



Research Methodology

March 2011

User Guide 4

SANDWELL TRENDS: How do I use the Benchmarking Tools?

Sandwell Trends Local Intelligence System (LIS) is the first port of call for data, intelligence and analysis about the people and places in Sandwell.

The system is web-based, which hopefully means that most users will be familiar with how to navigate the site – however this series of user guides has been produced to help answer the more complex questions a user may have. The fourth in the series aims to provide the user with more detailed information on how to use the National Indicator¹ and CIPFA² finance benchmarking tools.

Getting Started

Sandwell Trends can be accessed from www.sandwelltrends.info, via Sandwell Council's intranet homepage, or via the Research Sandwell website (www.researchsandwell.org.uk). The Sandwell trends home page offers the user the chance to log in to the system – for the majority of users, this is unnecessary, as all pages on the system can be viewed by any level of user. However, there are two main cases when logging in would be beneficial:

- if the user wants to be able to save queries (which could then be emailed to other interested parties)
- or if the user wants to create or contribute to “Topic Pages.”

If you think you would need a log in, then contact [Research Sandwell](#) who will provide you with the appropriate access level (this is currently restricted to Sandwell Council users).

¹ From 2008, public services were required to collect data on a number of indicators known as “The National Indicator set.” This requirement has now ended.

² Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.



Technical Bit

Just as a reminder, to use the system you'll need to have JavaScript enabled and have the latest version of Adobe Flash installed to use the maps, charts or Benchmarking tools. [User Guide 1](#) gives more details.

So what's first?

To start, go to the *interactive tools* menu on the homepage, and click on either the *National Indicator Benchmarking* option or the *Finance Benchmarking* option. Alternatively, click on the *Benchmarking* or *Tools* quick links at the top of the screen. You'll be taken to the National Indicator (NI) homepage, where you can access the available National Indicator data gathered from [Floor Targets Interactive](#) or to the Finance homepage, where you can access data gathered from [CIPFA](#). You then need to simply select a number of options from the drop-down menus as required (both tools work in the same way):

1. **National Indicator** or **Finance Indicator**. Simply select the number of the National Indicator or the name of the finance indicator required.
2. **Region**. Select the region you would like to compare with Sandwell's result for that indicator.

| Region | Areas covered |
|---|--|
| All | All LA's in England |
| Black Country | Black Country Boroughs |
| CDRP (Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership) | Similar authorities in terms of crime |
| CIPFA Statistical Neighbours | A widely used group of similar authorities |
| CYP Statistical Neighbours | A group of similar authorities used by Education |
| England | National average |
| Metropolitan Districts | All Met Districts in England |
| Regions | Government Office Regions |
| West Midlands | LA's within the West Midlands Conurbation |

3. **Display**. The choice of *Region Comparison Chart* or *Quartile Comparison Chart* only affects the chart that is displayed for the indicator.

As soon as you begin to select an indicator and region, the data will appear on-screen. For both *display* options, you will be able to view the following results:

- A series of tables. These will show Sandwell's result and rank compared to the *Region* selected; a quartile comparison for the *Region* selected (is Sandwell within the best or the worst in the comparator group?); comparative data for England and the West Midlands, where available; and the selected indicator data for the individual authorities which make up the comparator *Region*. The data for the comparator authorities can be sorted into rank order by clicking on the date header of a column. Data is shown for the years available.
- A graph. This will be either a graph of results for the comparator authorities (*Region Comparison Chart*) or a chart of Sandwell's position in terms of the data quartiles (*Quartile Comparison Chart*).



- A link to the National Indicator Handbook (only available on the NI tool). Some metadata on the indicator is provided on-screen, but this provides further details of NI definitions. Metadata for the finance tool is only displayed on-screen.
- A map. Where available, a map showing disaggregated data (for sub-areas of Sandwell) or a comparator map will be displayed. A comparator map is not yet available for the England or Regions comparator *Region*.

That wasn't what I wanted!

Just revisit your selections of *National Indicator* or *Finance Indicator* and *Region*, and the page will automatically refresh.

What can I do with the results of my query?

- Copy the data. You can select the tabular data by clicking and holding down the left mouse button at the top of your table, and then moving down to select the table data. Then copy (by using <ctrl> and <c> on the keyboard or select edit / copy in your browser), and then paste into Excel (using <ctrl> and <v> on the keyboard or edit / paste in Excel). This will provide you with the tables produced from your query, together with the metadata.
- Export the map. The results of any map generated can be exported as an image to use in reports or presentations. You simply right-click on your map, and choose to export the full screen or individual elements (such as the map itself).
- Print the graph. You can right click on a graph and choose to print it. If you wanted to transfer it into a document, you could print to a pdf (if you have Acrobat Professional), but this does tend to lose the colours on the graph legend (but not on the graph).

How do I find out further information?

Further User Guides are available from the homepage of Sandwell Trends. These include:

- [Sandwell Trends – overview](#)
- [Interactive Tools - charts, maps and tables](#)
- [How do I find 2001 Census data?](#)
- [Publications and Topic Pages](#)
- [Getting the most from Maps](#)

Christine Wright, Principal Research Officer
Research Sandwell
15th March 2011

