Research & Intelligence News

LARIA NEWSLETTER NO. 11 June 1983

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EDITORIAL

Elsewhere in this issue you will find a personal view by George Woodcraft on the Local Authorities' Research & Intelligence Association Annual Conference held at Nottingham on 18th - 20th April. Most of these to whom I spoke felt it was very worthwhile although some - like me - had been a little sceptical at first about the direct relevance of some of the topics.

Certainly the attempt by the LARIA Steering Group to carry out a little research of its own at the Conference into the demand for LARIA activities by way of feedback from our customers revealed little that was new and immediately relevant. The Steering Group are obviously concerned as to whether the activities we organise are best meeting researchers' needs.

Currently we provide:-

- The LARIA Annual Conference in the Spring
- An Autumn Workshop for Heads of R & I Units
- The LARIA Newsletter
- LARIA Research Monographs

There were no suggestions for additions to this list. Is it being complacement to suggest that the fairly sparse attendance at our "review" session was testimony to the fact that we have got it about right? Further ideas are always welcome - particularly if they are accompanied by offers of help to put them into effect!

Another perennial topic of discussion is the balance at the Conference between sessions on narrow specialisms and those of more general interest, sessions devoted to research techniques or exploring the relationship between research and politics. These again came up in the review session but the discussion was just as inconclusive as all our previous thoughts on the subject. The obvious conclusion is that there is a place at the Conference for all these aspects of R & I and no amount of abstract thought will ensure we please everyone. Perhaps we should not try to complicate matters too much!

That thought reminds me of the parting words of a colleaque of mine - several years ago - on his departure to a more senior post elsewhere. His message was "Keep it simple". At the time I was not sure I agreed with him, feeling that the problems of a complex world required sophisticated study and complicated results. Over the years I have come more and more to the view that in local government the most appropriate research is that which produces usable results within the interest span of the client. In the environment in which we work it may well be that our clients are far happier with something they can easily understand and that may mean choosing appropriately straightforward tools for the job. Our featured Project Article from the Cheshire R. & I. Unit provides a good example. No sophisticated techniques were

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involved - just the calculation of rates and simple plotting of the results. The work has aroused interest (see the quotes at the start of the article) and the results have already been found useful by Councillors in allocating resources. These are surely the acid tests for any research project.

You will see that once again there is a considerable volume and variety of contributions under "News from R & I Units". This is the section of the Newsletter to which many readers turn first, and we are very grateful to so many contributors who are prepared to take the time to let others know what is going on. Keep the contributions flowing to the editorial group, please! The next issue is due in the early Autumn.

Stuart Creak,
Chairman LARIA Steering Group.

AUTHORITY PROFILE: NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Newcastle's central research section is one unit within the Policy Services Department. The Department was set up in 1979 and has a staff complement of 43. The Department is a flexible resource at the heart of the authority, providing support to the Chief Executive, implementing key corporate policies (e.g. Economic Development) and complementing and co-ordinating the contributions of service departments. The other sections in the Department are the Economic Development Unit, Information and Publicity and a Library Unit.

The Director of Policy Services is a Chief Officer and a member of the City Council's Management Group of Chief Officers. He is responsible for the effective management of the Council's corporate policy areas, policy planning, research and information services to both officers and councillors, programme planning, performance review, public relations and economic development.

Nine members of staff work on policy and research issues. Two Policy Officers work directly to the Head of Policy Planning and seven members of staff make-up a research section including a Principal Research Officer who is responsible for co-ordinating their work. The permanent staff consist of the principal research officer, the local authority statistician, a senior research officer, three research officers and a data clerk.

Temporary staff are employed for fieldwork on specific surveys. Currently there is a temporary research officer and two clerical assistants financed by joint Health Authority funding working on a major survey of the disabled and frail elderly in the City.

The research section fulfils the normal central research role within a major metropolitan authority: analysing, interpreting and publishing the results of the 1981 Census, providing Census type information to officers, members and the general public, and carrying out major research projects on behalf of other departments and service committees. The 1983 version of City Profiles based mainly on Census data, was recently published and can be obtained from the Department for £4.

Since the creation of the new Department however, an increasing proportion of the section's resources have been devoted to undertaking research studies related directly to immediate policy issues and following these through to develop specific policy initiatives in conjunction with the service departments concerned.

An early general example of this was the Policy Review exercise carried out during 1981 and managed by the Department's policy and research staff.

The Review aimed to:-

- provide a coherent description of the City Council's responsibilities, polices and objectives;

- detail the activities being carried out by each service or department in fulfilling these objectives;

- clarify or question the relationship between these activities, the resources used to provide them and the Council's declared objectives and policies;

- provide a better basis for identifying policy options;

- provide a clearer yardstick by which to review achievement and performance and to assess procedures and organisations;

The Review exercise has led to the continuous review of performance and achievement based largely on the production of quarterly progress reports on work being done to resolve policy issues.

Much of the directly policy related work arises from two City Council sub-committees which now provide the focus for most of the work of the section. These are the Efficiency Sub-Committee, a sub-committee of Finance Committee, and Performance and Review Sub-Committee, a sub-committee of Policy and Resources Committee.

Examples of work now being done for Efficiency Sub Committee include:-

- a study of the effectiveness of the housing repairs and modernisation service, involving 1,000 interviews with tenants who had complaints about the service.

- setting-up a member working group on environmental management and maintenance.

- a broad investigation into Education Service expenditure.

- a study to identify the 'optimum' size of residential homes for the elderly.

Examples of work being undertaken for Performance and Review Sub-Committee include:-

- a study of the positive discrimination policy within the schools system.

- a study of parental involvement within schools.

Other work currently being carried out by section staff includes:-

- a study of policy issues relating to leisure and youth service provision, particularly in the context of the needs of young unemployed.

- providing supporting research and the lead officer input to the Authority's Women's Issues Sub-Committee.

- undertaking initial research and preparing a green paper on the Authority's policy for ethnic minority groups.

Further information and copies of reports and publications can be obtained from the Principal Research Officer, Policy Services Department, Civic Centre, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 8QN. Newcastle Upon Tyne (0632) 328520 Extn. 5034.

PROJECT PROFILE : AREAS OF FAMILY STRESS (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL)

'The most significant policy document produced by the County Council'
'A bigger pile of rubbish I have yet to read'
These are two of the quotes from councillors about the report produced by Cheshire Research and Intelligence in conjunction with Education, Social Services, Police and Probation. They show the strength of feeling about the results of the exercise carried out to determine the incidence of social problems throughout the County.

The study started in the latter half of 1981 when the four Chief Officers requested R & I to convene a group to examine the frequency of problems linked to families and children. It was decided that in view of the need to produce results as quickly as possible the project should be kept as simple as possible and service data would have to be used, rather than await receipt of Census data. After much discussion about relevance and availability, it was decided to analyse the incidence of the following indicators of family stress:

- Educational Sub- Normality (severe and Moderate)
- Free school meals
- Children in Care
- Youth Unemployment
- Probation Civil Orders
- Children and Young Persons Supervision by Probation
- Juvenile Liaison Referrals for Offences
- Community Service Orders
- Probation/Supervision
- After-Care
- 'Home Area' Crimes

In view of the fact that a gazetteer for coding could be made available, it was decided to use district wards as the areal base for the exercise. This proved possible for all indicators except crime. Information from the Police could only be obtained in aggregate form for police beats for crimes committed, rather than for the home areas of criminals. The refinement of this data by restricting analysis to crimes likely to be committed near to home was attempted, but results were strongly influenced by concentrations of all types of crime in town centres.

Data collection proceeded until the summer of 1982, whilst systems of calculating rates and plotting results were developed. By September 1982 all data had been analysed in terms of rates per 1000 population for each indicator, and maps had been plotted by computer. A report was produced which mapped and summarised the results. In the report patterns of family stress were described by means of rank order correlations and frequency with which wards occurred in the highest 20 ranks.

From the period October 1982 to January 1983 presentations of results were given to such bodies as the Chief Officers Board, various committees, departments and district co-ordinating groups and teachers. Wherever possible these presentations incorporated a full display of maps and involved representatives of each contributory department.

The exercise had considerable impact with councillors, officers and members of the public. After the first round of presentations it became evident that total unemployment and single parent family data were needed to supplement the indicators already included, and with the arrival of Census data, a supplementary report was produced which incorporated these indicators and excluded some of the less reliable original variables. The inclusion of the two extra indicators did not, however, result in any major changes.

Initial response after considerable discussion at full Council has been allocation in the 1983/84 budget of £118,000 to the 4 areas of highest levels of stress. However, the results of the exercise are being used for decisions on resource allocation at a wide variety of levels, and proposals for action at local and district levels will be included in the next budget cycle.

Research work will continue to identify areas of housing stress, to identify smaller areas of stress, and to establish a system of monitoring. From the outset the aim has been to keep the project technically simple and this philosophy will be continued.

Reports are available (at a cost of £5 cash with order).

Contact: Graham Smith, Central Policy & Research Unit, Cheshire County Council (0244) 602173

LARIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE APRIL 1983

My first impression of this year's conference was extremely painful - seconds after I had registered I fell on the steps outside Lincoln Hall - I still bear the bruises! Next I discovered how large the Nottingham University Campus was - it was further by car to the University shop and bank than to my own local shopping centre at home.

After an adequate lunch, the first speaker in the plenary session was Robin Morphet, Principal R & I Officer from Hackney, talking about the role of political researchers in his labour controlled inner city borough. This is still a new idea in local government and few of the participants in the discussion had any experience of it. Although Robin Morphet had found no great difficulties in working with the political advisers, others found the possible threat to the objectivity of research a matter of concern.

This first session confirmed an impression given by the list of delegates: apart from representatives from central government and CIPFA everyone was from a central research unit of one sort or another with no service based researchers at all. Many delegates had also not been to previous conferences. Is this a good omen for increased attendances at future conferences?

For the second session we split into two groups: one about SASPAC, the other about the MSC's Youth Training Scheme. I attended the talk on SASPAC from Keith Dugmore, SASPAC project officer at LAMSAC. This session was notable for the great confidence in the success of SASPAC as expressed by the speaker compared with the impression of continuing difficulties in making the system work 'at the coalface' in most authorities. It is unfortunate that such a good idea in principle has apparently run into so many practical problems. Let us hope that the teething troubles, if that is what they are, iron themselves out soon. The recent request for more money to maintain and enhance the system seemed, if the conference delegates are representative of authorities as a whole, likely to fall on deaf ears!

The first full day of the conference began with one session on experiments in the use of information technology by Gateshead MBC and one on the activities of the Local Ombudsman. By all accounts the ombudsman session was both entertaining and interesting. I attended the information technology session. This brought up the nearest thing to a theme in this year's conference: the interference by local authorities in the 'natural order of things', in other words the operation of a free market economy. Patrick Conway, Deputy Librarian of Gateshead, described the various ways in which his authority were trying to use information technology to improve the lot of Gateshead residents. These included the computerised grocery ordering system using a local superstore with a delivery service now provided by the Local Authority; a 'job link' between libraries and job centres so that people looking for a job could get the latest information on jobs available from their local libraries and community centres rather than having to visit their job centre. A local business database was also being set up and cable vision had been used experimentally. Gateshead were winners of the Local Government Information Technology 1982 competition and if their ideas are followed there is an exciting future ahead for R & I units in making information much more widely available, although at least one delegate expressed concern about the potential dangers involved particularly in disseminating information about private sector companies.

The next session I attended was an excellent presentation covering both the technical aspects and policy consequences of a survey of unemployed people in Newcastle. A very good example of relevant, topical, research which has had an impact on policy making in most services as well as providing valuable information for local politicians to use in presenting a case for more resources to Central Government. In discussions the session referred back to the previous speaker in demonstrating that one of the resources unemployed people lack is information, and new technology can be used by local authorities to improve the availability of information on benefits, jobs and economic development possibilities.

In the afternoon there was a second plenary session on the assistance local authorities, in conjunction with the private sector, can provide to economic development. Archie Duncan outlined the impressive array of services available to small firms in Leicester and John Cutler described the complementary support from the private sector.

The last formal session of the day was by Ansel Wong, Race Relations Adviser to the GLC. Mr. Wong was an impressive speaker and clearly committed to his role although it was obvious that it was not an easy position. Even classifying race or ethnic origin was not, as was discovered by OPCS in the run up to the 1981 Census, something on which it was easy to agree. The GLC is one of the first authorities to make a conscious policy that its staff should be representative of the multi-racial/cultural society it serves and I wonder how many authorities will follow suit.

The Local Authorities Research and Intelligence Association does not exist! Stuart Creak, as Chairman of the LARIA, Steering Group revealed this at the informal session in the evening to discuss the future of the organisation and its events. The Association has no members, no consititution, no elections and no money; it is run through secretarial and organisation support from INLOGOV and the steering group consisting of heads of R & I Units from most types of authorities. Members of the steering group are invited if they appear likely to contribute something to keep the organisation going.

Attendance at the session was sparse and those who did come did not seem concerned at the present nature of LARIA. Indeed the main discussion was on the conference itself and what could be done to increase attendance. Although the steering group had been concerned that this year's conference was too general in nature several delegates felt that the right balance had been struck between technical and policy presentations. The discussion led to no clear conclusion except that better marketing/pricing and a positive theme for at least one day might attract more delegates.

Opening the third day, Tony Veal from the North London Polytechnic reminded us of the wide range of leisure service suppliers-from the well know parks, sports centres, libraries and

allotments of local authorities, through other public bodies like the Forestry and Countryside Commissions' facilities (and the BBC?) to the voluntary sector largely for Arts and Theatre but social clubs too. All this provision paled into insignificance compared to commercial provision. Tony outlined his "organic approach" towards the planning of service provision together with a simple matrix system for checking equity of provision and identifying questions for consideration.

Winding up the Conference, Professor Nicholas Deakin charted the rise and decline in the influence of social researchers on government over the last twenty years. The role of R & I had changed over this period as had the predominant disciplines of the researchers. The changing background of politicians, the rise of the officer-member, tightening budgets and the contempt of the present government for data and, more particularly, social researchers all raised doubts as to whether the research and intelligence function can survive. Nicholas Deaking felt that social research can still be effective in assisting the formulation of government policy. Researchers would probably have to run harder to maintain their position and focus more closely on the key issues. The important thing was for researchers to understand the motives of the participants in their working environment and ensuring they were keyed into the system. At work, technical standards were the least likely test to be applied to the importance of their works, so these had to be maintained by exposing them to criticism by peer groups. Was freedom to publish the ultimate test by which the credibility of an authority's research could be established? Plenty of food for thought to chew over on our way home!

My final feelings were that it was a good conference but not the best (are they ever the best?) One of the main values, of course, in every conference is in meeting colleagues informally in a suitable hostelry for discussions on life, the universe and everything. This year the suitable hostelry was 'The trip to Jerusalem Inn' in the rock cliff below Nottingham Castle.

My trip to Nottingham was not a crusade - more of a period of retreat from the rigours and distractions of local authority life and a chance to put daily problems into a new perspective.

George Woodcraft, R & I Officer,
Hertfordshire County Council,
(with additional material from Stuart Creak).

(Full papers will be published in due course).

NEWS FROM R & I UNITS

Arun District Council

Over the past few months, the Corporate Planning Unit has been concentrating on two principal areas of work: the completion of a number of short ad-hoc value for money studies and the preparation of background information and policy papers for the new Council to be elected in May. On the former, the Unit has recently completed a review of cleansing service depot requirements in the District, which has led to a decision in principle to close one depot and centralise cleansing services.

A lot of effort is going into background papers for the new Council as part of a revamped corporate planning process/system, which will also involve an enhancement of performance review work. The work for this has been in three areas - the production of a 1981 Census summary document as a base document for all departments, the production of background profile statements on aspects of the District and the influences on individual Committees' services for Members, and research on individual policy isues for Members, the main effort currently being on the needs of the elderly.

Contact: Ian Treece, (090 64) 6133

Berkshire County Council

1. Review of Work During 1982

The Unit has published a brief review of work undertaken during 1982. The work is divided into four main areas:

- Corporate reseach projects
- Research for Service departments
- Policy Planning and Intelligence Support
- Berkshire Employment Programme

Copies of the review are available from David Rutherford, Research & Intelligence Unit, Shire Hall, Shinfield Park Reading RG2 9XD.

2. Revisions to Population Models

The Berkshire population estimation and population projection models which have been used to produce estimates and projections compatible with 1971 Census figures are at present undergoing a detailed evaluation of their accuracy in the light of the 1981 Census results. Work on setting up the new 1981 Census Usual Residents base, and recalibration of many of the parameters using 1981 Census data is soon to be undertaken. Initial investigation suggests that the models have performed well in estimating total populations but that there may be room to improve the estimation of the age structure of migrants. It is proposed to examine the possibility of using NHSCR data in this connection.

Other changes under consideration include alternative methods of estimating numbers of households, and procedures for producing estimates of persons from ethnic minority groups.

Contact: Keith Hawkins,
(0734) 875444 Ext. 3023

3. Analysis of Schools Courses

An annual survey has been carried out for a number of years on the courses offered in schools to sixth formers. A questionnaire is completed by all schools and the results are analysed on the County's mainframe computer in a manner agreed with the Education Advisers. Information is collected on all examination courses offered (including RSA Pitman and City and Guilds) and items which have been of particular interest recently are courses being run with very few pupils, and courses offered for the single year sixth former.

Last year for the first time a survey was undertaken of the curriculum offered to years 1-5 by schools, and was analysed manually. This year the survey has been repeated and will be analysed by the Research and Intelligence Unit on the County's mainframe computer.

Contact: Maureen Wellen,
(0734) 875444 Ext. 3024.

4. Special Education Transport

Over 1,600 children have to be transported to 15 non-residential Special Schools and units every day at a cost of £915,000 during 1982-83. A rationalisation exercise has been carried out on the transport arrangements to two adjacent schools and has led to a more efficient use of taxis, minibuses and coaches due to improved routes and has resulted in savings of over 20%.

Similar exercises will be carried out on the remaining schools during the summer with the aim of implementing the new routes at the beginning of the autumn term 1983.

Contact: Helen Graney,
(0734) 875444 Ext. 3025

5. Monitoring System for Out-County Pupils

A system has been developed to provide information on the 1750 children living outside the County who attend Berkshire Schools and to administer inter-authority recoupment. A coding form is completed by a school whenever a child is admitted or leaves. The information is then entered to a Commodore PET microcomputer. In January each school is sent a list of their children currently held on the system for checking and updating in line with the usual DES guidelines. The numbers of children in each age group can then be produced for the DES return, and lists sent to other LEAs for confirmation. Once the figures have been agreed the recoupment can be calculated.

A possible extension to the system will be to include details on those Berkshire children studying outside the County.

A further use of the system has been to forecast for budgetary purposes the future number of children for whom recoupment payments will be required.

Contact: Graham Symonds,
(0734) 875444 Ext. 3023.

6. Accident Record System

A system is being implemented on a Commodore PET Microcomputer to store and analyse details of accidents to staff on County Council premises. Twenty data items, plus a comments field about the person, the circumstances and the outcome are coded and entered to disk files through a screen input program.

It is the intention to produce regular reports for departmental management, and to design a 'search and select' facility so that the user can produce one-off reports.

Contact: Pamela Feltbower,
(0734) 875444 Ext. 3025.

Blaenau Gwent Borough Council

Work Study Applications for Microcomputers

A program designed to receive, process and file data from production studies has now been in use for about one month. It maintains a set of disk-based files for each work area, and each work area can cater for 100 jobs in total with up to 20 jobs per study and 25 elements per job. Up to three workmen can be included.

A program for computer assisted refuse scheduling has also been developed. This utilises the computer's speed of retrieval, manipulation and printing of data with the local knowledge of the scheduler to provide a simple means of allocating work schedules for refuse vehicles. Currently this program is being further developed into a street management program which, it is hoped, will facilitate scheduling of street cleaning, gully cleaning, grass cutting, maintenance of street furniture, play areas, etc.

A further program uses the microcomputer to store and print complete job specifications. This allows ease of updating and simplifies the production of information distributed to the workforce. It is hoped at a later date to merge this program with the production study program.

These developments have been carried out within the Management Services Department using Commodore 4000 series computers.

Contact: P.J. Dimmick,
(0495) 303401 Ext. 321.

Buckinghamshire County Council

Electoral Registration Enhancement Survey (E.R.E.S.)

The County Council, in conjunction with the Districts and the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, carried out an E.R.E.S. in October 1981. The survey was a simple canvas, largely postal and with no follow-up of non-respondents. Response rates were good - 83% at the County level with the lowest figure for a District being over 79%. The most significant problem encountered was the tendancy to underestimate vacant dwellings.

One of the main reasons for carrying out the exercise in 1981 was so that the results could be tested against those from the 1981 Census. Some preliminary work has been done on this. The County Council would be interested to hear from other authorities who have undertaken similar work and particularly on sharing experience on the following aspects:

- bias introduced by non-response
- undercounting of vacant dwellings
- production of correction factors for different types of areas.

Contact: K.L. Steventon, County Planning Department, (0296) 5000 Ext. 793.

Cheshire County Council

1. Needs of the Elderly

An interview survey in Chester District of over 800 elderly people in the community, in sheltered housing, in residential homes and in hospitals has recently been completed with the aim of assessing the needs of the elderly in relation to Social Services and Housing. Initial results have been passed to the Social Services Department, and a full report is now being written. This will be submitted to the Social Services Management Team, the Health Authority, the City Housing Department and ultimately the Social Services Committee. It is hoped that the report will be published in the summer.

Contact: Bill Redfern (0244) 602185
Gordon Hamilton (0244) 602176

2. 1981 Census

In common with other authorities (but later than most!) Cheshire has received the 1981 small area statistics from OPCS. Despite problems with SASPAC (in common with most?), the initial surge of requests for Census information has mostly been dealt with. A series of 32 topic pamphlets is being produced to help disseminate the information to County Departments, schools, libraries, District Councils and the public. Two seminars have also been held to explain the content and analysis available to officers and Members. One spin-off from the seminars has been a discussion with teachers as to the possibility of a teaching package on the Census for schools and colleges.

Contact: Catherine Knight (0244) 602117.

3. Pupil Forecasting

A fresh look is being taken at the methods of forecasting pupil numbers in Cheshire. Whilst the County forecasts have remained fairly accurate over the years, it was becoming clear that the methods devised over ten years ago for forecasting at district and school level were becoming decidedly shaky. Considering the changes in the education climate over that period this was not altogether surprising. Discussions with users of forecasts in the authority are taking place at present, and dependent upon the demand it is envisaged that a series of inter-linking modules will be designed to cope with forecasts over differing time periods and areas.

Contact: Catherine Knight (0244) 602117
Bryan Hall (0244) 602176

Chester City Council

Rural Employment

In January 1983 the City Council adopted for development control purposes the draft version of a Local Plan covering the rural section of its district. (Chester Rural Area Local Plan). This Plan includes policies favouring the conversion of vacant non-residential buildings to employment use and giving general encouragement to rural employment.

Although the Plan was adopted for development control purposes relatively recently these employment policies were a development of existing practice and applications of this type have been receiving favourable consideration for the past 2-3 years.

In March 1983 a brief study was made to assess whether this approach was resulting in significant employment gains (a local rural communities study has revealed the social and economic benefits of providing some rural employment).

A sample of Chester District applications already selected for a JURUE research study (into the planning problems of small firms in rural areas) was used as the basis of the 1983 study.

The 14 applications selected had all received planning permission between November 1979 and October 1981, 8 being for the conversion of agricultural buildings for various manufacturing uses and the remainder being for the conversion of other building types or the renewal of existing businesses.

The applicants were contacted and asked:-

- If the development had been carried out.
- How many jobs/extra jobs had been created as a results of the permission.
- How many were employed January 1979.
- How many were employed January 1983.

Replies were received from all 14 applicants contacted, only one of which had not carried out the development given permission. The remaining 13 businesses were employing 69 full time and 27 part time workers in January 1983 (approximately 40 additional workers were taken on during summer months). This was an increase of 19 full time and 22 part time workers over the numbers employed in January 1979.

In terms of extra jobs, i.e. those arising directly from the application not merely the transfer of jobs from elsewhere, these 13 permissions gave rise to 30 full time and 27 part time jobs.

The sample of applications did include one particularly large business which employed 31 full time, 2 part time and 35 seasonal workers but this business made no contribution to the figures of extra jobs provided.

The conclusion from this brief survey is that these decisions have led to a significant increase in employment and that operation of the rural plan policy should lead to further job gains.

Future work: A more complete survey of applications for employment use 1979-1983 is to be made developing into a monitoring exercise on the Rural Area Local Plan employment policies.

Contact: Brenda Harvey, Local Plans Section,
(0244) 40144 Ext. 2286.

Cleveland County Council

In the last few months three new officers have joined the Unit's Economic and General Research team. Maureen Begley, who joined the Unit in November last year was formerly with the Northen Ireland Economic Council in Belfast. At present she is carrying out research into option choice, careers education and the transition from school to work; sex differentiation in subject choice and careers aspirations among pupils in secondary education; and the composition of the housing General Needs Index, which is used by the DOE and Housing Corporation in making allocations to local housing authorities and housing associations.

Gordon Dabinett joined the Unit from the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) at Newcastle University in February. He is undertaking research into economic growth sectors and new technology initiatives.

Bryan Johnston has joined the Unit after 30 years in local industry, having been employed by Head Wrightson and later Davy McKee in various engineering, marketing and project management positions in the UK and abroad. He is now responsible for the updating and maintenance of "INDATA", the county's industrial information service.

Contact: Reg Fox (0642) 248155 Ext. 2370

Derbyshire County Council

Derbyshire County Council has been undertaking what is, as far as I am aware, its first ever public attitude survey. The primary function of the survey is to test out reaction to the introduction last year of a community policing experiment. The opportunity is being taken to extend the survey at the same time to cover a wide variety of questions concerning the provision of County Council services, including aspects of education, social services, and library provision, together with a number of questions about County Council priorities and expenditure.

The area covered by the survey will be that corresponding to the area of the community policing experiment. It will provide a cross section of social economic backgrounds, which can be identified from the answers to the questionnaire, but the principal interest in it derives from the fact that it includes virtually the whole of the Derby Inner City Area and the larger part of the 25,000 strong Asian and West Indian communities in Derby.

The survey, which covered interviews in 1,000 households, was carried out by Gallup Limited who recruited and specially trained a squad of local interviewers. Efforts were made to include interviewers from the ethnic minority communities covered in this survey, and to allocate them to appropriate households. The interviews took place in December and January, and initial results are now available.

Contact: Doug Scott (0629) 3411 Ext. 7340

Glasgow City Council

Homesteading

The Housing Department's Policy Research Group has published a study of Scotland's first Homesteading Scheme at Glenelg Quadrant in the Easterhouse area of Glasgow.

This study is based on interviews with participants in the first phase of Glasgow District Council's homesteading scheme. It examines the characteristics of the homesteaders, their reasons for purchasing homesteading properties, previous housing conditions and degree of satisfaction with the scheme and identifies improvements that could be made to the scheme.

The study finds that:

- Homesteaders are typically young married couples with children and with the head of household under 36 years of age, in full-time skilled manual or junior non-manual employment with an annual income of about £5,300.

- The homesteading scheme was most popular with people already living in or near the Easterhouse area.

- There was a substantial degree of housing need among homesteaders in their previous accommodation, in the form of overcrowding and sharing of basic amenities.

- There was a high level of satifaction among homesteaders both with their new home and with the neighbourhood.

- The survey suggested a number of ways in which the Council could improve its service, which have been implemented in subsequent schemes.

- In financial terms the homesteading option seems likely to be the most beneficial option for Glasgow District Council for the use of the houses concerned.

- The Glasgow homesteading schemes have a much lower proportion of householders in managerial and professional occupations than does the Greater London Council's scheme.

Publication: January 1983, £2.00 including postage and packing.

Contact: Elizabeth Purkiss, Policy Research Group, 041-221 9600 Ext. 2629

Other publications by the Policy Research Group:

- Research Memorandum on Housing Vacancies in the Glasgow District Council area.

- Annual Housing Review 1982.

Gloucestershire County Council

1. Juvenile Justice Record System

This piece of work is the result of a series of discussions between the Gloucestershire area-based Intermediate Treatment Officer and the Social Services Research Section. Initially the focus for discussion was the monitoring of children on specific Intermediate Treatment projects, but out of this developed a debate on the information needs of Intermediate Treatment sections. These discussions resulted in a Juvenile Justice Record System which accounts for all children subject to police referrals, and not just those who find their way into Intermediate Treatment projects. The scheme is outlined below.

For some time now the Intermediate Treatment Officers have been looking at ways of providing alternative options to the Courts in place of custodial sentences or care orders. The purpose of such interventions is to provide the most appropriate and effective social work input and to avoid an automatic response to all cases. However, one of the difficulties inherent in such approaches is that they necessarily focus on specific cases which serve to cloud the wider picture of the relationship between Social Services, the Court and other agencies. All too often Intermediate Treatment Officers need a blend of two differing types of information, neither of which is necessarily readily available. Firstly, they need detailed knowledge of individual circumstances for which they have a responsibility. Secondly, they need to be aware of the trends concerning juvenile offending in their area. This new record system attempts to resolve both these problems by basing trend information on juvenile referrals from the police and their outcomes.

The information collected by the Intermediate Treatment Officers is coded and stored on a computer. Considerable pains have been taken to ensure that this material remains absolutely confidential.

Finally, the Juvenile Justice Record System is a joint piece of work which has the potential to be enhanced and expanded to meet differing needs of practitioners and managers. It provides for a client based record system and it allows for an anlaysis of changing trends. The system has been written in such a way as to allow for further development, such as the forthcoming Criminal Justice Bill, to be included.

2. North Cotswolds Survey

This is a survey of retired and disabled people living in 24 parishes in the North Cotswolds Social Services area. The focus of the survey is to identify the retired and disabled living in the most rural and isolated parishes and to collect information on various aspects of their life in these parishes. The information gathered includes:-

- The use of health and social services in the villages, surrounding areas and own homes.
- The kinds of problems faced in obtaining essential services such as groceries, pensions, prescriptions, medical help.
- Difficulties experienced in looking after themselves getting out and about, and specific disabilities which restrict personal mobility.
- The presence of family and friends, either in the home or in neighbouring parishes who could possibly help in times of emergency.
- The kinds of living conditions experienced by these people in terms of age of house, distance from nearest house, and ownership of fridges, freezers, telephones and cars.
- Accessiblity of services through public or private transport, and the use made of various forms of transport.
- Use made of or given to voluntary services.
- Number and type of people who have moved into the area on retirement.

The survey was undertaken between March and July 1982 and 1,180 people who were either retired or disabled or both, participated in the survey. Two reports have so far been prepared which focus upon the first five aspects of the survey, and a third complete report is forthcoming.

Contact: N.Watson, Social Services Department, (0452) 21444 Ext. 7594

Hertfordshire County Council

"Have you got a microcomputer program that could help us out?". It was the man from the Education Department. Apparently the divisional officers in the County set estimates of each school's roll for the following year and then make a decision on how many teachers to allocate to each school and from this they derive the pupil-teacher ratios.

The trouble is that there are 470 primary schools in seven divisions and the whole thing was done manually so it was difficult to see if resources were being allocated fairly and consistently and not easy to see what effect changes in allocations might have.

Have you heard of AIDA? (I didn't actually say that because I'm not that quick off the mark). AIDA is a stats package for a 48 or 64K Apple II microcomputer. It does most of the social statistics I would ever want or understand, is totally interactive and fairly easy to use. The statistical routines are all in one system, the program moves from one routine to another when you give it simple commands. The data is stored on disk as numbered variables in a file.

So, for each education division in the County we entered data for each primary school: its school number, the number on roll and the allocation of teachers. We also used a code for type of school (1=JMI, 2=Junior Mixed etc.) to enable us to analyse sub-sets of cases within the original file. Other variables are created by the Transform commands - for instance to get the pupil-teacher ratios you divide the variable holding the pupil numbers by that holding the staff numbers.

You can do all sorts of clever things with each variable singly or in combination. In this exercise we wanted to illustrate the decisions that had been taken in allocating teachers to schools. To do this we used the scatterplot routine with the number of pupils on the horizontal axis and the allocation of teachers for those schools on the vertical axis. Magic! As you might expect staff numbers are very very closely correlated with the number of pupils, but the plots highlighted any variation that remained. So we followed on with the regression routine and used the residuals as an indicator of 'over' or 'under' provision of teachers when the effect of the size of school had been accounted for. The residuals could then be ranked to pick out the most significant variants.

As a result, allocations within and between divisions could be compared and, following the merging of all seven files into one, the picture for the whole County could be shown.

"The Education Department has come on a hundred years in one afternoon with this", said the man from the Education Department. Well, it did take a little longer than an afternoon and there were some sceptics who had to be convinced. The point of the exercise was to show that these clever programs were not aimed at taking away the decision making process, but were there to help to make clearer what was happening already and to highlight cases that might require further investigation.

Contact: Philip Wells, (0992) 54242 Ext. 474.

London Borough of Lambeth

The Council has maintained a decentralised approach to research and intelligence work, with most Directorates having at least one member of staff with such responsibilities. The Chief Executive's Office pursues a co-ordinating role concurrently with various other tasks of a performance review/planning/budgeting/'trouble-shooting' nature.

Features of recent work in some of the research sections, in addition to routine collection and dissemination of management information, include the following.

1. Town Planning and Economic Development

Questionnaire interviewers were carried out with 103 black-owned businesses in Lambeth and survey results compared with a parallel survey of 100 white-owned businesses of the same type. The survey established the nature and extent of black businesses in Lambeth and the problems they experience, and led directly to a number of measures of assistance being adopted by the Council. A comprehensive survey report is set out in Research Memorandum No.20 which is available (price £2.00 plus 50p postage) from: Information and Research Group, Directorate of Town Planning and Economic Development, Courtney house, 9-15 New Park Road, London SW2.

Among a number of computer developments already in operation is a property referencing system which forms part of the London Boroughs Joint Rating Scheme, an ICL package which is being applied in Lambeth.

A comprehensive review of the Directorate's new technology requirements has been completed which included a survey of the use of computer information systems in 26 other local planning authorities.

Contact: Bob Kessler 01-674 9844 Ext. 230.

The Inner City Unit which services the Lambeth Partnership is now part of the Directorate. Over the coming year it is intended to start research studies on various aspects of the Partnership programme, including its impact on the local black community and various schemes that have been promoted to create small industrial units.

2. Social Services

A major area of work in the last year has concerned the needs and, in particular the employment needs, of disabled people.

Other research areas include:-

- non-accidental injury to children
- preventive field social work
- the impact of the Inner City Partnerhip on Social Services policy and practice
- the role of the voluntary sector in the care of clients.

Future planned work includes:-

- research into one parent families and their experiences as consumers of child care services
- an investigation into the needs of those caring for handicapped or elderly relatives at home.

Copies of Social Services Research Reports are available from the Clerical Officer, Research Section, Room 1002, Blue Star House, 234-244 Stockwell Road, SW9 9SR.

Contact: Sue Wallis 01-274 7722 Ext. 2256.

3. Housing

The Policy and Information Section has for some time monitored housing allocations by race, rehousing category and property type. Over the last few months the section has also been reviewing the Council's allocations policy in the context of reductions in the amount of property becoming available for letting and the decentralisation of the letting process.

Research priorities for 1983/84 include analysis of the increasingly pressing housing needs of the elderly in the Borough.

Further details of all the Council's Housing research activity is inclued in the London Housing Research Group Register of Research, the January 1983 update for which was co-ordinated by Lambeth.

Contact: Steve Wilcox (L.B.A. Secretariat) : 01-278 4444 Ext. 2137 or Jane Hankin: 01-274 7722 Ext. 2751.

4. Health and Consumer Services

A particular achievement of the environmental health side of the research section has been the establishment of in-house analytical facilities to assist the Council's programme of combating lead, asbestos and water pollution.

Consumer Services research has concentrated on projects which attempt to build up a composite picture of current financial problems faced by low income consumers. This has included examination of fuel debt, credit refusal and welfare rights problems dealt with by Lambeth's Consumer Advice Centres and debt cases handled by the Money Advice Team. A survey on use of credit, including types and costs, was carried out and assessments made of discriminating practices by credit granters and the use of illegal money lenders by low income groups.

Doubts about home safety education were raised by a study of the social and economic factors affecting home accidents. It is hoped that the findings will now be taken up both within the Council's own public safety programme and elsewhere.

A priority for future work on which contact with other authorities would be particularly welcomed is to develop the use of micros by advice workers, with special reference to advice on benefits and household budgeting.

Contact: Sue Whitaker 01-622 6655 Ext. 156.

5. Amenity Services

The Directorate has carried out a survey of the various types of synthetic turf surface currently available and their characteristics.

In order to assist the Committee's development of its Equal Opportunities Policy a review has been carried out by means of a postal questionnaire of the approach to this issue made by various Inner City authorities in the recreation/libraries field and the steps taken by them towards service provision for disadvantaged groups.

Contact: Gavin Hawgood: 01-622 6655 Ext. 338.

Leicester City Council

Leicester has no single Research and Intelligence Unit; R. and I. work is undertaken by the Planning Department (Policy and Information Section), the Housing Department (Research Section) and the Personnel and Management Services Department (Operational Research Section). What follows is an account of the R. and I. work being done by the Operational Research Section.

1. Housing Investment Programme

Work in this area has concentrated mainly on the Urban Renewal Programme. Personnel and Management Services Department have in the past year completed a major review of the Improvement Grant and Improvement Loan systems operated by the Housing Department, the results of which will be subject to a further review at the end of this year.

The benefits arising from the review were as follows:-

- Reorganisation of the Home Improvements Section into four area teams and adoption of the principle that each grant case should be handled by only one member of the technical staff. This has allowed a better service to the public, while increasing efficiency. Procedures have also been improved and formalised.

- Methods have been devised to forecast workload ahead, taking into account programmed declarations of Housing Action Areas and General Improvement Areas, Government legislation, seasonal effects, etc. Staffing formulae have also been constructed, taking into account the long timespan from allocation to completion of a case (average 20 months),the high rate of cancellations etc. As a result, it is possible to predict staffing requirements for some time into the future and also to predict with reasonable accuracy such output measures as future approval rates, completion rates and expenditure, resulting in improved control over input rates.

- A system of collecting management information has been implemented. This provides a full range of statistics to management, both weekly and monthly, as well as statistical returns required by auditors and by the DOE. These can be used to monitor staff performance and the effects, on case throughput, of outside influences such as the work capacity of building contractors in the City.

- Cases are now classified by priority and by difficulty, allowing greater control at the allocation stage.

2. Vehicle Utilisation

There has been a range of work in this area, at various times in the last 7 years. In 1978, a set of computer programs based on the LGORU Nomogram was written for use in determining the annual replacement lists of vehicles from the Council's Central Vehicle Pool. This is in regular use.

In 1981 the O.R. Section carried out a complete survey of the vehicles used by the Housing Department's Maintenance Branch. Each of the 50 vehicles was observed for an average of 8 working days, by school leavers recruited under a W.E.E.P. Scheme funded by the Manpower Services Commission.

The job tickets used for bonus payments, which record material requirements and geographical locations of maintenance work, were also analysed, together with records of vehicle downtime. The observations and analyses combined to give a complete picture of vehicle usage in the Maintenance Branch and enabled the calculation of vehicle requirements, both for specialist and for general use vehicles. The analyses also provided a basis for calculating the effects of future changes in material requirements as a result of new incentive bonus schemes or changes in work practices. Many of the recommendations have already been implemented and others are due for implementation in the near future.

Independent from this survey, but of considerable use when assessing vehicle requirements for use by foremen, are a series of reports giving tables of annual mileages at which Council ownership of a vehicle becomes cheaper than provision of car user allowances. The tables are currently being updated to take account of the recent national settlement relating to car user allowances.

3. Development of Micro-Computer Applications

Development so far has been largely in connection with Management Services projects and implemented by Personnel and Management Services Department. The areas covered include:-

. Computerisation of bonus scheme calculations. This is currently in progress, using an amended version of the BASIS package, purchased through LAMSAC from Slough B.C.

. Interdepartmental staffing and work target calculations for the sale of Council houses. The figures are updated weekly using a VISICALC spreadsheet.

. The rationalisation of forms used in the Council. This is currently being developed using a database package, the MANAGER.

. The possible use of a database management system in recording, updating and printing Work Study data for the various bonus schemes used in the Council.

4. Statistical work on Surveys

Three surveys in progress at the moment are:-

. The Survey of Leicester 1983 - a supplement to the 1981 Census, in effect. The Race Relations Unit of the Chief Executive's Department is controlling the survey, which is being carried out on 20,000 households, almost one in five of the City, by about 100 interviewers over a period of 8 weeks. The primary aim is to assess accurately the size of the numerous ethnic minority groups in Leicester, an area in which the Census data is of very dubious value since it estabished only the birthplace of the head of household. Various other points, of interest to the Education Department, Area Health Authority etc. are also being covered.

. A survey by the Housing Research Section of Hostels in the City - personal histories, attitudes and preferences of hostel residents.

. Home Accidents Survey - geographical distribution by age and sex of different types of home accidents. It is being done in conjunction with a national survey on the same topic. Currently the data covers children under 14.

5. Miscellaneous

Two other projects of interest are:-

. An analysis of characteristics of premises inspected by the Environmental Health Department under the Health and Safety at Work Acts and their ratings of the state of the premises. The aim of the analysis is to establish the relative importance of these characteristics and, if possible, to predict high risk premises.

. A computer program to rebalance the workload of refuse collection rounds. At present, the rebalancing is a manual exercise that can take up to 6 months to do.The computer program has to date been tested on data for 3 of the 26 rounds, somewhat redefined and hacked about to test all possible circumstances. Run time on complete rebalancing exercises for this data is just over one minute. The massive exercise of defining the data over the whole City, thankfully a one-off job, should start in the near future. On the basis of the increase in run time between the original test data and the "real" data, we do not expect run times for the complete data to be excessive.

Contact: David Lowe (0533) 549922, Ext. 7114.

Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council

1. Pre - 1919 Houses

A survey of pre 1919 houses outside the general and special improvement areas will be undertaken during 1983. This is to provide an information base from which improvement grant policy over the next few years can be developed.

Fieldwork: 1983; sample sizes not yet determined

Publication: Not known.

Contact: A. Reece, (0632) 328520 Ext. 5051.

2. Survey of Lunch Clubs

A detailed survey commenced in May to provide details of all lunch clubs operating throughout the City. A self completed questionnaire will be distributed to members of these clubs seeking their perceptions of the service.

Fieldwork: 1983. About 80 clubs to be surveyed. Number of self completed questionnaires not known.

Publication: Report to Social Services Committee late 1981.

Contact: J.Blackie,(0632) 328520 Ext.5037.

3. Needs of the Young Unemployed

A number of semi-structured interviews are to be carried out by a small team of youth workers to determine perceptions of employment, education and recreational opportunities

amongst young unemployed people. The results will form part of a review of youth and leisure services being undertaken by a working group of Councillors.

Fieldwork: May/June 1983.

Publication: Report to Youth and Leisure Services Working Group, September, 1983.

Contact: J.Blackie,(0632) 328520 Ext.5037.

Northamptonshire County Council

1. Care of the Elderly Project

March saw the end of a four year project aimed at developing joint approaches to support of the elderly in the community. Three geographical areas of differing size and type were chosen and a team of officers with immediate responsibility for services in those areas was set up for each area. The teams included various staff from Social Services, the Health Authority and the Housing Department together with representatives of voluntary organisations where appropriate.

The main purpose of this project was to examine the value of such teams in the localised assessment of needs of the elderly,the co-ordination of local resources and the development of new approaches to meeting the needs. To assist them each team was given a small budget (£10,000 +) over and above existing resources, together with central administrative and research support.

Each team spontaneously identified a different local need on which to concentrate its efforts. These were:

- the loneliness of the elderly
- stress to the families of the very frail elderly
- the meeting of lower priority needs as a preventative measure. Despite this the developments introduced had several common features, notably the use of 'non-aligned' workers and of volunteers.

The administrative support and the evaluation of the project were undertaken by the Central Policy & Reseach Unit with additional input from INLOGOV. A final report will be available during the summer.

2. Surveys of Clients - Libraries and Police

The Unit has been involved with two recent surveys of client opinion. A sample of 2,400 library users, identifying patterns of library use and preferences, was undertaken in November 1982. The main finding, that there was no real dissatisfaction with opening hours, was closely followed by a decision to extend opening hours in several libraries!

Assistance has also been given with a survey by the Police Force of public perceptions and attitudes to the Police. This was carried out at the end of 1982 prior to a major reorganisation of the management and operation of the force. The Police hope that a further survey in 1984 might reveal an improvement in some aspects of the attitudes of the public to the force.

3. Teaching Staff Projections

Following the production by the Education Department of a proposed curriculum staffing policy for secondary schools a member of the Unit has developed a teaching staff projection model which incorporates existing school roll projections and permits varying assumptions on parental choice between schools. This is currently being tried out by Education staff.

4. Employment Promotion

In common with some other R & I Units, staff have become involved with various aspects of employment promotion. This has included the establishment of two Information Technology Centres, a Co-operative Development Agency and an Enterprise Agency jointly with the District Councils and the private sector.

Contact: Philip Davies (0604) 34833 Ext. 5110.

Nottinghamshire County Council

1. Review of Neighbourhood Family Centre

This was an evaluation of the work of a neighbourhood family centre run by a large voluntary organisation on a small modern housing estate of about 2,800 people in north Nottingham, which had been identified as having a high concentration of social problems. The review focussed both on the work of the Centre, which includes statutory social work, community work, and a problem advisory service, and on the characteristics and problems of the estate itself. A wide range of opinion was canvassed, both on the estate and among agency workers serving it, and a considerable amount of relevant factual and statistical information was compiled. The resulting report attempts to define and evaluate the effects of the Family Centre's work on the community.

2. Review of Needs and Services on a Nottingham Housing Estate

The estate in question is a council estate of traditional (1930s) design of around 7,000 people situated near the edge of the Nottingham city boundary which has been identified as very highly disadvantaged on the basis of a wide range of social and economic indicators. A number of officers from Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council are involved with groups of tenants and representatives of local agencies in identifying the area's problems and how they might most constructively be tackled. One of the main objectives is to examine the effectiveness of agencies' policies and interrelationships in meeting the needs of the community and so produce recommendations for change as appropriate.

The review is scheduled for completion by Autumn 1983.

Contact: G.R.Gilbertson (0602) 863366 Ext.3597

Sheffield City Council

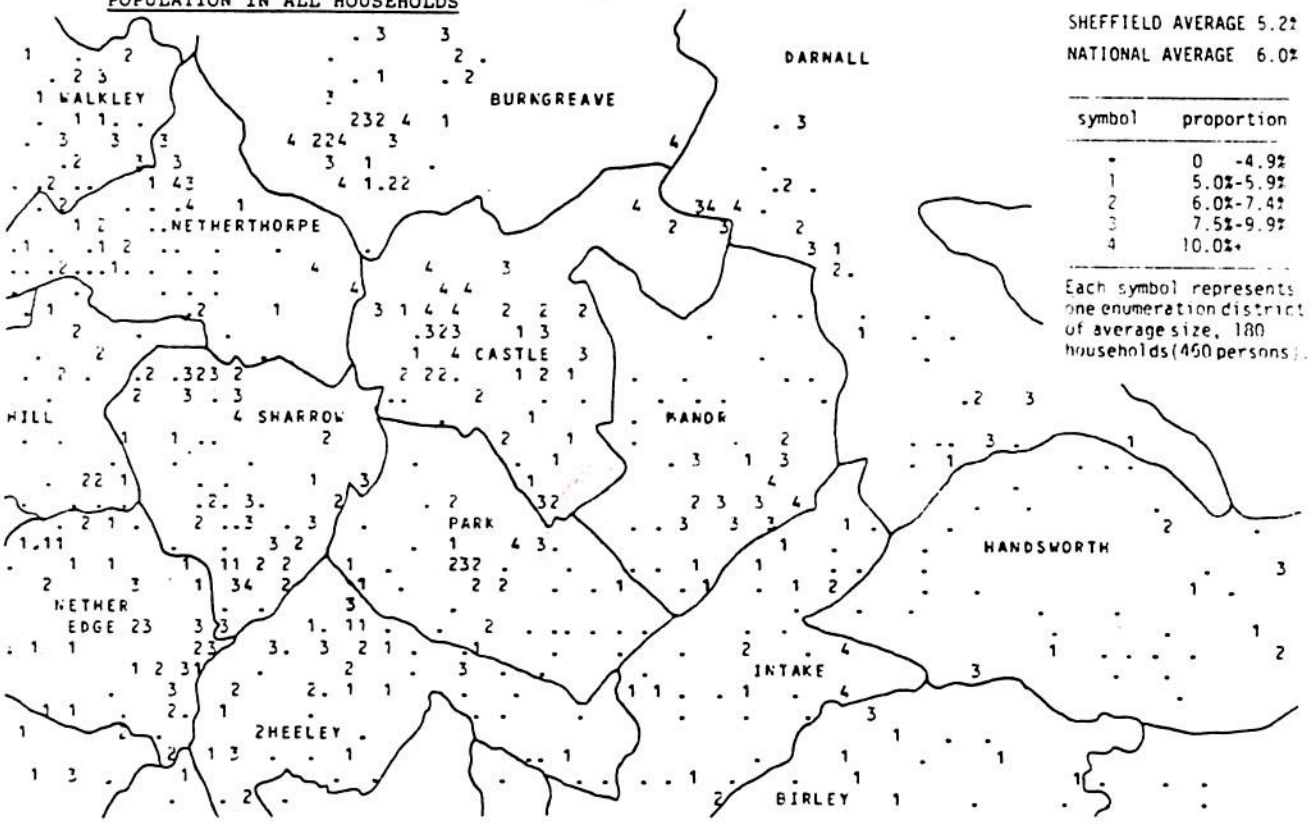
The small Research Section of the Corporate Management Unit has been concentrating its attention on disseminating the 1981 Census results over the last year, and so far has produced the following eight Census Reports:-

1. Commentary on the First Results for Sheffield.
2. Economic Activity and Unemployment in the Metropolitan Districts and Inner London.
3. Key Indicators for the Metropolitan Districts.
4. Unemployment in Sheffield.
5. Key Indicators for the Sheffield Wards.
6. Sheffield : The Detailed Results.
7. Summary Ward Profiles (including 10% data).
8. 10% Data.

These reports have been provided to all members of the Council, and each has been considered by the Policy Committee.

In the near future, it is hoped to produce a Census Report on the subject of Census Mapping. A small computer program has been written which uses the grid reference of each enumeration district and allocates a single symbol to represent a range of values for any particular variable. The example below shows areas with the highest concentrations of children aged 0-4 (part of Sheffield only is shown in the diagram). This is also a reasonably good guide to population density, and is felt to represent a better visual representation than the usual area based maps.

CHILDREN AGED 0-4 AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL POPULATION IN ALL HOUSEHOLDS



The Unit also intends to produce detailed profiles of the six new constituencies, once agreed, using polling districts as the most meaningful small area at which to examine the local characteristics. It is hoped that limited monitoring of certain key characteristics will be possible for these polling districts, possibly combined with the occasional extended electoral roll survey.

Contact: David Smith (0742) 734250

South Yorkshire County Council

The Research and Information Section have maintained their interest in the County's Draft Waste Management Plan and have helped guide this into the current formal consultation stage. Responses from various groups are being collated in the Unit, which will be involved in redrafting the Plan during the summer.

The programme of refuse vehicle weighing, designed by the Research and Information Section, has been implemented and the data provided will be analysed during the summer. Work is also in hand in developing the data base for a computer model for allocation of waste disposal resources and facilities. This model has been acquired from the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Work continues on the County's electoral review and the Unit has been responsible for submitting the County Council's proposals to the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Policy Research Section has had to mark time to some extent while two staff left and were replaced. However, work has continued on the Council's opposition to Sizewell B (this is in partnership with Planning Department) and on

its involvement in the national Nuclear Free Zones steering committee. More recently, attention has been directed at the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill and other police matters. We have also concentrated on trying to improve the state of our information systems.

The Corporate Planning Section has co-ordinated the preparation of the 1983 Urban Action Programme for the young unemployed. Organised events are being spread over a longer period - from May to October and include successful activities like motorcycling, computer days, camping, canoeing.

Particularly interesting is the expansion of the Programme to provide an allocation of funds to encourage schemes generated through the established Police/Community Liaison procedures. Last year's Countywide five-a-side and superkid competitions and boxing training are to be repeated and new ideas include a mobile community disco and several outdoor pursuits weekends.

The preparation of the Annual Report for 1982/83 is now in progress, led by the Corporate Planning Section. Significant progress was made last year in terms of design and arrangement and it is hoped to improve on this again in the next issue.

Three members of the Unit have left to take up posts with other authorities, Geoff Dwyer with Kingston-upon-Hull D.C., Gill Greenwood with Sheffield M.D.C. and Tony Geeson with Cambridge City Council.

After some internal switching of personnel, replacements are Alan Clarke, formerly a researcher and tutor with the Open University, Sally Green, whose background includes archaeology, and June Bell whose previous experience includes research for Strathclyde Regional Council.

In addition, Carole Sleight has been engaged as the Unit's technical/clerical assistant.

Contact: Stuart Creak, Corporate Planning & Research Officer,(0226) 86141 Ext.156

Strathclyde Regional Council

Recent months have seen a consolidation of a number of projects which have been reported in previous Newsletters. The draft Regional Review prepared in 1982 has become a Policy Review which is being considered by the Labour Group during April, May and June, prior to formal consideration by the Council over the summer months. The objective of the Review is to set the major directions of Council policy for the next four years.

The latest Social Work Needs and Resources Study has been completed. The range and quality of the data have been steadily improved, and the Study is now a key management tool within Social Work. Consideration is currently being given to greater use of the data in the financial planning systems of the Council, and in attempting to influence the preparation of expenditure guidelines by the Scottish Office.

Area Profiles, containing statistical indications and analysis of needs and problems in the Areas of Priority Treatment, have been completed for most of the Region. They are currently being used in the preparation and evaluation of Urban Programme Submissions.

The 1981 Census small area statistics have been accounted on the Honeywell machine without great difficulty and analysis is proceeding via SASPAC. Priority is being given to a review of the Areas of Priority Treatment, as part of the Policy Review mentioned above, using factor analysis and ranking techniques.

The latest population and household projections, linked to headship rates from the 1981 Census, have enabled an assessment of public sector housing needs. The analysis has indicated that potential household formation is considerably greater than had been previously estimated, with significant implications for new public sector construction and modernisation and repair programmes during the 1980s. The results are currently being discussed with district councils and other housing agencies. They will then be incorporated in a Strategic Outerview of Housing Needs, Policies and Programmes.

Comparisons between the Census and the Annual Voluntary Population Survey have confirmed the accuracy of the V.P.S. The response rate has steadily improved over the years and now stands at 94%. The Census is being used to attribute estimated ages to the missing 6%. The V.P.S. is widely used as a source of small-area population statistics and to provide address lists of client groups for regional services (on a confidential basis).

Joint working with Health Boards in Strathclyde has steadily expanded. One recent joint project compares the geographical distribution of Health Board mortality data with data on multiple deprivation in the Ayr sub-region. The results confirmed that postcode sectors with the highest incidence of multiple deprivation have the highest mortality rates, which cannot be attributed to different age structures. More work needs to be carried out on mortality data, causes of death and the take-up of services.

The GIMMS computer mapping package is operational in Strathclyde and is providing useful support to several of the areas of work mentioned above, in particular Social Work Needs and Resources, Area Profiles and Census analysis. A series of working files and a library of area descriptions can now be accessed through time-sharing. The area library will be steadily expanded using a digitiser.

Contact: Bob Black 041-227 3619

Sunderland Borough Council

1. The Programme Planning Department have joined forces with Sunderland Polytechnic Department of Economics on a two-year research programme on the local economy. This includes cooperation on a survey of the unemployed, but this is held up at present by arguments over the employment of Community Programme workers.

2. Negotiations are proceeding with the Sunderland Polytechnic Department of Geography over the joint production of a Borough atlas, incorporating Census and other data.

3. P.P.D. has commenced an up-date of its widely known Ward Profiles, and has issued Pact Sheets and Fact Cards giving details from the Census. These are supplemented annually by information on development works and electoral statistics for each ward.

Contact: Peter Kershaw (0783) 76161

Surrey County Council

The retirement of a senior officer provided the opportunity for restructuring certain central functions early in 1983. Management Services and Personnel were combined into the Manpower Services Division and the Clerk's Department (which carries out the Council's "secretarial" tasks and related activities) now includes a small Corporate Support Staff of five people, with close links to the Clerk & Chief Executive, headed by Peter Richardson, the Research & Intelligence Officer. All were already working for Surrey.

He reports to Frank Dewhirst, a Senior Assistant County Clerk who has overall responsiblity for sections concerned with various aspects of corporate development such as R & I and Public Relations.

Tasks include:

- Servicing the Chief Officers Board and certain Member-level meetings concerned with matters of "corporate" policy.
- Developing, in co-operation with Treasurer's and others, resource planning and review procedures.
- Undertaking a wide variety of complex "ad hoc" policy studies and the majority of capital project appraisals.
- Contributing to, and sometimes editing, major publications (eg the Annual Report).

Surrey's R & I activities are decentralized, for example detailed statistical work on population and Block Grant is carried out in Planning Information and Treasurer's Technical Sections respectively. We are, however, charged with improving co-ordination in these activities and are promoting joint working on particular problems (eg Education pupil forecasting). Studies of the future direction of R & I are in hand.

Because of severe reductions in Grant and general expenditure restrictions, Value for Money is being pursued with renewed emphasis in the County Council. We shall be recording and monitoring the extensive programme of review activities on behalf of the Chief Officers Board.

The role of the Corporate Support Staff is obviously still developing and a progress report will be presented in a future issue.

Contact: Peter Richardson, 01-546 1050 Ext.3374.

Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation

A Visitor Survey at Norton Priory Museum

Norton Priory was founded in 1134 as a house of Augustinian Canons. Excavations carried out by Runcorn Development Corporation† since 1971 have uncovered the remains of the Priory, which flourished for four centuries until the dissolution in 1536. A Tudor mansion and then a Georgian-style country house subsequently occupied the site, the latter being demolished in 1928.

In 1975 the Priory was opened for the first time as a museum, under the directorship of J. Patrick Greene+ making available to the public the conserved and landscaped excavation, the surviving twelth century undercroft, an exhibition and slide/sound show, and the restored Georgian gardens and woodland. Since then further work and improvements have been carried out.

During the opening year, 1975, an interview survey among a sample of visitors was carried out at the museum by the Development Corporation (Research and Social Planning Section, Runcorn), with the intention of guiding future publicity and of testing public response, particularly with a view to improving visitors facilities. This survey was repeated in a similar form in 1977, 1980 and 1982.

Some summary results from this most recent survey are as follows:-

- The most frequent source of information about Norton Priory given by visitors was local knowledge.
- A third of visitors lived in Halton Borough*, over eight out of ten lived in the North West **.
- Half of all visitor groups contained one or more children. Groups comprising two adults (with or without children) accounted for over half of all visitor groups.
- 99% of visitors had seen the exhibition in the new museum building during their visit, but only 63% had seen the slide show in the new auditorium.
- Only one out of ten visitors spent less than an hour at the site. The average length of visit was just over 1½ hours.
- Four out of ten visitors were making a return visit to Norton Priory at the time of interview. Among these returning visitors, four out of ten had already been three or more times before.

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† The site is in the Designated Area of Runcorn New Town, a new town built alongside an existing community in North Cheshire. In 1981 its Development Corporation merged with that of the nearby Warrington New Town.

+ J.P. Greene is now Director of the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry.

* Runcorn and Widnes

** Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester.

- Over nine out of ten visitors said they would visit the museum again.

- Only a quarter of visitors had not visited, in the 2 years prior to the survey, any of the ten other local museums and places of interest asked about, while a further quarter had visited three or more.

- Six out of ten visitors made some suggestion on how the museum could be improved.

- 72 visits by organised parties were made between March and November 1982. The majority were from Cheshire and Merseyside.

A copy of the 1982 report, which will be of interest to those involved in recreation research, museum directors etc, is available free of charge from Mrs. L. Bolger, Norton Priory Museum, Warrington Road, Astmoor, Runcorn, telephone Runcorn 69895.

Contact: A. Morgan/A.Whitworth, (0928) 714444.

REPORT FROM THE LARIA STEERING GROUP

Tim Rhodes (Oxfordshire C.C.) and Brian Orr (DOE) have resigned from the Steering Group. Our thanks go to them for their efforts and support - especially to Tim who has served two 'stretches' on the committee. The following new members are joining the Group:

Steve Little: West Midlands C.C. Central Statistical Information & Research Unit

Kerry Winter: Principal Planning Officer with Congleton B.C.

Chris Griffin: CIPFA

Martin Blogg: Oxfordshire C.C. R & I Unit.

A full list of names and addresses of the Steering Group will appear in the next Newsletter.

Further ideas are being considered for Monographs. Ted Kitchen (Manchester City Council) is trying to produce one on local economic initiatives but contributions are not coming in very fast. Philip Davis (Northamptonshire C.C.) will outline possible ideas for one on education projections. We are also trying to organise the preparation of short papers from an invited audience for a seminar on population projection models. The intention would be to edit these papers on a standard format to demonstrate the different uses of various types of projections.

The Autumn Workshop is intended to be a working session for Heads of R & I Units where they can disscuss problems of management in the R & I field. This year the meeting will probably be in late October fashioned round four introductory papers to get discussion started. These topics will be:-

- The Changing roles of R & I (Grahame Handley)

- What has happened to the R & I role in Corporate Planning (Phil Davis)

- The relationship with elected members (Bob Black)

- Staffing, selection and training in a period of reduced job opportunities (John Chapman)

Planning has also started for the 1984 Annual Conference which will be based on the theme "New Dimensions in Research & Intelligence". Topics suggested so far include education forecasting, employment and training needs, the elderly and population forecasting.The detailed programme has still to be worked up so suggestions for any other topics, particularly supported by ideas on recommended speakers will be welcomed.

The next meeting of the Steering Group will be on 1st July, so any ideas for the Conference, or matters you think the Steering Group should discuss, should reach me before then.

Stuart Creak, Chairman, LARIA Steering Group

PUBLICATIONS

"GREAs - Where they came from and where they are going" - Price £2.50

This is a collection of papers delivered to a joint INLOGOV/CIPFA seminar. Items include: J.D. Stewart - the changes in central government's assessment of local government's need to spend, G. Jessop - a detailed history of the last few years including the intricacies of service allocations, E. Proctor - the data collection and statistical basis, P. Jenkins - a local authority reaction to the system, J.D. Stewart - possible future scenarios.

Research and Intelligence Annual Conference Papers

INLOGOV has a limited number of copies of "Research and Intelligence", an annual compilation of papers presented at the R & I Conference. While stocks last, the following are being offered at £1.50 each (incl. p & p):-

Annual Conference 1978 (published March 1979)

including papers on household surveys, output measurement, local economic development and operational research.

Annual Conference 1979 (published November 1979)

including papers on the role of R & I in policy formulation, performance review, budgeting, and operational research.

Annual Conference 1981 (published June 1981)

including papers on manpower and employment planning, an investigation of rural communities, managing library bookstocks, home-help services, and the development of information support.

Also Available:-

"Research and Intelligence for Deprivation" (August 1978, price £1.00 incl. p & p) with case studies of Strathclyde, Liverpool and Nottinghamshire, a review of research and an assessment of the political dimension.

Copies are available from:-

Joint Centre Publications Officer
J.G. Smith Building
University of Birmingham
P.O. Box 363
Birmingham B15 2TT

Telephone: 021 472 1301 Ext.2742

Please enclose remittance with order where possible and quote 'R & I Special Offer'.

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