available, work will begin to produce draft 2011 data zone boundaries. This will be followed by a **3 month public consultation** (subject to Ministerial approval) on the draft boundaries before making manual adjustments and finalising the boundaries. It is expected that the **consultation will begin in October 2013** and finalised data zone boundaries will be published in February 2014.

Work cannot begin until the 2011 Small Area Census data become available and the timetable is subject to change.

**METHODOLOGY**

A consultation was carried out in 2011 on the methodology used to produce data zone boundaries. Outline of the process is:

* Best fit 2011 Census Output Areas (COA) to existing data zones;
* Split or merge data zones along COA boundaries where data zones are outwith recommended population ranges of 375-1,125;
* Best fit new data zones to existing intermediate geographies;
* Split or merge IG along DZ boundaries in only the most extreme cases of population change.

There is strong user demand for exact data on new data zones and this means that alignment to 2011 Census Output Areas is a key constraint. Aligning to COA allows for accurate Small Area Census results on the new boundaries to be produced quickly and easily.

**CONCLUSION**

TAGRA members are invited to note the forthcoming consultation on data zone boundaries (subject to Ministerial approval). The Analytical Support Team will provide a response to the consultation on behalf of TAGRA. To assist with this, the Analytical Support Team will carry out impact analysis around the effect of the data zone boundary redraw on the target shares.

TAGRA Analytical Support Team

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