

# Laria News

LOCAL AUTHORITIES RESEARCH + INTELLIGENCE ASSOCIATION

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## LARIA Conference 2002 - University of Nottingham

The Annual LARIA Conference this year took place on 25 – 27 March at the University of Nottingham at the splendid venue of the new Jubilee Campus. The Conference was sponsored by BMG, MVA, ReadSoft Ltd and Business Geographics.

**Lord Best**, Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, opened the conference by saying that neighbourhood renewal was integral to the role of researchers in local government. He described the work shortly to be published by JRF on the 'Use of Research in Local Government'. This study found that research was moving into centre stage, as evidence was increasingly needed for decision taking. Much more effort was needed to disseminate research. His focus on research into neighbourhood renewal was concerned with understanding urban disadvantage, particularly the concentrations of disadvantage, the importance of partnerships (which generally take two years before trust is established), the benefits of research, and the need for dedicated staff.



**Sir Michael Lyons** from the Institute of Local Government Studies outlined the Government's agenda for the renewal of Government (both central and local) to deliver improved public services. He outlined how the Prime Minister had called for an emphasis on "evidence-based policy" and "what counts is what works". Local government has experienced considerable change in the last 5 years under the Government reform programme - Best Value and continuous improvement, Beacon Councils, mayors and cabinets, and a new Local Government White Paper published in December 2002.



He went on to say that it is time to invest in the "science of improvement" in local government. This should encourage experimentation in the ways services are delivered, have a greater emphasis on outcomes for the public, and promote learning and comparisons across the sector. If this is to be achieved, there is the need to invest in independent and skilled research. If evidence is to become more important in the future, it is important that local authorities ensure that evaluation is designed in to new services; that time is given for thinking and good research design, and that the outcomes of research are independent and act to challenge current ideas.

He concluded that improving the use of evidence is "not a game for anoraks". Evidence is wider than just research results and data. There are many forms of evidence which can help inform policy - research is just one of these. At the end of the day the power of the political imperative may win over the rational evidence base, and the choices which are made will often be political ones.

**Jonathan Owen**, Head of Policy at Suffolk County Council, described the community leadership agenda and the role research plays in this. The 1998 White Paper placed community leadership at the centre of local government along with a new power of well-being, LSPs and community strategies and new political structures. Jonathan suggested that key elements of community leadership are to build vision and direction for an area, work effectively in partnership and listen to and involve communities. Research can contribute in the development of visions – describing what the community is like, particularly its environmental, social and economic circumstances. In Suffolk, Jonathan reported that there is a strategic partnership, and a State of Suffolk Profile has been produced including both statistical data and results from consultation. In conclusion, he recommended that good quality research should underpin community leadership; it is an opportunity researchers must seize.



After the formal proceedings of the first day had ended a wine reception was held in the exhibition area amongst the stands of the sponsors. This provided an excellent opportunity for delegates to meet one another and to network.

The second day was mainly split into two streams.

Straight from breakfast, **Rachel Cossey**, from Manchester Geomatics, provided Stream 1 with considerable food for thought as she described the work and findings of the Joined-up Geography Testbed research on geographies for small area statistics. She reviewed the spatial areas currently used to analyse and aggregate data and neighbourhood statistics and illustrated the problems associated with each of these. The JUG-T project has created a new geography in the 'block base' and she showed how this facilitated data sharing and how it could be used in the future. Is this the answer for small area statistics? Only time and usage will tell.

PAT 18 called for 'Better information', the harmonisation of data and the collection of data at much smaller geographies. **Alistair Calder**, GIS, Analysis and Outputs Manager within the Geography Division of ONS, discussed and graphically illustrated the progress to date in achieving the demands of PAT 18. He also discussed some of the issues arising from trying to pull together statistics from across government and the wider community, and described plans for the future and specifically for developing a GIS front-end to the Neighbourhood Statistics website. This was a presentation with a high 'Wow' rating leaving the delegates stunned into commending ONS on the quality of their work and looking forward to using the data in its new environment.



## LARIA Conference 2002 - University of Nottingham cont...

This was followed by a session on "Developing Community Profiles: A Common Basis for Decision Making" presented by **Daniel Grindey**, Community Safety Co-ordinator, Essex County Council. In 2000, Essex County Council led its local crime and disorder reduction partnerships in a search for a common data exchange, mapping and analysis tool. Incorporating a wide variety of data from the Essex Police, National Probation Service and Essex CC Learning Services, the system is shared between the partners. The maps it can produce clearly show the relationships between variables such as deprivation and victimisation or the links between health and crime. It is being further developed to incorporate data from the Youth Offending Team, Social Services, the Housing Department, the Essex Fire and Rescue Service, and Essex SHA. It is now being developed as the standard community profiling initiative for all Essex authorities. Daniel gave examples of the uses to which the system can be put and shared his experience of developing it, including recommendations on what data a common profile should include. He emphasised that joint profiling was dependent upon a realistic view of what is possible, an effective project plan, the practical application of data sharing protocols and a commitment to inter-agency partnership working.



In Stream 2, the day started with a session from **Dawn Roberts** of Rotherham Council on Evidence-based Policy – Research, Consultation and the New Policy Agendas. Dawn described how research and consultation is being used to inform and shape policy development in Rotherham. Research and consultation have two main roles – informing policy development and review, and informing (or driving) service improvements. The many recent external policy agendas, such as Best Value, modernisation, community strategy, LSP, Neighbourhood Renewal and others, all have consultation as a key element. The internal policy agenda also requires consultation for Corporate Planning, performance management, and development of scrutiny and social inclusion.



Rotherham's broad approach has been to raise the profile of research, promote good practice in research and consultation, and effectively co-ordinate research and joint working with partners. Dawn talked through some case studies of research and consultation in Rotherham, and finished by saying that Rotherham's approach is evolving, and that they feel they are at "the end of the beginning"!

Following this, **Lisa Green** from Cheshire County Council presented an interesting and detailed paper on Cheshire Partnership's experience of research and consultation over the past 18 months for their Community Strategy. She explained the guidance



and benefits of Community Strategies and the importance of a firm foundation for community planning - i.e. having appropriate facts and figures about the area, a track record in partnership working and a protocol for joint working with District Councils. Partnership workshops were held to reach agreement about what should be in the strategy and focus groups were held with the Citizens' Panel on key issues, enabling priorities for action to be identified. Businesses, disability groups, young people and ethnic groups were involved in consultation exercises using existing networks to access these groups e.g. Social Services, Youth Service. The importance of going out to residents so they felt more involved was recognised, with roadshows, graffiti boards and the involvement of school children taking place at a local level.

The key messages from the presentation were building on the information you have got, getting the right balance between perceptions and facts, using appropriate techniques for local circumstances, using information at a local level to complement information held at a strategic level, and reaching out to residents on their own terms.

Wrapping up the morning session in Stream 2, **Kate Chamberlain**, Director of the Local Government Data Unit in Wales, provided an insight into the newly established (April 2001) LGDU, based in Cardiff. Kate gave a full account of the role of the LGDU which involves relating to local authorities and other data providers, building capacity, adding value to data and managing all-Wales sample surveys. A full description was given of the project work being tackled with the objective of creating data sets of primarily local government data. She spoke about the need to KNOW the data sources, to SHARE data through community profiling, and to USE data in ways such as the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation. The importance of being able to link data sets was emphasised as was dealing with issues affecting the quality and utility of data.

After a good lunch, there was a presentation from **Councillor Alan Clark** from Nottingham City Council who addressed a plenary session which focused on how public consultation in regard to planning and development issues had taken shape in Nottingham. The matter of 'consultation fatigue' being experienced by certain groups was spoken about, alongside the contrary view from other groups that there was scant consultation before major decisions were taken. Alan referred to the consultation undertaken by the Council in the Top Valley district, a large neighbourhood on the edge of the City with extensive municipal housing. A number of other key planning decisions involving differing degrees of public consultation were touched on including the City's tram system, a refurbished rail route and school closures. He concluded with reference to redevelopment of parts of the City centre which had involved urban regeneration companies.

There then followed the "business" part of the Conference ie the LARIA Annual General Meeting. This was the first time the AGM had been held in the middle of the Conference and it was encouraging to see not only a good number of full members there, but also others.

## LARIA Conference 2002 - University of Nottingham cont...

After an intensive day of formal presentations, delegates were able to unwind a little, by taking a coach tour of Nottingham, with informative commentary from two officers from the City Council. The tour finished at Wollaton Hall where delegates were able to wander freely about the grounds and take in the sunshine that had heralded the party's arrival – another good opportunity for networking.

The social side of the Conference continued into the evening with the formal Conference Dinner being held in the Long Gallery at Nottingham Castle. For the first time for many years, the programme had incorporated an after-dinner speaker, but unfortunately, due to illness he was unable to attend. However, at extremely short notice, **Paul Vittles**, from RBA Research, stepped into the breach and gave a humorous address on many aspects of research.



The third day was also partly split into streams. In the first stream, the day was started by **Anne Green** from the University of Warwick, who reported on a survey undertaken for DETR/DTLR in 2001 into regional information needs, uses, gaps – and proposals to address these. It quickly became clear that many of the needs and gaps were, in fact, of a sub-regional nature. The 'user' population is extensive and partly unknown; many users are unaware of the information that does exist and how to access it. These two issues have already been picked up in one outcome of the research to come to fruition in Spring 2002 – the creation of a "Data Catalogue" and publication on the DTLR website.

Anne identified a number of specific key pointers for meeting gaps – in relation to GDP, information on businesses, ethnicity, traffic and commuting flows, local incomes and e-commerce and access to ICT. Anne believes that DTLR/ONS are willing to address many of these issues and progress is already being made on, eg GDP data and local income data.

In the other stream, **Gill Swaithes**, who is a Senior Research Officer with the Herefordshire Partnership, talked about some of the challenges of carrying out research work in a very rural environment. The presentation focused on two key areas of work, the first of which related to developing a set of indicators to monitor progress towards the objectives in the Herefordshire Plan and the second to promoting the sharing of research information and expertise within Herefordshire. The purpose of the State of Herefordshire Report was to provide baseline and trend data for sets of indicators which would help to monitor progress towards the objectives stated in the Herefordshire Plan. It would also provide other key contextual statistics for Herefordshire and act as a signpost to sources of non-detailed information.

Indicators were chosen which linked to key objectives but took account of the availability of national and local data sets. Additional sources of information were the perceptions of local people, gathered via local surveys, a citizens' panel and community involvement. Lack of availability of local data was a major issue and even when sometimes it was available there were

questions over the statistical validity at the County level. The issue was partly addressed by establishing processes to collect information locally. The presentation also focused on some of the problems which are frequently overlooked when carrying out an analysis of trends. These were the time lag between action and a response seen in an indicator, the impact of unrelated external factors and a consideration that the trend may be good or bad, depending on the perspective.

This session involved a perceptive presentation of high quality followed by an illuminating discussion with the audience.

A workshop was organised at short notice to replace the scheduled session on the Bolton Information Map which, unfortunately, could not be delivered.

Around twenty delegates participated in a discussion covering a number of themes and issues that had emerged in the conference to that point. These mostly focused on what might broadly be termed the politics of policy research and included such questions as:

- Is the commitment of politicians, at national and local level, to evidence-based policy making likely to be maintained if the evidence suggests policy failure?
- Are policy researchers still going to be able, if they ever were, to 'speak truth to power'?
- Under the new political management structures in local government, are policy researchers being asked to test out the political impact (and possibly the party political impact) of policy proposals, and does this take us close to the boundaries of professional legitimacy?

There was also some discussion of the extent to which the growing demands for public consultation were 'crowding out' the scope for other types of research, including more explanatory work. Happily, colleagues were able to point to evidence of continued explanatory research in many authorities.

There was a brief discussion around the question of so-called 'hard to reach groups' and the potential of survey fatigue among some groups. It was suggested that there might be important differences between a legitimate reluctance to be drawn into consultation exercises and other forms of deliberation around policy options, and low response rates among certain groups of people in survey or other forms of research.

Finally, the group considered the case for 'forcing' the public to make choices between policy options as part of research and consultation exercises, and compared this with the reluctance to ask leading questions in, for example, survey research.

It was felt by some that the possibility of a similar type of open-ended discussion should be considered for future conferences.

**Mark Tranmer**, a researcher at the Manchester Centre for Census Surveys and Research, presented the outcome of a project developing a methodology for enhancing existing Census information for local areas. The premise for developing the methodology is that Census users often want more detailed cross

## LARIA Conference 2002 - University of Nottingham cont...

tabulations than are available for reasons of confidentiality. Using a statistical model framework, it is possible to get a more accurate estimate by combining Census Area Statistics and the Sample of Anonymised Records, and the aim of the project is to assess how well this approach works for a number of tables.

With LBS Table 9 as an example, Mark demonstrated how this approach would work in practice and how the end result would be improved by Iterative Proportional Fitting. Mark further demonstrated how explanatory variables additional to the table being studied could be included in the model. Further work on the project would include the study of more models and other methods with extended tables, and populations other than the North West. It is hoped that a methodology will be in place for the release of the 2001 Census.

The Conference finished with two plenary sessions.

**Ludi Simpson** (Bradford Council) briefly outlined and reviewed several of the new initiatives introduced for the 2001 Census. He welcomed the new questions, the elimination of 10% coding and the impact of the One Number Census initiative. He then focussed on some of the key problem areas in collecting the data: the slow turnaround of forms by the Post Office and the limited completeness checks on returned forms. He finished by describing the measures ONS has put in place to prevent disclosure of personal information and was critical of the impact of the decision to round all output cells to a number divisible by 3. **Andy Teague** (Deputy Director of the Census)

pointed out some of the data collection successes and then announced that ONS had had a further look at rounding and were (that day) issuing a paper that presented revised proposals which - if proven to be adequate - will reduce the impact of rounding to 'small numbers' only and enable column and row totals to reflect the sums of the cell counts.

In the closing session, **David Prince** (Audit Commission) described how monitoring had demonstrated that there were signs of improvement in local government services according to Best Value Performance Indicators and judgements of inspections. The Audit Commission is intending to produce more evidence-based products that influence primary audiences, assure the public about stewardship, and assist auditors and inspectors to help improvements. It is developing a research strategy involving more of a users' focus, supporting service improvement and better regulation. He felt the challenges for user-focused research are concerned with communicating with a more diverse audience, the longer time scale and greater costs, increased user expectations and working with difficult-to-reach groups.

It appeared from comments made by the delegates that LARIA had yet again provided a Conference programme relevant to the local government research community, and this was reflected in the highest ever number of delegates attending a LARIA Conference - almost 150.

**This summary was collated by Graham Smith from input from the Chairs of the various sessions.**



## From the Chair - Bob Cuthill

I always admire someone who can run off an editorial in such a way as you actually look forward to reading the follow up in the next edition. One such editor prepares the frontispiece to the magazine New Start. In your new chair of LARIA, any comparison with Julian Dobson will, however, be imaginary.

In taking over from Bryan Hall, I cannot hope to emulate his leadership of LARIA in bringing it to the verge of being recognised as the professional organisation its members deserve. I can only try to assist in taking it forward in a sufficiently confident manner to exploit the opportunities for the research community that lie in waiting.

To achieve that will depend on the continuing contribution of those members who actively support LARIA through its activity groups, through LariaNews and the LARIA web site and by attending the day seminars. Those members need to be continually added to and replenished by others. The continued future well-being of LARIA will depend on more of you becoming involved.



**Bob Cuthill- Chair of LARIA**

### Annual Conference

Three months on, memories of the annual conference, held on the superb Nottingham University Jubilee campus, will have been overtaken by those good old pressures of work. The range of topics around the theme of local information for neighbourhood planning, together with the quality of much of what the speakers had to say, gave us much to take back to the office and build on. The conference was as much about networking with colleagues as about content, and with the record attendance provided a good amount of opportunity to find out what others were faced with. I was especially impressed that 120 members stayed on to the final session to hear what the 'Prince' had to tell us, having heard previously of course from a 'Lord' and a 'Knight' – Bryan's observation, not mine.

Whilst the dinner could not upstage the Pump Rooms in Bath 2001, it was held in a setting of equivalent grandeur amongst the Titians and Turners of the Long Room in Nottingham Castle. In Paul Vittles' after-dinner address, we were not disappointed and hopefully that has set a trend for coming conference dinners, albeit with a little more notice for the speaker. Our thanks go to Graham Smith once again for his able organisation of the whole conference.

### Survey Methods

A repeat of the training day on survey methods was held at Aston University in March to a full audience. What I found pleasing is the way in which LARIA members from the private sector willingly gave of their time and expertise to join together to help make both of these training days successful events.

### Membership

LARIA'S membership in its second year has held up remarkably well at just under 1,000 and would seem to fully justify the faith both of the LARIA Council in introducing the scheme and of the belief of members that LARIA is worth supporting. We still have some way to go to embrace all local authorities, a task we can all assist with when meeting other researchers on our travels.

### Modernised Councils

We have all entered a phase in which our councils are modernised, or at least being run along executive and non-executive lines. This offers immense opportunities for researchers to make a difference. In particular the overview and scrutiny function, which all councils are now operating, fundamentally depends for its success on quality research being made available. It may not be called research, and it may not be done by researchers, but research it is. The scrutiny function is on a steep learning curve and we will all be watching to identify best practice wherever it occurs.

### Research Councils Initiative

Another area of development is the reawakening of the local authorities research councils initiative or LARCI for short. Formed back in 1999 to develop a link between 6 of the research councils and local government, LARIA is working with LARCI to try and help it achieve its aims. The research councils are massive funders of research programmes and any way that some of that research funding can assist local government in its objectives is worth pursuing.

### Programme of Events

Through the Events Activity Group, LARIA is planning a series of one-day seminars in the second half of this year and into 2003. The programme of events that we are trying to achieve covers Health Research in September, Community Profiling in November, aspects of the 2001 Census in January, and Electronic Consultation in March. I hope you will find your way to one or more of these.

### Census 2001

Finally, picking up on the eagerly awaited Census output, the issue of rounding and output areas have been very hotly debated. Those of you at Nottingham would have heard the well presented argument from Ludi Simpson against the ONS rounding and output area thresholds proposals. In support of that argument LARIA has written to Len Cook to try and achieve a more acceptable means of protecting an individual's confidentiality. I suspect that there will be a few more big Census issues to resolve yet.

## Analysing housing markets using data mining and mapping

**By Bob Line of Bline Housing Information**  
**Bob@bline.stayfree.co.uk**

District local authorities are now required to develop housing strategies for their areas covering all tenures. Traditionally, surveys have been used to gather primary data, but techniques using operational databases and GIS are now beginning to be used to help assess and forecast housing market patterns, flows, demands and needs.

### Operational Data Sources

The operational computer systems in councils carry masses of data that can be used to help assess housing needs. Council Tax records, for example, typically show well over 95% of moves from and to an address. They also hold data on empty properties, which is probably as up to date and accurate as it is possible to get, as Council Tax departments actively look for empties to levy the appropriate rate.

Similarly the Electoral Roll shows young people reaching age 18 - a good indicator of potential new households - and also those aged over 70, who are shown as exempt from Jury service.

However, operational databases are not (yet) set up for this strategic use, so flexibility and persistence is often necessary to extract the right data. The best method found so far is for operational users and IT experts to combine their knowledge, literally sitting down together in front of a screen, selecting fields and running reports. Operational staff know in which fields among many the relevant data is stored, and how it gets entered, changed, and updated. IT staff can extract it in electronic format, ready to be cleaned and interpreted and manipulated using a variety of appropriate applications - spreadsheets, databases, statistical packages or Geographic Information Systems.

### Building data warehouses and 'Knowledge Development in Databases'

Commercial organisations increasingly use their operational data, collected routinely through every transaction, to plan strategy and activities. Supermarkets are developing this into a fine art, using Electronic Point of Sale, 'Loyalty cards', and geographic marketing data to identify and target customers. 'Knowledge Development', or 'KDD' is an accepted and growing tool in strategic analysis and forward planning.

Once collected, data can be archived into time-period 'warehouses' to allow analysis of trends and changes. Structured Query Language can be used to ask questions of the data, and increasingly sophisticated IT techniques can now use algorithms to effectively burrow into the data to identify links, patterns and trends which it has not even occurred to human analysts to ask as SQL questions.

Housing organisations have been described as 'data rich but information poor'. 'Data mining' techniques can unlock and utilise this data to show when people move, how often, and even where to. Given the right expertise within the authority, and a focus on the data required, substantial data can be extracted quite quickly.

### Incomes data

One of the crucial requirements for a housing needs assessment is information on incomes. Surveys face considerable problems of consistency and clarity in collecting incomes data. Is the response for the household, or just the respondent? Are the respondents sure whether it is net or gross? Does it take account of Housing Benefit paid direct or reducing the net rent due? Do they know, or can they even guess at, incomes of young people likely to form new households? And will such a sensitive question damage response rates, as organisers of the 2001 Census feared?

However, data is now also available from commercial sources, such as CACI, on incomes as well as household types, ages, tenures, energy use, and many other factors. Much of the data comes from 'lifestyle' surveys, which have now built up to 4 million records for the UK, across all classes and tenures. This can save survey costs and give better coverage, to a full postcode level of detail.

This can then be linked to other database information, for example at postcode level, to enable the pattern of mover households to be seen and analysed in relation to their ability to afford housing.

### Mapping the findings - using Geographic Information Systems to analyse data

In the course of managing and developing housing, delivering services and dealing with problems, housing organisations inevitably gather lots of housing related data - on household types, rents, repairs, lettings, costs, housing needs, benefits, moves, voids, and so on. This data may originate in a variety of ways - telephone messages, notes, file records - but much of it now finds its way into computerised records. New work patterns such as 'Call Centres' rely even more on recording everything onto a computer system, and may lead to more comprehensive electronically recorded data on all manner of housing related activities.

However it arises, this means that much housing data is already in database systems in electronic format. This type of data is usually much more up-to-date and dynamic than in a traditional 'snapshot' survey, and based on much larger samples in which you can track who is included more effectively. Local authorities also hold much useful data in other databases such as Housing Benefit, Council Tax, Electoral Roll, Environmental Health, Planning, etc.

These miscellaneous data sources are often held on a variety of systems and platforms, but much of it is capable of being 'mined' and transferred to a Geographic Information System (GIS). This can then be used to map any data with a geographical tag (such as an address or postcode), which is estimated to be something like 80% of it'. For housing needs assessment this can let you see patterns on the ground of incomes, tenures, age and type of property, movements, emerging households, and much more.

These techniques can all be applied at considerably less cost, and scenarios run more frequently - ultimately virtually at will - than for any traditional, snapshot 'housing needs survey', and yet give better coverage. Surveys can still be carried out if necessary, but

1 Higgs, Gary, 'Review of the Role of Geographical Information Systems in Housing: Potential Areas for Future Research', in Housing Studies, Volume 9, No. 3, 1994.

## Analysing housing markets using data mining and mapping cont...

specifically targeted on areas of interest, or used to fill in gaps in the data.

As for any housing needs assessment, getting data is only part of the picture. In many respects the choice of data gathering method is less significant than the possible assumptions and alternatives in interpretation of the results, which can double or halve a need figure at the press of a calculator button. A model of the interactions and patterns within housing markets is needed, which can be tested against past reality to refine its future predictive power - and avoid expensive mistakes.

### Wider housing markets

It is also increasingly recognised that housing needs do not stop at borough boundaries, but that people move from one area to another according to various market pressures and choices. This therefore should require studies to go beyond the administrative boundaries of a single local authority, to look at the wider housing market, travel to work area and sub-market levels.

In addition, housing needs, flows and patterns are not rigidly bound by tenure divisions, and movements between tenures need to be considered to give a full picture.

### Interpreting mined data

In using mined data for an overall assessment of need within an area, the key variables affecting housing demand and need are:-

- The population levels and profiles of an area compared to the housing supply.
- The number of new households forming and intending or planning to take up housing within the borough - termed 'emerging' households. This will also include households living within other households who would like, or may in effect 'need', to move out to form new households - 'concealed' households.
- The number of households moving within or into the borough - the 'moving' households. While these contribute to demand and/or need, mover households will also contribute to supply by releasing accommodation for occupation by others.
- Existing households living in poor or insecure housing. It has not been found possible so far to obtain this data through data mining, so indicators need to come from other sources.

How the demand arising from these households can be met will depend on the level of their resources and incomes and the cost of housing on the open market (or of improving their current housing circumstances). So further key factors in assessing housing need are:-

- The cost of housing.
- The level of incomes, and other resources such as savings.

Other factors then also need to be considered. For the owner occupied sector, effective incomes may be stretched or

supplemented by lower interest rates and more generous or flexible lending policies by building societies. For the rented sector Housing Benefit may be available, but can have complex, wider implications. Schools are now a major driver of housing demand in many areas.

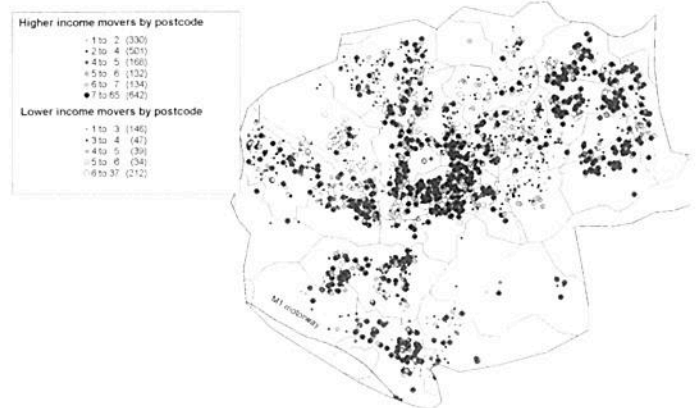
These elements taken together form the basis for an assessment of overall housing need. However, it is vital that this is not seen as a simplistic, deductive process. Rather it requires an understanding of the processes and flows within the housing market in its widest sense. The techniques applied must use not only 'primary data', but also summarised, interpreted and contextual information from many other sources to develop hypotheses and models of local housing markets and flows, and to construct arguments to support these in a non-mechanistic, dialectical manner.

This will involve assumptions and interpretations of data, which can inevitably be challenged or amended to give different results. Attempts have been made to encapsulate the analysis into a spreadsheet model, which summarises key data acquired, indicators used, and assumptions made to estimate the difference between supply and need.

Undoubtedly housing needs assessment has a long way to go before it can be seen as representing the complexities of reality to an acceptable and testable degree of accuracy, but at least progress does now appear to be possible.

### Examples of 'mined' and commercial data and GIS representation to analyse housing factors and flows

Northampton Housing Needs Assessment 1998 - higher and lower income movers (<£14.8K pa) by postcode



Movers with incomes below and above the level required to buy in the district

## Census Disclosure Diary 2002

### 17 January

ONS release Advisory Group Paper AG(02)01- the note of the 13 December meeting between Len Cook, the National Statistician, and representatives from the five Advisory Groups about disclosure control measures. This includes commitment from ONS to provide more details about the rounding proposals and methodology and to provide some statistics for parishes that fall between the old lower thresholds and the raised thresholds. ONS was aware that special attention needed to be paid to the impacts of rounding on the origin-destination outputs.

### 6 February

ONS hold meeting with user representatives about output and methods of delivery. Details can be obtained from Hywel.Davies@london.gov.uk.

### 26 February

ONS circulates a draft paper on disclosure control to the Advisory Group representatives. It includes the history leading to the decisions, some examples of options that were considered and some details of the way rounding will be tackled. It is not proposed to be conventional rounding to the nearest number divisible by 3. For example, 2 could be rounded to either 0 or 3. The way this is done should not introduce any bias in the statistic. Effectively this means that there is a 2 in 3 chance of the number being conventionally rounded to the nearest number divisible by three and a 1 in 3 chance that it is rounded to the next nearest. However, ONS will not officially confirm that this will precisely be the method.

### 6 March

Treasury Sub-Committee Report on the 2001 Census includes a number of recommendations on the conduct of future censuses and one particularly aimed at the output from the 2001 Census. The Report recommends 'that ONS reconsider their decisions on rounding and the minimum threshold for individual output tables in the light of concerns expressed by data users and others'.

### 14 March

ONS release Census News 48 and the 2001 Census Output Prospectus. This shows the schedule of release of Key Statistics (February 2003), the three Tranches of

Standard Tables and Census Area Statistics (April and May 2003) and Origin-Destination matrices (September 2003).

### 25 March

ONS canvasses views amongst Advisory Group representatives about some easing of the original rounding proposals.

### 27 March

Ludi Simpson (City of Bradford and CCSR Manchester) speaks at LARIA Conference on the Census and is strongly critical of the approach ONS has taken on the issue of perceived disclosure that has resulted in the proposal for the rounding of all output cells and the raising of area thresholds. Andy Teague (Deputy Director of the Census) responds and indicates that Advisory Group Paper AG(02)02 (released the same day) would include amended proposals that included only rounding small counts (maybe below 6 or 3) and for the subtotals within tables to be the sum of the adjusted cell counts. More testing would be undertaken to ensure the adequacy of these measures.

### 5 April

Graham Jones resigns as Director of the Census and is replaced by Joy Dobbs, from ONS Social Survey Division.

### 7 April

Ludi Simpson writes a widely circulated letter to Len Cook about disclosure and is the first person to present some statistical analysis of the impacts of the decisions on rounding. His conclusion is that rounding is bad for the user and for the integrity of the Census and that other approaches to the problem of perceived disclosure should be taken. He recommends that ONS should educate the public and media about the Census and that ONS should strongly back up the licence agreement that indicates that persons using the Census 'shall not attempt to derive information about identifiable individuals nor purport to have done so'.

### 1 May

Ordnance Survey and DTLR announce an agreement for the use of OS products within central government for one year. The importance of this is that Census users will be able to get vector boundaries of output areas via the Census Access Project.

### 2 May

2001 Census Output, Geography and Confidentiality Working Group held in London. Unfortunately Len Cook was unable to attend. On disclosure issues ONS were about to issue paper AG(02)03 giving options for rounding and asking for user comment. ONS said that it would not be possible to alter the confidentiality threshold of 100 persons and 40 households to allow an institution of 100 or more residents to be output area in its own right. This would cause problems with the output area algorithm and with neighbourhood statistics.

There would be a small 'virtual' working group formed to agree a set of statistics for 'between threshold' parishes in England. The problem of statistics for County Electoral Divisions in England was aired. ONS anticipated being able to provide output (whether Standard Tables or Census Area Statistics to be decided) but they would be at the end of the standard production timetable. There was a potential problem of slivers of difference between other geographies. The data may have to be based on best fit.

Neighbourhood Statistics is likely to hold only a subset of Census Area Statistics and Key Statistics. ONS were looking to intermediary organisations to assist in the task of the distribution of bulk electronic output to end users. Users are advised to check the News section of the National Statistics Census website for updates to documentation and reports. Census News is now virtually a web only publication with email alerts to contacts. There is planned to be a joint Census and Neighbourhood Statistics Roadshow in Autumn 2002.

There is likely to be another technical meeting on output delivery held in early summer and the next round of advisory group meetings will take place in June.

**John Hollis**  
Greater London Authority  
LA Lead on CLIP Census Subgroup.



## The Research Unit – Warwickshire County Council

**Robert Maguire**

We continue our occasional profiles of research units within authorities with a profile of the Research Unit based in the Department of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy of Warwickshire County Council.



The purpose of the Research Unit is to monitor economic social and environmental well being in Warwickshire. Outlined below is a brief overview of what we do and who we are. Individual telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are included below, or we can be contacted via our general e-mail [research@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:research@warwickshire.gov.uk). Details of what we do can be found at our website <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/research>.

### Demographic and Social Research

The Research Unit undertakes a variety of research into the demographic and social trends in Warwickshire. We collect, analyse and maintain a number of different datasets and publish regular reports.

**Population Trends** is an annual publication summarising the latest population estimates and forecasts at county, district and ward level from the Office for National Statistics. In the coming months the research activities and reporting in this area will be greatly enhanced. At present we are considering methods of estimation for small areas and mechanisms for measuring and/ reporting on other demographic issues (e.g. migration and vital statistics) as well as undertaking our own population and household forecasts.

We undertake regular research into **deprivation** and social exclusion in Warwickshire. Recent work has included analyses of the 2000 Index of Multiple Deprivation, household income levels in the County based upon the CACI Ltd 'PayCheck' data and the study of other data sources that provide the potential for more detailed small area analysis of deprived neighbourhoods. Work is currently under way examining the findings of the Countryside Agency's **Rural Services** Survey 2000 and its implications for rural service provision within Warwickshire.

### 2001 Census

The Research Unit is taking the lead in Warwickshire in preparing for the release of the 2001 Census results. As the rich amounts of information are released we will provide added value by analysing and disseminating the local data. It is likely this work will be closely linked to progress on our web based dissemination projects but will also take the form of overview reports, area profiles, an atlas of key variables and theme based analysis. In the coming months we will be releasing a prospectus detailing our own plans for consultation with potential Census users. The first in a series of newsletters to keep potential users within the authority and partner agencies informed of progress and the latest developments was circulated in November 2001.

**For more information contact Ed Dunn on 01926 412775 or [eddunn@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:eddunn@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

### Economic Research

The Unit is involved in many economic research projects in Coventry, Solihull, Warwickshire and in the region. Current projects include our annual survey of local employers and leading on the publication of our next sub regional economic assessment.

**For further details contact Andy Davis, 01926 412411 [andydavis@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:andydavis@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

### Crime and Community Safety

The Research Unit provides a research and information facility for partner agencies involved in crime and disorder reduction activity. We collect, analyse and disseminate data related to crime and disorder, so that other agencies can target their community safety work more effectively and help keep Warwickshire one of the safest places to live.

The Research Unit acts as a one-stop-shop for all community safety data needs, maintaining a central database of crime and disorder related information that all agencies feed into. GIS also plays an important role, with the mapping of community safety data instrumental in directing resources towards those areas in greatest need.

Crime and community safety provides an excellent example of joined-up research and analysis in Warwickshire, with a wide range of agencies providing information to a central point then benefiting from the added value of combining different types of data. The Unit has helped a number of agencies and projects secure funding for community safety improvement work and has been commended for good practice by the Home Office and other bodies.

**For further information, please contact Spencer Payne, Community Safety Information Analyst, on 01926 418645 or [spencerpayne@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:spencerpayne@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

## The Research Unit – Warwickshire County Council cont...

### Consultation

Warwickshire County Council has been looking at its overall approach to consultation and has published its Corporate Consultation Strategy. The key elements of the Consultation Strategy are sharing opportunities for joint consultation, which reduces costs and duplication of effort, and sharing best practice. Our Consultation Database is an important tool in the support and implementation of the Consultation Strategy.

Within the Council there are two corporate groups. The Corporate Consultation Group meets bi-monthly to manage consultation activities across the Council and to champion the use of the Consultation Database.

An operational working group has been set up to advise on consultation with priority groups defined in the Social Inclusion Strategy.

Externally a group has been set up with our partner organisations. This is the Warwickshire Joint Consultation Group, which meets quarterly and involves the five District/Borough Councils in Warwickshire, Police and Health Authority.

**For further information, please contact Louise Richards, Consultation Development and Research Officer, on 01926 412796 or [louiserichards@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:louiserichards@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

### Structure Plan Monitoring

The Research Unit produces monitoring reports for Warwickshire's Structure Plan. These are:-

- Housing Land
- Employment Land
- Transport policies
- Town centre policies
- Environmental Resource policies

An information officers' group has also been set up to aid sub-referral working and ensure a consistent approach to monitoring the emerging regional planning guidance.

**For further information please contact Suzanne Pretorius on 01926 412358 or [suzannepretorius@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:suzannepretorius@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

### Quality Of Life In Warwickshire

The Unit produces an annual 'Quality Of Life In Warwickshire' report giving an overview of economic, social and environmental wellbeing in the county, assessing our performance over time and in comparison with other areas. The next edition of the report is due for publication in September 2002.

[research@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:research@warwickshire.gov.uk)

[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/research](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/research)

*The people in the photo are as follows:  
front row, left to right - Andy Davis,  
Louise Richards, Suzanne Pretorius.  
Back row, left to right - Ed Dunn, Robert  
Maguire, Spencer Payne.*



## “Halton 2000” Crime Survey Comparison - 1999 and 2002

By Sue Scott

In order to monitor public opinion on the effects of Halton's first Community Safety Strategy, a survey undertaken in November 1998 with Halton's citizens' panel ("Halton 2000") was repeated in November 2001. The results were produced in early 1999 and early 2002 respectively, and these reference years are used in this article. The first survey produced 687 replies, a response rate of 58.6%, while 876 were returned in 2002, a response rate of 64.9%. All the results below have been compared as a proportion of those who answered each of the surveys, since the most recent survey results are based on a larger sample size.

Initial results show a remarkable consistency in the issues raised in each survey.

There has been no change in the four top-rated problems in respondents' local neighbourhoods. A lack of facilities for young people was seen as the biggest problem by 56.8% in 1999 and 57.4% in 2002. The second biggest problem highlighted by the surveys was teenagers and young people hanging around in groups, with 42.4% in 1999 and 47.2% in 2002. Third was litter with 26.3% in 1999 and 30.4% in 2002, and fourth road safety at 24.9% in 1999 and 25.7% in 2002.

Crime in general had increased slightly, with 17.1% of respondents in 2002 compared with 12.7% in 1999 seeing crime in general as a big problem in the neighbourhood where they live.

In both studies, respondents were most worried about being burgled, with 68.8% in 1999 and 65.7% in 2002 saying they were either very worried or fairly worried about this happening to them. The second biggest worry was having a motor vehicle broken into with 65.7% and 64% respectively, and third was having a motor vehicle stolen with figures of 60.4% and 58%. Fourth was vandalism or damage to respondents' houses, fences or garden, with 48.4% in 1999 and slightly higher at 55.4% in 2002.

Panel members were also asked how worried they were about 13 different incidents happening either to themselves or to someone living in their household, in the local area in which they live. Fear of 8 types of incident had dropped between 1999 and 2002, while fear of the other five had risen. It is worth noting that the largest reduction in fear of crime was a 4% drop in those very or fairly worried about being sexually assaulted or harassed.

In 1999, 39.6% felt very or fairly safe if they were to go out alone on foot in the neighbourhood in which they live after dark. This figure increased to 43.2% in 2002.

In 1999 26.3% said they always or usually avoided using public transport after dark because they may be worried about crime; this increased slightly to 27% in 2002. However 45.2% rarely or never avoided public transport because of fear of crime in 2002 as compared with 41.8% in 1999.

44.5% of panel members in 1999 thought there was a drug problem in their area; this had increased by 2.9% to 47.4% in 2002.

Table 1 refers to a question asked only in 2002 when just under four in ten or 38.7% said that they felt less safe in their surrounding neighbourhood in the evening than 3 years ago.

Table 1

Thinking back over the last three years, would you say you felt safer, about the same or less safe in the following areas?

	More safe	Same	Less safe	Not sure	No answer
In your home	8	72.4	18.4	6	.7
In your surrounding neighbourhood during the day	7.2	76.8	13.7	9	1.4
In your surrounding neighbourhood in the evening	3.7	53.9	38.7	1.9	1.8
In Runcorn Town Centre	1.5	19.1	38.5	29.5	11.5
In Widnes Town Centre	2.4	26.4	38	28.7	4.6

Table 2 illustrates that just over a third (36.6%) said that they were more worried about having a motor vehicle broken into than three years ago. However a quarter, or 25.2%, were less worried about being harassed or assaulted because of their colour, race or religion.

Table 2

Thinking back over the last three years, would you say you were now more worried, less worried or about the same as you were three years ago about the following happening in the local neighbourhood in which you live, either to you, or to someone currently living in your household?

	More worried	Same	Less worried	No answer
Being burgled	32.5	62	4.1	1.4
Having a motor vehicle stolen	31.8	55.4	6.1	6.7
Having a motor vehicle broken into	36.6	51.3	5.5	6.6
Having a cycle stolen	17.9	51.9	13.9	16.2
Vandalism or damage to your house, fences or garden	35.6	56.1	5.9	2.4
Being mugged, robbed or beaten up	30.3	62.8	4.6	2.4

## “Halton 2000” Crime Survey Comparison - 1999 and 2002 cont...

	More worried	Same	Less worried	No answer
Being insulted or bothered by neighbours	13.5	62.3	21.1	3.1
Being sexually assaulted or harassed	11.6	67.5	17.4	3.5
Being harassed or assaulted because of your colour, race or religion	3.7	61.8	25.2	9.4
Being knocked down by a car	27.7	59.6	9.8	2.9
Being assaulted or attacked on public transport	16.6	63.2	10.4	9.8
Being threatened on public transport	18.3	62.0	9.9	9.8
Being threatened or assaulted whilst waiting for or walking to or from public transport	24.2	59.1	7.5	9.1

### PANEL MEMBERS' EXPERIENCE OF CRIME

Panel members' experiences of crime show the changing patterns in crime between the surveys but also that the public are less willing to report crime than they were 3 years ago.

In 1999 3.5% of the panel had been burgled at least once; this rose to 4.7% in 2002. Of these, 73.9% were reported to the police in 1999 and 61.9% were reported in 2002.

In 1999 just over one in ten or 10.2% had been a victim of attempted burglary. The figure was similar in 2002 at 10.6%. Of these a third or 33.3% were reported in 1999 and just under a quarter or 23.4% in 2002.

In 1999 16.9% had had something stolen from their garage, garden, shed or outbuilding; this dropped slightly in 2002 to 15.9%.

In 1999 3.2% of respondents had been conned; this rose slightly in 2002 to 4.1%. In 1999 33.3% reported this incident to the police whereas only 25% did so in 2002.

In 1999 5.4 % had been attacked; this dropped slightly to 4.3% in 2002. Of these attacks 11.4% took place in the home in 1999 as opposed to only 5.2% in 2002. However more attacks took place elsewhere in the country in 2002 at 18.4% compared with 8.6% in 1999. Having suffered an assault, more people reported the incident in 2002 (60.5%) compared with 57.1% in 1999.

86.2% had access to a car or van in 1999 and this had reduced to 79.2% in 2002.

Of the respondents who had access to a vehicle, similar numbers in each study had had them stolen at least once; 4.7% in 1999 and 4.8% in 2001.

In 1999 53.6% of car thefts were taken outside respondents' homes. In 2002 this figure had fallen to 47%. However only 10.7% were taken from elsewhere in the Borough in 1999 - this had more than doubled in 2002 to 23.5%.

In 1999 25.6% had had a vehicle vandalised at least once. The 2002 panel revealed that 33.9% had had a vehicle vandalised.

Slightly more people had had something stolen from their vehicle in 2002 than in 1999 at 13% and 11% respectively.

In 1999 20% or one in five had suffered vandalism or deliberate damage to their house, fence or garden as compared with 25% in 2002. Again the rate of reporting the incident had fallen from 18.1% in 1999 to 14.9% in 2002.

Finally, in 1999 28.6% had suffered a child or young person causing a nuisance to them at least once; this had risen to 39.8% by 2002. Again the rate of reporting the incident had fallen from 18.1% in 1999 to 16.1% in 2002.

Respondents were asked about their priorities for their community. The top priority in both surveys was job opportunities for young people, being classed as either very important or important by 94.7% in 1999 and 95.1% in 2002. In 1999, services for the elderly was ranked as the second most important priority, with 93.8%, closely followed by activities for young people at 93.5%. However the second and third priorities in 2002 were Health Care services with 92.9%, closely followed by reducing crime at 92.8%.

### COMMENTARY

The crime and disorder audit and consultation process undertaken in 1999 identified four key priorities for action: Tackling Drug Misuse, Tackling Youth Issues, Tackling Domestic Violence and strengthening the Community Safety Partnership's Effectiveness.

On tackling Drug Misuse, as the research above indicates, more people think there is a drug problem in the area where they live in 2002 than did in 1999.

Youth issues also remain high on the agenda, being rated the biggest problem in respondents' local neighbourhoods in both 1999 and 2002. Further reinforcing this point, in both surveys young people hanging around in groups was seen as the second biggest problem.

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## “Best Value” Council Budget Optimisation Using SIMALTO Modelling

John Green, Research for Today Limited  
 John Boyle, Wandsworth Borough Council  
 Caroline Fitz-Gibbon, Dacorum Borough Council  
 John May, Emma Gaydon, London Borough of Barnet

### Background

SIMALTO modelling, a unique quantitative approach, had been used by several Australian councils to help them plan their investment strategy, but had not been used in the UK until Summer 2001. Since then three councils, Wandsworth, Dacorum (West Hertfordshire) and Barnet have used it. All three used it for different applications and used different sampling approaches.

Wandsworth used it in conjunction with their crime prevention committee to find citizens' priorities between alternative investments designed to enhance citizen feelings about security – e.g. extended CCTV coverage, civilian crime patrols, graffiti removal, etc. The SIMALTO questioning was a 10-minute section of a 40-minute broader based regular survey Wandsworth conduct covering a wide range of crime prevention issues.

Dacorum has traditionally been a very wealthy authority, and this was the first time they had been faced with having to make savings of this magnitude. They needed to select a combination of service cuts and revenue increases that would meet their overall savings target, and it was essential that they obtain reliable and meaningful feedback from their residents on their proposals. A random sample of 300 respondents was interviewed, in their homes.

Barnet was seeking to enrich its annual consultation on the forthcoming budget by getting a much deeper understanding of how residents make choices and trade-offs between different service developments and different levels of cost. The problem was which services to improve, and by how much, and how much, if anything, would citizens pay for any improvements decided upon. Members of the citizens' panel were invited to council premises to be interviewed.

### Benefits of SIMALTO Modelling

It can be used to find which savings can be made that will cause least dissatisfaction. Not only does it show the areas where savings can be made but also the *extent* of saving that can be made. It also finds which improvements (*both* the areas of improvement *and* extent) will maximise citizens' satisfaction for any budget level set by the Council.

The approach described below is sensible and flexible, questions being asked which are relevant to the problem at hand, rather than of the nice-to-know variety.

Respondents indicate their preference priorities in a budget-constrained realistic manner, informed of the relative costs of their choices. They are made aware that some changes save or cost more than others, and they cannot spend the same money twice – in fact citizens balance their own personal budget priorities by trading off between alternative costed levels of services.

The research findings are not simplistic “attribute importance” scores but, rather, citizens' detailed relative priorities, i.e. those changes that individuals find to be their own personal ‘best value’ evaluations of alternative investment strategies.

The modelling does provide the overall, on balance, optimal investment specification of service levels for any budget amount. Respondents' preferences are not simply averaged but each individual's priorities are preserved in the analysis and findings. This optimum specification should not be regarded as a “fait accompli”, since councillors can pick and choose individual alternative changes to it if they wish, and the modelling shows them the impact of these changes on citizen ‘satisfaction’ and preferences.

The payback of increased citizen satisfaction, or decreased criticism of the council, for different levels and details of investment are predicted, so the point of diminishing return for increased budget expenditure can be clearly seen, both on each attribute, and for the budget as a whole. Knowledge of citizens' own best value priorities does not threaten councillors' decision-taking role, for which they were elected. Rather they can now make informed decisions, and be seen to do this.

Councillors cannot be expected to know all their constituents' needs and values in the detail possible from this approach. Armed with this quantitative SIMALTO modelling information, they should have more confidence in the decisions they do reach.

## “Best Value” Council Budget Optimisation Using SIMALTO Modelling cont...

### Methodology

Individual Councils prepare the SIMALTO grid attributes and options, and their relative costs. Each grid can be different to reflect the issues the council is interested in. Part of the Barnet grid is shown below. The numbers in each option box indicate relative costs to the council of changes. E.g. it costs twice as much to have daily street cleaning in four extra neighbourhoods as it does to have one extra park keeper on patrol.

	Attribute	Levels							
2	number of Park Keepers (To Reduce Vandalism)	As now - 10 park keepers 0		One more to patrol 1	Two more to patrol 2		Three more to patrol 3		
6	Homework Clubs (At Youth Clubs)	None 0	4 1		8 2	11 (At all youth clubs) 3			
8	Daily Street Cleaning in Problem Areas	As now - all 20 town centres 0		4 extra neighbourhoods 2		7 extra neighbourhoods 4		10 extra neighbourhoods 6	
10	Fly Tipping	As now - rubbish removed within 6 hours of being reported 0		Removal within 3 hours for 90% of cases 2		Rubbish removed within 2 hours for 90% cases 3		Removal within 3 hours for 100% cases 4	
11	Highway Repairs / Maintenance	As 2001 - 150 roads repaired and 125 footpaths repaired 0			3 more road, 10 more footpaths 5		6 more road, 20 more footpaths 11		12 more road, 40 more footpaths 22
13	Pedestrain Safety - Crossing Road Narrowing	Same as 2001 - 16 schemes 0			4 extra 1		8 extra 2		12 extra 3
14	CCTV	As now - Limited distribution, 2 town centres 0			One extra town centre 3		2 extra town centre 6		4 extra town centres (50% town centres) 10
15	Crime Prevention Patrols Reporting Vandalism, Graffiti, etc	As now - 60 officers <i>on the street</i> 0			One extra 1	Two extra 2	Three extra 3	Four extra 4	Six extra 6
16	Dedicated Officer to Check Highways, Repairs and Co- ordinate Utility Work	No 0				Yes 1			
18	Grant Aid For Local Charities/Voluntary Groups	As 2001 0		2% extra funding (above inflation) 2		5% extra funding (above inflation) 4		10% extra funding (above inflation) 8	

Respondents complete a series of logical tasks on this matrix. They do some, but not necessarily all of the following, depending on the objectives of the study:

1. Circle their perception of the service level they currently receive
2. Cross out any “unacceptable” options that, if delivered, would cause the respondent to complain, etc.
3. Circle the level of service they expect from a top quality council

## “Best Value” Council Budget Optimisation Using SIMALTO Modelling cont...

4. From some specified starting point on each attribute - which may be the respondent's perception of the level of services provided or the council's actual provision or some more basic level - indicate how they would re-prioritise the current budget (i.e. any improvements must be matched by savings)

5. Indicate their first priorities for improvement within a given budget constraint (e.g. plus 20 points)

6. Indicate their second priorities for improvements within a second budget constraint

7. Indicate how satisfied they are with and/or respond to some other measure of whether they would change their habits/opinions/actually pay more, for each of these scenarios, if it were delivered.

### SIMALTO Modelling Reports

1) **Generating Citizen Optimum Service Specifications Within Any given Budget Constraint e.g. if the council decided to allocate between 20 and 70 points in total on alternative enhancements**

	20	30	40	50	60	70
Park Keepers	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3
Homework Clubs	None	None	None	None	4	8
Street Cleaning	7 extra	7 extra	7 extra	7 extra	10 extra	10 extra
Fly Tipping	As now	As now	As now	As now	As now	3 hours
Highway Repairs	+3 roads	+6 roads	+6 roads	+6 roads	+6 roads	+6 roads
Pedestrian Safety	As now	As now	As now	As now	4 extra	8 extra
CCTV	As now	As now	2 extra	2 extra	2 extra	2 extra
Crime Patrols	3 extra	4 extra	4 extra	6 extra	6 extra	6 extra
Utility Officer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Local Charities	As now	As now	As now	As now	As now	+2%

As the budget increases, so options tend to be added to the previous lower budget or basic specification. Shaded boxes highlight these changes of service level.

(Note, only 10 of all 22 attributes in the study are included above)

## “Best Value” Council Budget Optimisation Using SIMALTO Modelling cont...

### 2) Best Value Index Hierarchy of Citizen Priorities For Individual Improvements

SIMALTO modelling uses ALL the prioritisation and value data collected to predict the best individual changes from any given starting position (budget allocation).

Attribute	From	To	Index
Highway Repairs	As now	3 more roads	72
Dedicated Officer	None	Yes	68
Street Cleaning	As now	4 extra	68
Park Keepers	As now	1 more	66
Park Keepers	1 more	2 more	65
Crime Patrols	As now	1 more	64
Crime Patrols	1 more	2 more	62
CCTV	As now	1 extra	61
Crime Patrols	2 more	3 more	60
Street Cleaning	4 extra	7 extra	58
CCTV	1 extra	2 extra	57
Highway Repairs	3 more roads	6 more roads	54
Local Charities	As now	2% more	47
Fly Tipping	As now	3 hours	41
CCTV	2 extra	4 extra	41
Local Charities	2% more	5% more	39
Fly Tipping	3 hours	2 hours	30

The above is a subset of all the possible stepwise improvements. It shows it may not be necessary to achieve 'perfection' on any attribute. Rather it is important to achieve a certain level, and then when this has been reached, some other attributes should be improved before returning to already improved ones.

### 3) Predicting Levels Of Satisfaction With Different Specifications

Assuming the Council made the changes in the budgets as shown in Report 1, citizen satisfaction is predicted to be: -

Budget	20	30	40	50	60	70
Extremely Pleased	4	6	7	10	19	26
Very Pleased	29	40	50	56	50	47
Quite Pleased	50	41	31	24	22	20
Uncertain	11	7	7	5	5	4
Slightly Unhappy	6	7	5	5	4	4
Very Unhappy	1	0	0	0	0	0

## “Best Value” Council Budget Optimisation Using SIMALTO Modelling cont...

Such a Return on Investment statistic as this can help councils decide the level of investment needed before the law of diminishing returns applies to increasing “customer satisfaction”.

Other reports are available, depending on the questions asked, e.g.:

- Perception of the level of service council is providing on each attribute
- Percentage of respondents who invest at least some of their improvement points on achieving at least a known specified level of service on any attribute
- Willingness to pay extra for any given specification proposed by council
- Prediction of which of 2 or more competing budget allocations is preferred
- Clustering citizens with similar values/priorities

Obviously, reports are available by demographic sub-groups, if sample sizes permit.

### Reactions to the SIMALTO Modelling Survey

#### Wandsworth

“We felt the detailed description of the options available for choice meant that the approach could be described as offering a quantitative method that provided genuine qualitative information as well. We now have a far better understanding of the real trade-offs that residents will make between cost and service level in a situation where several different services/initiatives contribute to the overall goal of crime reduction. The quantitative nature of the survey enables us to tailor our response to particular areas and/or sub-groups of residents.”

#### Dacorum

“The nature of the SIMALTO model meant that our Members could clearly see our residents’ priorities, and were therefore confident in accepting the findings. As a result of the SIMALTO exercise, we were able to make a number of small changes to our prior proposals which significantly increased resident satisfaction levels without reducing the overall savings we would achieve”

#### Barnet

“Residents did seem willing to pay more for *their* own choices, as long as they were actually going to be delivered. This was an important first step using SIMALTO modelling for us, and we hope to use it again later this year. SIMALTO was *complementary* to Barnet’s main budget consultation and it has provided a wealth of detail for the council to study. The main consultation attracted responses from more than 9,900 people, 60% of whom endorsed the council’s own preference of a 2.5% rise in the Barnet element of the council tax”

### Conclusions

These very positive comments from the first U.K. council users are in line with the published reactions from Australia. Gosnells - part of Greater Perth - was the first Australian council to use the method. The City of Gosnells was the first in Australia to win the internationally judged Universal Design Award – and only the fourth city in the world to win this prestigious award.

Both the City of Gosnells’ Mayor and its Chief Executive Officer appreciated the input from SIMALTO modelling. SIMALTO modelling was used as the objective basis for their strategic plan.

The Mayor said, “The council intends to act on the findings as part of its drive and commitment to customer service”, and from the CEO, “The community was aware the Council had a *real* interest in their views. SIMALTO made it very easy for people to prioritise their service wants. The outcome is that you find out not only what people believe is important, but what they are prepared to pay for it.”

All council SIMALTO Modelling users to date agree the method lives up to its reputation earned in the wider business world, and feel it should be considered for several of the investment priority and trade off activities councils regularly undertake.

## Scottish Household Survey

### Barbara Knowles

On a very rainy and windswept February 1st, 58 delegates assembled in Falkirk for a joint free meeting for members of the Policy Network and LARIA in Scotland to discuss aspects of the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). Louise Finlayson of the Scottish Executive, Central Research Unit, and until recently the project manager for the Survey, gave a presentation on what the SHS was; how big it was; who the contractors were; what range of topics were included; who the users were (or likely to be); why the Survey was commissioned and whether it was likely to continue.

The main aims of the SHS are to provide household and individual information to support transport, local government and social justice policy areas; permit disaggregation of such information both geographically and in terms of population sub-groups; allow relationships between social variables within households to be examined; allow early detection of national trends and allow detailed follow-up surveys of sub-samples from the main survey. There were approximately 15,000 interviews per year, which now formed a continuous survey since February 1999.

Louise went on to describe the range of topics and indicated that the sample was selected to provide a minimum of 550 households in each Council area over a 2

year period. Response rates varied from 79% in Eilean Siar to 59% in E. Renfrewshire. All Scotland was 66%. The SHS has been used for a wide range of policy areas e.g. Social Justice Milestones; Older People issues; Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP'S) benchmarking; child poverty; health matters; transport in Edinburgh and Strathclyde PTE. The data for the first two years is now available via the UK Data Archive and Cosla.

Simon Braunholtz from MORI Scotland, the contractors, gave a presentation on Maximising the Data's Potential. He explained the factors to bear in mind when using the data and in particular the size of samples in your authority; period over which sample collected; structure of the dataset; and content of the survey. This resulted in a complex dataset containing household, population, random adult, random school child and travel diary trip data. He illustrated his talk by various comparisons on a diverse range of topics at local authority level e.g. household types; status of individuals within a household; households with children; population mobility; perceptions of the area respondents lived in; involvement with the community; travel to work patterns; transport facilities by MOSAIC and access to the internet. He indicated that it would be feasible to track other variables through time or income e.g. access to phone/car/computer. On the latter he

produced a data gem that in the first quarter 1999 29% of households owned a computer; by last quarter of 2000 37% of households had ownership.

Presenting the Practitioner's Perspective of using the SHS, Norman Jamieson indicated that Edinburgh Council had commissioned a boost to their sample to enable a better understanding of transport issues. His team had used SPSS to do the analysis, but any statistical analytical software would do. The plus side was the Council obtained a lot of socio-economic background data, as well as the transport information they were interested in, and were able to make comparisons over time with Scotland, other Councils or groups of Councils. The downside of the survey data is its size; the vagaries of a small sample size and the geography. He indicated that several differences emerged between the year 1 data and the Edinburgh boost. The data had been used for work on the New Transport Initiative, but there was the 'spin off' of information of a socio-economic type. However, like a number of Councils, resources to analyse datasets were diminishing and while policy officers and researchers now had access to a wide range of data, we were fast becoming 'data rich but information poor'.

One of the conclusions of this seminar is the need for further Policy Network/LARIA in Scotland joint initiatives in the future.

## Project Renewal of Deprived Neighbourhoods - The Israeli Experiences Part 1

### Zvi Weinstein

This is the first of a 2 part article on the Israeli experience of neighbourhood regeneration

### Introduction

Israel 'Project Renewal', begun in 1978, is one of the most ambitious programs for neighbourhood regeneration in the world in terms of scale and scope. In its apex in the mid-1990s Project Renewal encompassed 146 neighbourhoods (of which 40 were operating with only physical improvements). In Israel, a small country, this has meant that most cities and eligible towns have had at least one neighbourhood in the Project and that 930,000 people have been included – approximately 20% of the country's population of 5 million. By the year 2001, the Project had spent some \$2000 million.

The Project was initiated and grew on the backdrop of the social fermentation that existed in the distressed neighbourhoods of large cities. These neighbourhoods were characterized by the following distress indicators: low education levels; low income levels; a high rate of unemployment; problems of family function; a high rate of school dropouts; a high crime rate; a strong poverty culture; alienation and apathy to the immediate environment; physical deterioration of housing stock; a lack of public institutions, facilities and services; a lack of physical infrastructure; a negative image of the neighbourhood among residents and other citizens of the city; and a lack of political representation inside the establishment.

## Project Renewal of Deprived Neighbourhoods - The Israeli Experiences Part 1 cont...

The origins of the creation of distressed neighbourhoods could be found from the period when Israel became a state in 1948. The government faced the masses of immigrant refugees - survivors of the Holocaust and refugees from Arab countries – several times the size of the Jewish population of 650,000. The first need was to house the new immigrants. The result was the establishment of 30 new towns in all parts of the country, many in outlying areas. In addition, new neighbourhoods were constructed at the outskirts of cities where immigrant transit camps had been located. These were all constructed on national land by government or other public agencies. The housing was characteristically composed of uniform blocks of apartments designed by central government architects (28 to 32 sq. m. per family while many of them were large families) with little regard for consumer diversity.

The Project started operation in 1979. The first group of neighbourhoods was selected from a pre-existing list of 160 neighbourhoods considered to be in need of renewal. While the declaration of general national goals was made at the outset, the operational goals remained largely unstated and evolved with time. In Israel, a program of this kind requires no special legislation except for the standard annual budget approval by the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament). The actual design of the Project was left largely in the hands of planners, urbanists, social planners and professionals from the education, employment, health and welfare fields. On the other hand, little direct political input in the Project was performed. The program as a whole had no termination date, but each neighbourhood was to benefit for only a few years until it comes to its 'take-off' point towards regeneration.

The neighbourhoods included in the Project are located in urban metropolitan areas in medium size cities, in developing towns and in other population centres: rural villages, Arab, Druze and Bedouin settlements.

### The Project's Goals

Over the years the activities of the Project have changed to reflect a different set of priorities than the goals that were originally defined for renewal. The following are the goals that were set out at the beginning of the Project:

1. Improving the quality of life in the neighbourhoods through improvements of physical infrastructure and improving of housing condition and level of public services;
2. Increasing and advancing opportunities for educational achievements and employment for all age groups;
3. Strengthening residents' involvement and control in their lives and environment. Encouragement of resident involvement in matters relating to the neighbourhood and in creating a sense of belonging and identification.
4. Stabilizing the neighbourhood, stopping processes of deterioration and out-migration, improving the image of the neighbourhood among its residents and others.

Resident participation was one of the most central goals of the Project and it became the focal point of neighbourhood decision making for planning, budgeting, management and monitoring.

During the years of operation Project Renewal undertook new goals as conditions in the country changed. The dynamic changes in Israel resulted in the Project undertaking: economic development during years of recession and unemployment; political involvement (changes in the government administration due to elections); demographic changes (absorption of one million new immigrants from the former USSR and Ethiopia during a short period between 1989 to 1995); and changes in planning concepts and approaches as real estate values changed with the creation of new urban suburbs and new settlements. All of these changing conditions have caused policy makers to add new goals, as described below:

5. Improving the ability to function of weak populations (elderly, one parent family, new immigrants) and increasing concern for their needs in the community;
6. Strengthening reciprocal interests between the neighbourhood and its surrounding environment by developing new common services and service delivery to a broader population base in the field of education and culture;
7. Increasing income levels of neighbourhood residents by catalyzing economic development processes and encouraging local entrepreneurial activity;
8. Assisting social and economic integration of new immigrants into renewal neighbourhoods.

### The Project's Principles

To implement its ambitious goals, Project Renewal had to create institutional machinery that could carry the lead. The Project had to shake up existing modes of doing government business. This implied a need for innovation. Successful implementation of the Project's goals would depend on the degree to which major operational principles were fulfilled (summarised here due to lack of space).

- 1. The Project is comprehensive and operates in a social and physical integration. Activities in the neighbourhoods include the integration of all government ministries involved in the Project: Housing, Education, Employment, Welfare, Health, Police.**

Project Renewal, unlike existing social and housing services, was to be an integrated program. This meant that government offices would have to overcome their generic tendency towards separate action, and would have to learn to coordinate for the long term on a large scale, entailing scores of neighbourhoods spread all over the country. Of all the Project's operational principles, this one required the greatest departure from traditional behaviour.

## Project Renewal of Deprived Neighbourhoods - The Israeli Experiences Part 1 cont...

Coordination was achieved and it was an impressive achievement. Most significantly, the Project's organizational structure (see chart below) supplied a forum for eight to nine government and quasi-government agencies to sit together on a routine basis, focus jointly on a particular neighbourhood, and decide, at least formally, on a set of programmes and create norms of cooperation among service delivery personnel.

### 2. No dislocations of residents from their homes.

The Project's activities are focused on the indigenous residents and the housing they live in. The past experience in the USA taught the policy makers, that displacement of population from its neighbourhood didn't achieve the expected social goals of services, education and employment.

### 3. Allocation of resources on a general neighbourhood basis.

Assistance is provided on a generic basis to both "weaker" and "stronger" households and families in order that the latter are encouraged to remain in the neighbourhood. In this way a negative selection process is avoided. This principle was adopted although it created an inequality problem inside the neighbourhood between "those who have" and "those who haven't".

### 4. Delegation of authority and the participation of residents in the planning and implementation process.

One of the major innovations introduced by Project Renewal was the delegation of responsibility for decision making to neighbourhood steering committees. The degree to which decentralization was realized should be assessed against Israel's highly centralized structure. We concluded that decentralization was achieved to a significant extent.

### 5. The Project is to be operated on a time limited basis.

This principle didn't stand the test of time. According to the Project's data, a neighbourhood is "renewed" after between 12 to 15 years of operation. There are a few exceptions where neighbourhoods which started from the very beginning are still in the Project's framework, due mainly to the hard core of prevailing problems.

It must be emphasised here that during 25 years of operation the Project has been phased out of 54 neighbourhoods, i.e. these neighbourhoods have reached the point where most of their multi dimensional problems were solved and services developed were taken over by local municipality or other agencies. Project Renewal is performing exit strategies of various different kinds.

### 6. The Project was to operate without creating a new organizational structure.

The designers and policy-makers of Project Renewal were aware of the unmitigated failure of Israel's Urban Renewal Agency of the late 1960s, established by the 1965 Law for Reconstruction and Clearance of Renewal Areas. As a new agency, it turned out to be powerless against existing government agencies. Therefore, the Project designers declared their intention that the Project would rely on existing agencies for service delivery, adding only a modest superstructure for planning, coordination, and evaluation. The implementation machinery needed to be equipped with good hierarchical integration and clear rules for decision making.

### 7. Adding services rather than substituting funds.

What often happens during implementation of public programmes is a game of tug-of-war that pulls the process in unplanned directions. If a program is well funded and is perceived as a success, this 'game' may take the form of participants substituting the new program's funds for their own and shifting their own funds to other purposes or sites. Such a process could occur either as a conscious policy on the part of some of the participating agencies, or as gradual slippage.

In Project Renewal the degree of substitution varied by type of programme. It was noticed to some extent in the first stages of the Project when the inter-ministerial coordination was fully achieved in ongoing programmes. But programs that were totally new to Project Renewal such as planning, or were highly innovative, such as neighbourhood-based training and special health services, naturally showed no displacement of budgets. Today, no substitution or displacement takes place due to full control and follow-up network.

## Organizational framework of the Project

The Project acts in three tiers: National, Local government and the Neighbourhood. In 1982 a Ministerial Committee was established and has been headed since then by the Ministry of Construction and Housing. The Committee included all Ministries participating in the Project: Housing, Education, Welfare, Health, Treasury, Labour, Interior and Absorption (new-comers). The Jewish Agency (an international organization, which in pre-state times has been aiding Jewish communities in distress in various parts of the world) became a partner too until its involvement came to an end in the late 1980s. The Committee's main role is to approve the inclusion or exclusion of neighbourhoods from the Project framework. Though political considerations have had an influence, it has become clear that the professional recommendations (based on strong data) of those who composed the Inter Ministerial Committee (representatives of governmental ministries) are accepted.

The roles of the Inter Ministerial Committee are: To determine the Project's goals and targets; to decide on priorities and budget sharing including personnel; to approve the neighbourhoods' yearly programs; to appoint managerial staffs at the neighbourhoods; to suggest criteria and indices for including additional neighbourhoods in the Project.

## Project Renewal of Deprived Neighbourhoods - The Israeli Experiences Part 1 cont...

The third tier is the neighbourhood level where Local Steering Committees have been established. The LSC's are composed of 22 members of which 50% are elected residents and the rest are government and local municipality representatives. The LSC is the most significant expression of citizens' involvement and participation in the Project networks and systems. Their roles are: Building the neighbourhood's renewal strategy; to approve the annual program according to the budget and planning guidance of the Inter Ministerial Committee; to determine the physical and social priorities; supervising and following-up the plan's advancement; transmitting information to the residents.

At the neighbourhood level a management staff was established to be the performers and the connectors among government ministries, local municipality, local services and the residents. The staff include several function such as: Project manager, secretary, planners, social workers, human resource coordinator.

While in the first years of the Project there used to be direct contacts between neighbourhood and government through the government representatives in the LSC, it became clear that local municipality will have to take the responsibility for the plans and programs created and established during the Project activity. Thus, the local government and its department became more involved and participated in the processes of planning and budgeting together with the residents.

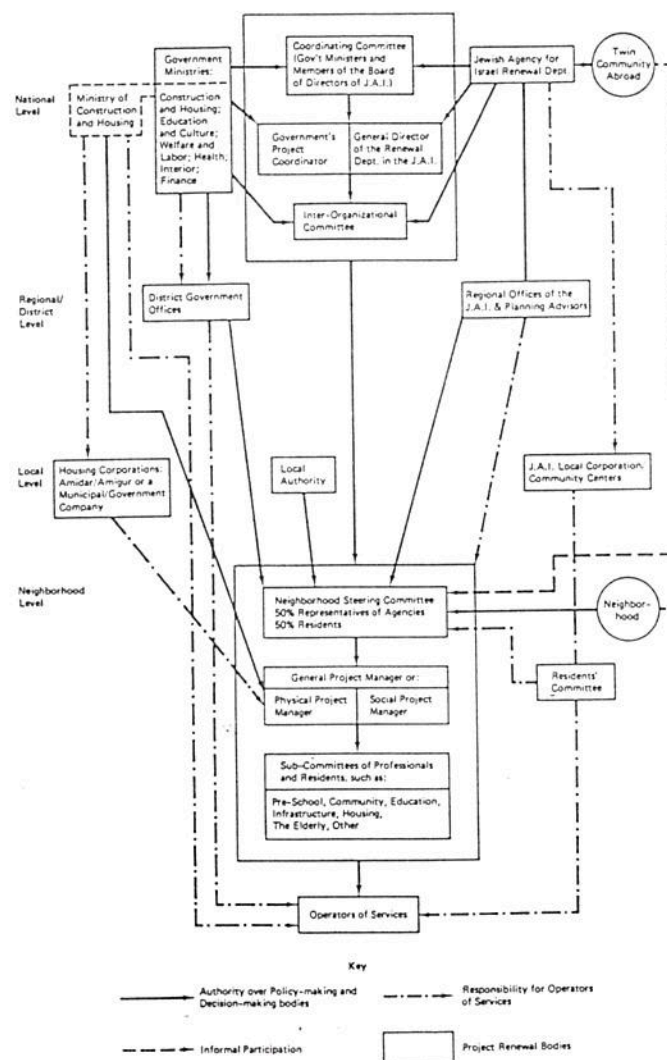


Fig. 1. Organizational chart of Project Renewal.

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Part 2 will follow in the next issue.

## Capacity Building For Evaluation in the Manchester, Salford and Trafford Health Action Zone

In Summer 2000, the Manchester, Salford and Trafford Health Action Zone (HAZ) asked for tenders from organisations willing and able to support capacity building for evaluation in their region by running a series of learning events. The Centre for Systems Studies, which is based in the Business School at the University of Hull, was awarded the contract (with participation from Manchester Metropolitan University). A Steering Group, made up of HAZ representatives and other stakeholders of Manchester, Salford and Trafford health services, was convened to oversee the project.

A relatively large group of us from the Centre for Systems Studies were actively engaged in the capacity building: Alan Boyd, Ted Geerling, Carolyn Kagan (Manchester Metropolitan University), Wendy Gregory, Gerald Midgley, Peter Murray and Mike Walsh.

From 1 September 2000 to 30 June 2001, we were engaged in three phases of work. In phase one, we consulted 55 community groups, voluntary organisations and statutory services to find out about their current and future evaluation requirements. In phase two, we facilitated 9 learning events that were specifically designed to meet the needs identified in phase one. In phase three, we set up 3 full-day workshops (one for each part of the HAZ region) to support people in looking at what they can do to continue the learning process they have embarked upon.

In this short article we briefly review these activities. At the end we give details of how to obtain a free copy of the final report from this work.

### Phase One: Exploring Evaluation Issues with Local Groups

Altogether, we consulted with 55 voluntary organisations, community groups and statutory services about their views on evaluation and what they wanted from a series of learning events. Equal opportunities monitoring data was collected during this exercise so we were reasonably confident that these groups were representative of those living and working in Manchester, Salford and Trafford.

Groups and organisations were asked to participate in a 3-hour workshop. We requested that as many staff as possible attend, and also (if it was a service) some users. However, if getting together a large group was difficult for people, we said that we would prefer to talk with just a small group rather than nobody at all. Sessions varied from one-to-one meetings between a member of the local community and a researcher, to large-scale workshops with 125 participants. However, in the majority of cases, there were around 5-10 people involved.

The facilitators used a set of guidelines and questions to structure the workshops, inspired by the methodological thinking of Ackoff (1981) and Ulrich (1983). We started with questions about people's current situation; how they think of and use evaluation; and what immediate plans they have to do things differently. We then moved on to support participants in looking at where they wanted their organisation to be moving to in the future. We asked people to imagine that they had woken up this morning to find that their group or organisation had disappeared, and they had been brought together to redesign it from scratch. They had only three constraints: their designs should be feasible (no magic

solutions), viable (sustainable by the agencies given the responsibility of funding them) and adaptable (not creating an inflexible bureaucracy). This gave people an ideal, but feasible, vision that they could realistically work towards (if they chose to do so). We mostly focused our questions on planning issues because, to be effective, evaluation should interface with planning.

We had two reasons for conducting this exercise with participants. First, we wanted to find out if different kinds of evaluation would be necessary if they were to move towards their vision of the future. Second, as part of our ethical commitment to partnership working, we wanted to give something to the groups in exchange for the time and information they were providing to us.

Looking back over the experience of facilitating these workshops, and taking into account the feedback we received from the groups, we argue that this proved to be a useful approach to managing the consultation process. Focusing on the ideal future of people's groups and organisations (especially on how they should set up planning) enabled people to consider a wide range of issues (e.g., how to encourage the participation of stakeholders) which had a direct bearing on the conduct of evaluation. Importantly we found that, in most cases, people gained a great deal from taking time out to vision the future of their group or organisation. Most also said that the results of this exercise would be useful to them, regardless of whether they took the issue of evaluation any further. For us, this confirmed that we did the right thing when we decided to put substantial resources into the consultation exercise (almost as much staff time was used on this as on the learning events themselves).

The information gathered through these workshops was used to inform the design of the learning events. The design itself was undertaken by our team in partnership with some of the members of the Steering Group, drawn from the HAZ and other local statutory and voluntary organisations.

### Phase Two: The Learning Events

In total, we ran 9 learning events. We started with a 'foundation' event for people who had no previous formal knowledge of evaluation, or who were put off by the concept. Some people were unaware of the possibility that evaluation could be participative and even fun, so we decided to call the first event "Facing the Fear and Finding the Fun!" We anticipated a large market for this, so we determined to repeat it three times: once each in Manchester, Salford and Trafford.

One of the issues thrown up by the earlier consultation exercise was people's lack of knowledge of the potential variety of evaluation approaches. A lot of people also said that they wanted evaluation to be participative, sweeping in stakeholder views. In the early 1990s, some researchers in the Centre for Systems Studies surveyed a wide range of evaluation methodologies in order to identify general types that could be brought together to form a more comprehensive evaluation framework than is normally used (Gregory and Jackson, 1992a,b). Three such types were identified, which we re-labelled: 'goal based', 'stakeholder' and 'organisational'. These are general approaches, and any number of specific methods can be used at different stages during their implementation. The three approaches can be summarised as follows:

## Capacity Building For Evaluation in the Manchester, Salford and Trafford Health Action Zone cont...

- **Goal-based evaluation** is where organisational goals are set; measures are devised; data is collected; and then an analysis is conducted to find out whether the goals are being achieved. The findings may indicate the need to continue as planned, or to revise the goals and enter into a new cycle of devising measures and collecting data.
- **Stakeholder evaluation** does not ask you to pre-set organisational goals. Rather, the views of stakeholders are sought in order to find out about their expectations and experiences. Evaluation of this kind may be integrated into a participatory planning process. Alternatively, the results from evaluations may be fed into a separate planning forum. Stakeholder evaluation may be conducted for its own sake, or to inform goal-setting, thereby ensuring that the goals of an organisation (and the measures used to evaluate achievement) are sensitive to the views of key people and organisations in the community.
- **Organisational evaluation** asks you to assess organisational structures and communication patterns against a model of good practice. This model may be another, similar service organisation viewed as particularly successful, or it may be drawn from the management literature. The purpose of organisational evaluation is to enhance the efficient and effective pursuit of whatever goals the organisation has set for itself.

These three approaches address the issue of variety, so we structured the next learning event around them—but making sure that the issue of participation was dealt with up-front (the research from the early 1990s only emphasised the value of participation in relation to stakeholder evaluation). We called the event “What should we Really be Asking?” because different kinds of question can lead people to choose different approaches to evaluation. Again, because there were lots of people raising these sorts of issues, we determined to repeat this event three times: once each in Manchester, Salford and Trafford.

“Facing the Fear and Finding the Fun!” and “What should we Really be Asking?” accounted for six of the nine learning events. The final three were all one-off events to tackle issues that were raised less widely in the consultation exercise, but were clearly significant to a range of stakeholders.

We called the seventh event “Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics!” This concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods, with the focus more on the qualitative (and how to combine the two). The eighth event was named “Don’t Stand in Judgement!” and dealt with how evaluation can be built into participative planning to encourage on-going learning rather than one-off judgement. The ninth and final event was “Getting it Right from the Start”, which focused on how evaluation might be used more constructively as part of contracting between health service purchasers and providers.

Anonymous quantitative and qualitative feedback was gathered from the participants at all these learning events. When asked whether their event had been worthwhile, 93% of the 117 people attending replied positively.

### Phase Three: Looking to the Future

Representatives from 42 community groups, voluntary organisations, service providers and commissioners participated in the 3 workshops (one in Trafford, one in Salford and one in Manchester). In designing these events we drew upon the methodological thinking of Ackoff (1981), Checkland (1981), Thomas (1985), Mintzberg (1990) and Midgley and Reynolds (2001) amongst others. Each of the workshops was structured as follows (although there were minor variations between workshops to cater for local needs).

The participants were asked to imagine that they had climbed into a time capsule, and stepped out five years into the future. They found that, in this future, there were strong mutual support networks to help them learn about and practice evaluation. They identified what these would look like. Then, returning to the time capsule, they went back to just one year into today’s future. They looked at what was happening then that would enable the positive future to emerge in just four years time. Through these explorations, the group formed a vision of good practice to aim for, both in the medium and longer term. Having explored the ideal future, the participants then returned to the present day and formed themselves into small groups to identify obstacles to setting up mutual support networks. They also looked for opportunities that could be used to move towards the desired future, and strengths that they could bring to building mutual support networks for evaluation. The workshops then ended with people identifying the first steps that would need to be taken, and who should take responsibility for them.

In the anonymous feedback we received from participants, 95% said that these workshops had been worthwhile attending. There were two significant outputs: the generation of an agenda for action to support the continuation of capacity building for evaluation, and commitment from people on the ground to aid its implementation. A summary of the agenda is presented in our final report.

### Conclusions

The outputs from this project include:

- Strategic reflections by 55 groups and organisations on their future direction (separate from, and connected to, evaluation issues);
- The participation of 117 representatives of a wider set of groups and organisations in learning about evaluation;
- The exposure of all these people to methods and techniques for evaluation and planning;
- The generation of recommendations to support the continuation of capacity-building for evaluation into the future; and
- Commitment from people on the ground to do what they can to help implement these recommendations.

### Obtaining the Final Report

If you would like a free copy of our final report, which contains much more detail than this short article, please write to the

## Capacity Building For Evaluation in the Manchester, Salford and Trafford Health Action Zone cont...

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## Better Connected 2002? A Snapshot of Local Authority Websites

Reviewed by Rachel Cossey

'Better Connected 2002' is the annual survey of local authority websites published by the Society of IT Management (SOCITM). It shows that over a quarter have substantially improved since 2001. As one who has spent too much time peering at LA websites trying to find a specific piece of information, like a phone number or information on council departments, I was very interested to see the results of this survey.

The survey was carried out in November and December 2001, and involved a team of reviewers visiting all websites managed by 476 councils throughout the UK. Using a structured questionnaire the review team explored the websites' ability to respond to the sorts of needs that typical LA customers might have. In 2001 these customers were imagined to be:

- A teenager studying for GCSEs
- A business expanding in a new location
- A family moving to a new part of the country
- A person planning retirement

Exploration of the above scenarios allowed researchers to gather information on key themes including: joined-up government; interactive applications; and community leadership and visibility. Websites were also tested on: response to an email sent from the website; accessibility for those with disabilities; accessibility for the visually impaired; and technical performance.

The SOCITM reviewers used the information gathered to develop a rating system. This rating reflects the potential of LA websites to play a major role in the delivery of e-government. The categories are defined as follows:

- Promotional – sites providing information but little interaction
- Content – sites providing more sophisticated information and some interaction
- Content Plus – sites providing very useful content and more advanced on-line self-service features.
- Transactional sites – sites which are accessible, complete, thoughtful and coherent with more than one type of on-line interaction (examples include payments, applications, consultation and bookings).

According to this year's survey, four LA websites have now reached transactional status (Tameside MBC, LB Camden, LB Westminster and Herefordshire CC).

The report is divided into 3 main parts. Part A provides some information on the demand and supply side of website usage. It includes information on the latest trends in internet access by region, gender, age and social class and a summary of the progress of local e-government policy over the past year. Part B is the results section and provides detailed results from the questionnaire. It also presents an overview of national trends in website development. Key findings of the report include:-

- All but four LAs have websites.
- Over 1 in 4 websites have improved, i.e. moved up the rating system.
- Websites are generally increasing their interactivity. The number of interactions that can be performed on-line increased 5-fold in 12 months.
- The number of transactional websites increased from 1 in 2001 (Tameside) to four in 2002. However if more sites had their transactions built into a complete overhaul of the site, rather than bolting them on, more transactional sites would have been found.
- The results from the sample email test, more difficult than last year's test, pose some important questions about LAs' internal capacity to deal with emails generated. In 2002 only 41% of those authorities who received an email responded within 10 days, compared with 60% in 2001.

Section B also includes plenty of examples of both good and bad practice which I think those involved in website development would find particularly helpful.

Part C of the report details next year's plans and offers detailed advice for website managers on improving both content management and usability.

Finally the appendices include summaries of results for each LA on all aspects tested – so you can see how your own authority fared. More information on this report can be found at [www.socitm.gov.uk](http://www.socitm.gov.uk)

## Localis - Serious Thinking

Six months ago Localis, a think tank dedicated to local government, was launched. In this article Localis explains the work it has done and its plans for the future.

Lord Hanningfield, Localis Chairman and the current Vice Chairman of the Local Government Association explains Localis' history and mission. He says, "I had felt for some time that local authorities, both in terms of senior officers and senior elected members, had become increasingly focused on the short term. We were continually responding to central government rather than looking at our own future. There was a need to create an organisation which could take a longer term perspective looking at public service reform and the role of local government in particular."

The concept of launching a think tank dedicated to local government was therefore born. Hanningfield joined up with two others to found Localis - Colin Barrow, the Chairman of the Local Government Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) and Paul Bettison the Leader of Bracknell Forest Council. Localis was launched in September 2001 and the founders spent the first two months of its existence consulting with and meeting academic and other local government specialists. Colin Barrow the Localis Vice Chairman says, "we wanted to create an organisation which would be leading and challenging the policy agenda. In order to put firm foundations in place we wanted to spend a considerable amount of time listening to established specialists."

In January 2002 Localis held its first policy seminar. This included presentations by Prof. John Benington from Warwick Business School and MORI Director Ben Page. Barrow says, "the main purpose of this meeting was to crystallise the main priorities for Localis over the coming 12 months. By this point in time we had already had a number of local authorities join as members and we wanted to meet with them and key experts to agree the way forward."

A second Localis seminar in February looked at planning and the Government's planning green paper. The highlight of the seminar was a presentation by Prof. Harry Dimitriou, Head of the Bartlett School of Planning at UCL. He asked some searching questions of those attending with regard to the development of major infrastructure

projects and the role of local authorities. Both business (CBI) and the environmental lobby (CPRE) were at the meeting whilst James Russell from Coventry City Council and President of the Planning Officers Society gave a clear and articulate view on technical aspects of the paper. There was a clear consensus that the planning function would become increasingly important as land became increasingly scarce and that the role of local authorities in determining development in their own locality would become a growing area of tension in the policy debate about land use.

The third Localis seminar was in March 2002 in the House of Lords. It focused on the fundamental issue of local government finance. Lord Hanningfield says, "even after just a few short months it became clear to us that at the crux of the policy debate was the issue of how local authorities were funded. Local government finance has a clear impact on the role and local democratic accountability of local authorities." Those speaking at the seminar included Mark Lambirth, Director of Local Government Finance at the DTLR, Neil Kingham from the LGA and David Prince, Director of Operations at the Audit Commission. The seminar concluded with a presentation from Dr. Peter Watt from INLOGOV (University of Birmingham) who set out how a new model of funding local government could be drawn up providing more financial autonomy for local authorities. In his presentation he pointed out that changes in the UK tax system, such as the introduction of the self assessment regime, meant that creating a scheme of local income tax was now more achievable than ever before.

Paul Bettison reflecting on the seminars comments, "we have found a broad consensus across officers and members, that more progress must be made in developing ideas for the future of local government." He says, "one of our primary objectives is to generate new ideas, blue skies thinking, and I'm delighted we are starting to get this. It is difficult to remove oneself from day to day priorities but without a long-term view then local government will become simply an administrative outpost of central government. We need to do more to ensure that we keep synthesising new ideas which are both innovative and practical."

Over the coming months Localis will be holding seminars on E-Government, Social

Services and the Environment. Barrow identifies these as "three key areas where local authorities face a considerable challenge." Localis is also forging ahead with its research programme. An academic advisory board has been created and comprises both Prof. Benington and Prof. Sir Michael Lyons, Head of INLOGOV. Further intellectual weight has also been added to Localis with the appointment of Kent County Council Leader Sandy Bruce Lockhart as Chairman of the Localis Policy Board. Three policy research papers have been commissioned and more are expected over the coming months.

Over the course of this year Localis intends to continue building links with the policy and research community both in academia but also increasingly in local authorities. Hanningfield says, "we want to work with all those who are interested in the future of local government and who want to develop new ideas." Whilst the primary Localis objective is to generate new ideas for local government, Colin Barrow the Localis Vice Chairman adds, "we also want to provide a forum for best practice in local government and are looking to work with authorities across the country."

How you can get involved:

- Send details of innovative work your council is doing which can be published as part of the Localis "Case Studies in Innovation"
- Register with Localis if you are an expert in a particular field or if you would like to attend specific Localis events
- Contact Localis if you would be interested in writing a research paper
- Visit the Localis website to find out about events and seminars



(left to right - Paul Bettison, Lord Hanningfield, Colin Barrow)

## The Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector - ARVAC

ARVAC exists to promote effective community action through research. We are interested in research about communities and community organisations. We are an organisation with members and we have also been running an outreach service that has been helping community groups to carry out their own research. Our members receive a quarterly bulletin which includes articles about researching communities as well as information of a more general nature about research about, and of interest to, the voluntary and community sector. We also produce a bi-monthly e-mail update disseminating information about events, training and vacancies that may be of relevance to people interested in community research.

Our information service has developed a database that holds information about research in the voluntary and community field. It includes research about the voluntary sector and also research carried out by the sector on a wide range of topics. Though not exhaustive it is the only existing resource that pulls together this information about this kind of research. We have found that this information is useful to a wide range of people; from academic researchers to community groups who want to carry out their own research and would like to see what other people have done. We are particularly keen to hold examples of local research carried out at community level as these are often difficult for people to get hold of and yet seem to offer the potential to voice the concerns of the 'grassroots'. We are keen to promote this resource as a means by which we can disseminate the findings of research in and on community organisations and make it available to the policy makers who ought to know about it. In the future we hope that it will be available to members on-line though currently they have to contact us to access the database.

ARVAC also aims to encourage networking and collaboration between people working in this field and we have recently run a conference entitled 'Involving Communities in Research – Capacity Building within the Community Sector' which looked at different perspectives on the involvement of local people in research about them and their lives. The conference included perspectives from researchers and from people working directly with various communities as well as contributions from the Community Development Foundation and the Home Office Active Communities Unit. It was a chance for people to come together

and debate the ways in which research can and is being used to help give voice to communities in the UK. The conference also included a workshop discussing the lessons learned by our own Outreach project which has been delivering a capacity building service to small community groups to carry out their own research.

Our Outreach service has worked with small community groups in England, Scotland and Wales helping them to design and develop research projects. Most of them have been interested in conducting needs assessments of their users, mapping the services available in their area or in evaluating their work to date. They have various reasons for carrying out research. These include wanting information to help them to shape current or future services so they are delivering more focused and relevant services to their client group, needing to carry out research to assist them to lobby predominantly local service providers, or carrying out a study to generate information which they can use to apply for funding for service development or for lobbying activities.

The Outreach service has been delivered mostly on a tailor-made one to one basis although we have also been developing training events run in partnership with other Umbrella Organisations. We have worked with a variety of different organisations, from a group who wanted to consult their community in order to obtain funds to develop a new supplementary school, to a group of young people who want to carry out peer research to find out what other local people in their area know and think about drug use.

As a result of our outreach work we have developed a resource pack entitled 'Community Research – Getting Started' which is a practical guide aimed at community groups which takes you through the 'how to' of carrying out a manageable research project with helpful tips and information. It will be available shortly. Membership of ARVAC costs £75 for an organisation and £30 for an individual.

### Contacts for more information:

**Tel: 020 7704 2315**

**Email: [admin@arvac.freemove.co.uk](mailto:admin@arvac.freemove.co.uk)**

**To join the e-mail update send an e-mail to [information@arvac.freemove.co.uk](mailto:information@arvac.freemove.co.uk)**

## Evidence Network

### Making more use of existing research – the role of EvidenceNetwork

**William Solesbury, Associate Director – Networks, ESRC UK Centre for Evidence-based Policy and Practice, Queen Mary, University of London**

£15 billion is spent on R&D in the UK each year – about a third funded from the public purse. Only a small proportion of this research is undertaken or commissioned by local authorities. The big spenders are government departments, research councils, business and the research charities. Most of this research will have little value for local authorities – either because it addresses issues that do not concern them or because it is basic research without immediate application. But it is hard not to believe that, somewhere in those £billions worth of research, there are not data or findings which could be a valuable resource for local authorities.

For the call for more evidence based approaches to policy and practice in public services does not just mean doing yet more primary research. It also means exploiting the existing knowledge base through secondary research – reanalysing existing data, synthesising existing findings, reviewing the conclusions of existing research. By these means a local authority researcher could, for example, find useful evidence

## Evidence Network

on current social or economic trends, or on alternative analyses of policy issues, or comparative benchmarks with other places, or evaluations of the outcome of particular policy initiatives. Existing research might provide the answer to just the questions being asked.

It might or might not, of course. On the face of it there are a lot of potential reasons why not. Relevant research may simply not exist, or – if it exists – it cannot be identified and accessed. Even if located, its quality may be questionable, for example, because its methodological basis is unknown – sample size, questionnaire design, review method. Or there may be a number of projects in the same field with contradictory findings making drawing and presenting conclusions difficult. Tackling these problems takes time and effort. So it can be tempting to start afresh with new research to get results tailor made to your requirements. But there will be circumstances in which recycled research can be the better buy.

The Economic and Social Research Council's EvidenceNetwork initiative is committed to strengthening the contribution of social science research to public policy and management by facilitating the re-use of existing research. You can find out about it on [www.EvidenceNetwork.org](http://www.EvidenceNetwork.org). Organisationally it consists of a network of 7 specialist research centres, which are committed to bringing research in their fields closer to policy and practice, and a central unit at Queen Mary, University of London supporting the whole initiative. Some examples of work on which the network is currently involved include

- indexing, and guiding users in accessing, the wide range of existing databases on research publications – on the above website
- exploring how better evidenced policies for children can be more effectively implemented by care professionals – at the Barnardos/City University/York University What Works for Children? programme
- training for both researchers and practitioners in more rigorous ways of reviewing existing research – under development at the Centre for Evidence-based Policy and Practice, Queen Mary, University of London
- establishing a Neighbourhood Question Bank for use by local surveys – at the Centre for Neighbourhood Research, Universities of Glasgow/Bristol
- publishing reviews of existing research relevant to current policy concerns, often commissioned by clients – at many of the network centres.

These are just examples. Information on the full range of EvidenceNetwork's services, projects, publications, resources and events can be found on the website and through its links. Do make a visit. If interested, you can register as a network Associate and be kept in touch with future developments.

**Contact:** [w.b.solesbury@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:w.b.solesbury@qmul.ac.uk)

## Good Practice Guide

### Getting It Right: Including Disabled People in Communication and Consultation

In conjunction with Kirklees Metropolitan Council, LARIA has published a Good Practice Guide concerning consultation and communication with disabled people. This guide which contains valuable advice for any researcher consulting disabled people is available at a price of £30 (£25 for LARIA Corporate members). It has been written by Philip Cortese and Louisa Nardini from Kirklees Metropolitan Council. The Guide includes sections on models of disability, how to find the target audience, transport, physical access, working with a group, using support workers, using advocates, communicating with deaf and hearing impaired people, communicating with visually impaired and blind people, communicating with people with learning disabilities and with speech impaired people, and good practice in printed, visual and electronic communication.

**If you would like to order a copy of this Guide, please contact Graham Smith, LARIA Administrator ([lariaoffice@aol.com](mailto:lariaoffice@aol.com)).**



## LARIA Annual General Meeting 2002

LARIA's annual general meeting for 2002 was held on 26th March at the University of Nottingham during the annual conference. Over 30 members were present.

### Chair's Report

Proceedings started with a report from LARIA's Chair, Bryan Hall. He looked back not only over the past year, but also over the preceding three years, since he had earlier announced that he would be standing down as Chair once the elections for new Council members had taken place.

He reviewed the major developments which had occurred over that time, particularly the 1999 study on Research Capacity in Local Government, the survey of readers of LariaNews and the transition to a membership organisation. He then went on to express his appreciation for the contribution of many individuals to the work of LARIA before concluding that in his view LARIA is well prepared to move to the next stages of development.

Updated figures were announced in respect of membership. As at 23 March 2002 there were 131 full members; 168 corporate members; and 398 associate members, which meant there were 894 individuals identified as members.

At the end of the Chair's report Bob Cuthill proposed a vote of thanks to Bryan for all the work he had done for LARIA during his time as Chair and before. This was fully endorsed by all those present.

### Financial Position

John Hollis, the Treasurer, circulated provisional details of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2001. These showed a turnover of approximately £62,000 for 2001 with reserves standing at £23,781 at the end of the year. There had been a net surplus on operations of about £1,800 over the year. He drew particular attention to the increase in membership income which had been achieved as a result of the new membership arrangements, but also to the associated increase in administrative costs which this had entailed.

### Affiliation of ALGIS

Bryan Hall reported that the LARIA Council had received an approach from ALGIS (the Affiliation of Local Government Information Specialists) who wished to affiliate with LARIA. A number of discussions had been held and suitable terms and arrangements agreed. On this basis he asked the meeting to confirm the affiliation of ALGIS with LARIA. This was ratified unanimously.

### Election of Officers

There being no other candidates, Bob Cuthill was confirmed as Chair; Dawn Roberts as Vice Chair; John Hollis as Treasurer; and David Karfoot as Secretary. Elections then took place for the two vacant places on Council. There were four candidates and the votes cast were as follows: Bryan Hall 22; David Allen 11; Dylan Griffiths 10; and Clive Lloyd 9. Bryan Hall and David Allen were therefore elected to Council for two years.

Activity Group Chairs were confirmed as follows:

<b>Admin and Policy</b>	<b>Bob Cuthill</b>
<b>Education and Training</b>	<b>Knud Moller</b>
<b>Events</b>	<b>Jill Tuffnell</b>
<b>External Relations</b>	<b>Paul Vittles</b>
<b>LARIA in Scotland</b>	<b>Jack Winchester</b>
<b>Publishing</b>	<b>Rachel Cossey</b>
<b>ALGIS</b>	<b>Jan Matheson</b>

## ALGIS in LARIA

### Affiliation of Local Government Information Specialists Affiliated to LARIA

#### A short introduction by Jan Matheson, Chair ALGIS in LARIA

ALGIS was formed just over ten years ago with the specific aims of improving the effectiveness of information specialists within local government, and raising awareness of the potential and actual benefits of their work. The priority then was to find a 'host' organisation that had aims largely in line with those that ALGIS hoped to address for a widely dispersed yet clearly defined 'community'. Hence, in 1991 ALGIS formally became a special interest group of the Institute of Information Scientists. This arrangement, whilst meeting the constitutional and administrative needs of ALGIS, was brought to a close through the Institute's own merger with the Library Association.

ALGIS was thus faced with a number of challenges. But, as Albert Einstein said, 'In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.' Fortunately, ALGIS was able to locate a willing partner that not only answered the group's immediate constitutional and administrative needs, but also offered the prospect of future development and partnership opportunities. With all the arrangements now in place, ALGIS in LARIA hopes to spark a renaissance of interest in local government research and information issues.

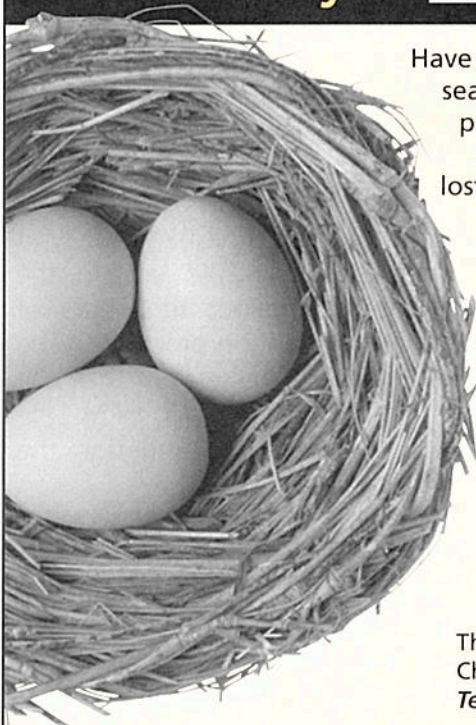
ALGIS in LARIA will continue to organise small-scale events for local government information practitioners but also hopes to work with LARIA in extending the range and reach of the activities that are facilitated. For the first time ALGIS in LARIA has the opportunity of developing its presence on the Web via LARIA's own site. ALGIS in LARIA expects the progress here to be of value not only to its own membership but also to the greater LARIA community.

A commitment to working with LARIA on issues of joint concern underpins ALGIS in LARIA's forward strategy. The group wishes to encourage active participation in the development of its programme of events, publications, seminars etc. It is of course possible that LARIA members have information needs that are not being addressed. ALGIS in LARIA may not have the answers, but we could certainly look at the issue strategically and raise awareness generally.

With our first meeting already behind us, we are looking forward to a fruitful and energetic year ahead. We plan to continue to produce our Newsletter on a quarterly basis and to have a minimum of three small visits or events during the year. The ALGIS in LARIA committee has three new recruits for the current year who will join four long serving members in fleshing out and making a reality of the goals we aim to achieve. A subscription of £11 has been agreed for the current year. So, if you have any issues you would like us to address you are welcome to make them known to us either directly or via the LARIA Council.

Jan Matheson (ALGIS in LARIA Chair) c/o Strategy & Performance, Tower Hamlets London Borough Council, Town Hall, 5 Clove Crescent, London E14 2BG e-mail [jan.matheson@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:jan.matheson@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

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## New Award for Excellence in Research

You may remember from the last edition that LARIA's governing body, the Council, has decided to launch an award for excellence in local government research. The award will be given to an authority, whereas it is anticipated that the beneficiary will be the employee or employees who have initiated and have had primary responsibility for carrying out the research. The award, for which the exact form has yet to be determined, will be presented at the annual conference and may be a free place at the conference or even a cash prize. There will be an opportunity to present the research at the conference or at another appropriate event.

In evaluating the research the judges will have regard to things like relevance to policy-making, innovation, appropriateness of methodology and other matters. Now the really important issue is that we rely on YOU, the members of LARIA and readers of LariaNews to nominate research that you consider to fulfil the criteria and give us good reasons why you think it deserves an award. If you know of an outstanding piece of research by a local authority, or just wish to know more about the scheme, please contact Gerallt Evan-Hughes at BMG(Gerallte@bostock.co.uk).

**So far we have received submissions from the London Borough of Islington and East Riding of Yorkshire, and we have been promised some more. So come on, get your submissions into us now and you'll receive a FREE copy of the LARIA Education and Training guide!**

## Local Authority R&I News

### Barrow Borough Council

BIN (Barrow Information Network) is a project funded by the Heart of Barrow Building Bridges, a Single Regeneration Bid. The project was set up in December 2000 and has been running for over a year now. Its aim is to collect information from members and store this information spatially. This can then be used by organisations for the production of strategies, monitoring policies, providing evidence for bids and co-ordination of resources. We currently have 24 members of the network.

Contact: R. Gawlik Information Officer 01229 894921  
rgawlik@barrowbc.gov.uk

### Bedfordshire County Council

The Information Management and Research Group was formed nearly two years ago by bringing together various teams throughout the Authority. During that time there have been various appointments and the Group now has its full complement of staff. Main responsibilities are as follows: Group Head, Lyn Stokes (01234 228272); Education, Jash Singh (01234 228380); Social Services, John Eyre (01234 228576);

Demographics, Census, Disadvantage, Helen Wiltshire (01234 228527); Consultation, Elizabeth Belcher (01234 228044).

### Cheshire County Council

#### Cheshire Community Survey 2002

The Cheshire Partnership comprises around 67 local organisations across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The main purpose of this partnership is the production and implementation of the Community Strategy for Cheshire. The Strategy has been developed based on analysis of community issues identified first in the 1995 Cheshire Quality of Life Survey, then updated by the 2000 version, the analysis of community information, the views of partners and a series of consultation processes. The Cheshire Community Survey was undertaken after the strategy had been launched and will allow the Cheshire Partnership to begin to monitor the implementation of this strategy.

The main aim of the survey was to collect information and views on a range of topics within the Community Strategy. These topics included pollution, transport, healthy living, community safety, lifelong learning, community involvement and cultural experiences.

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

Analysis at this time can be used to benchmark views and allow comparisons to be made in future surveys.

Over 1000 home interviews were held with members of Cheshire's Voice, the Citizens' Panel of Cheshire County Council, during February and March 2002. Results will be available in June 2002.

**Contact: Jean Stelfox**  
**Email: [Stelfoxj@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:Stelfoxj@cheshire.gov.uk)**  
**Tel: (01244 602027)**

### Walking Strategy - Consultation

In the Local Transport Plan, Cheshire County Council states that it will develop a Walking Strategy to promote walking as a sustainable mode of transport. This will be achieved through 10 objectives, covering issues such as raising pedestrian priority, developing a network of routes with improved facilities, improving safety, emphasising maintenance, partnership working, integrating with other transport modes, promoting rural issues and informing and educating on walking issues.

Consultation was required to find out how the public would like to see these aims addressed. The results will be used to inform an action plan for delivering the Walking Strategy.

The consultation took the form of four discussion groups, facilitated by R&I staff. Each group contained around a dozen members of Cheshire's Voice, our Citizens' Panel. The groups had a mixture of ages, were gender balanced and included some people with mobility problems as well as some parents of very young children.

Two of the groups contained people from rural areas, with two other groups consisting of people from urban areas. Each group talked about:

- Crossings
- Making short journeys - i.e. the factors in deciding whether to make a journey on foot
- Traffic calming
- By-passes
- Pavements
- Footpaths and cycleways (urban and rural)

The groups also discussed two case studies, one urban and one rural. Both were based upon areas in Cheshire where the Walking Strategy would inform

specific decisions. Having been introduced to (and encouraged to comment upon) various measures of facilitating the co-existence of traffic and pedestrians, participants were then asked to propose solutions to the case studies that may or may include some of the measures discussed. Moreover, they were asked to comment upon the potential effectiveness of these various measures in addressing these case studies.

The outcome went beyond an understanding of what the public thought of various traffic management tools and schemes. It enabled us to understand the habits and preferences of pedestrians and how their behaviour should be considered when making changes that affect pedestrians. In particular, it shows that pedestrians are a stubborn bunch and will deviate very little from the shortest route to use a crossing on a busy road!

The next steps (!) are to ensure that these findings are taken into account when the Walking Strategy is implemented. The research will contribute to the development of the case studies used, and the overall messages will be used in developing an action plan for the Strategy, which will be developed throughout 2002.

**Contact: Mark Smith**  
**Email: [Smithma@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:Smithma@cheshire.gov.uk)**  
**Tel: (01244 602864)**

### City Of Sunderland



Over the last few months, the City of Sunderland Council has been creating Community Spirit, our new citizens' panel. We have based our panel on good practice from other authorities plus some ideas of our own, and in this article aim to share some of our experiences and what we have learnt.

### Background

The City of Sunderland Council recognises the importance of delivering the community consultation agenda, as a key step towards achieving Best Value,

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

service improvement and democratic renewal. Our Corporate Community Consultation Framework sets out key objectives for engaging with the local community and emphasises the need to co-ordinate our consultation programme both within the Council and also with partners. It emphasises the importance of maintaining an ongoing dialogue with consultees and the removal of potential barriers.

A number of new systems and structures have been implemented to deliver the Framework, including a corporate working group, an intranet based co-ordination database, training and guidance. The co-ordination database plays a central role by promoting information sharing, guiding people through our 'quality checklist' as they complete a consultation record and calculating key consultation performance indicators at both Council and Departmental levels.

### Creating 'Community Spirit'

A key element of our approach to community consultation is our new citizens' panel, 'Community Spirit'. We took professional advice on the name and branding of the panel so that these represented our core values - a commitment to listening, responding and providing mechanisms for communities to influence real change and improvement. We also wanted to emphasise to potential members that Community Spirit is about working together to improve the City of Sunderland, not just feeding back on Council services, and we see the panel playing a key role for our Local Strategic Partnership.

We took care to build statistical reliability into our panel design so that any quantitative work carried out with the panel will be statistically valid, and selected 20,000 names from the electoral register using stratified random sampling. Our own experience of conducting citywide surveys has shown us variations in response rates across our six area regeneration frameworks and we used this knowledge to calculate different sampling intervals in each area with a view to obtaining a geographically representative set of responses.

We felt it critically important to collect the right information from panel members at the outset so that future consultation exercises can be appropriately targeted and we will be able to take account of members' needs. Our membership form therefore

gathers information in the following areas:

- Contact details (including email address)
- What services do members use – a list of services, reflecting the activities of our partners as well as the Council, is provided
- What would members like to be consulted about – our list here is based on the core themes of our Community Strategy.
- How can we help members to take part – here we ask questions about how members would like to complete questionnaires (e.g. post, phone, internet), what arrangements may assist members to take part in surveys (e.g. large print, information on audio tape, language translation) and consultation meetings (e.g. disabled access, best time of day, childcare facilities, help with transport).
- Members information – this section contains standard demographic classification questions so that we can later test whether the panel is representative (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity and nationality, disability, working status and whether the member is a Council employee or Councillor)

Invitations to become a member of Community Spirit were sent through the post to all names in our sample and took the form of an invitation card outlining information about the panel, including instructions in the main community languages, with a tear off membership form. We offered invitees the option of returning their form via a freepost address, joining via our freephone helpline or sending an email containing their responses.

Approximately 900 members joined as a result of this initial mailing and we took a different approach to our reminder letters to try and attract different types of respondents. This time, we included a letter from the Chief Executive encouraging people to join and emphasising our key messages, and included the option to complete the form on the Council's website. This, combined with increased promotional activity, led to a further 700 people joining the panel, 5% of these joining online.

Next steps for the panel include providing members with a welcome pack containing key contact information, more details about how the panel will work and other interesting background facts. This is just the beginning, however, and the real challenges

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

will lie in the way we engage each panel member through regular communication and well designed consultation exercises. From the Council and its partners' perspective, the panel will provide a key opportunity over the coming years to identify priorities, evaluate performance and consult over decisions.



### Key Lessons

#### What worked well:

- Our reminder letter combined with the promotional campaign worked well. PR activities included radio interviews, media articles covering issues such as the first panel member to join, a young persons' perspective and a press call, as well as wide circulation of posters in local shop windows and other prominent places.
- Providing a freephone helpline was positive for enabling people to join verbally but also useful during the reminder stage for those wanting to let us know they didn't want to join, so that their details could be removed from the database.
- Organising a press call gave us the opportunity to meet and greet 'live' members and appreciate our responsibility to the community
- Having an email address for people to respond to and making the membership form available online.

#### Lessons we have learnt:

- Ensure that participants are given enough information to overcome possible barriers to participation and fears regarding the perceived level of commitment e.g. having to attend meetings

- Developing a contingency plan can help cater for a lower than expected response rate
- Good planning is crucial!

#### What's important ... CUSTOMER CARE !!

- Considering barriers to participation for completing questionnaires and attending meetings and consulting relevant bodies for advice well in advance e.g. RNIB
- Responding promptly to messages on the answer machine
- Monitoring replies with a database to ensure that people don't get reminders inappropriately
- Doing what we say we'll do - keeping in touch, keeping respondents interested
- Not losing sight of our aims and objectives

**Contact: Marina Dodgson, Research and Business Manager, Best Value Services, Civic Centre, Sunderland, SR2 7DN, telephone 0191 553 1514, fax 0191 553 1472, email [marina.dodgson@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:marina.dodgson@sunderland.gov.uk)**

### Dudley Borough Council

Community Choice is the Dudley Borough citizens' panel, which has been operating since 1998. It is a joint project run by Dudley MBC and Dudley Health Authority and is managed by the Chief Executive's Department of the Council. It offers residents of the Borough a chance to say how they feel about life in the Borough and issues that affect them.

The panel has recently been reviewed to address diminishing response rates and maintain its representativeness. 10,000 households were chosen randomly and invited to participate in the panel. Of those who express an interest, 2,500 people will be selected to reflect the demographic and geographical make-up of the Borough.

Panel members will be sent a postal questionnaire every 3 to 4 months, which they will complete and return to the Council for statistical analysis. During 2002, surveys are planned to be sent out in April, July and October. The results of the surveys will be presented to senior management teams and will be available for research purposes to Dudley MBC and Dudley Health Authority.

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

The panel has two main aims:

- By improving our understanding of what the public wants, we can deliver services that offer best value - responsive to local needs at a cost that is reasonable.
- We can plan for the future by improving the extent of public influence on decisions that are made about issues affecting them.

This year the surveys will cover a wide range of issues to include lifelong learning, social welfare legal advice, access to DMBC using new technology, NHS Direct and more.

The review of the citizens' panel has led to planned improvements for 2002, which include the following:

- 1 in 3 households in the Borough's most deprived areas have been targeted to assist in our plans to reduce inequalities between these neighbourhoods and the rest of the Borough.
- We want to hear the views of young people in the Borough and have invited 16 and 17 year-olds to take part in a young persons' panel.
- A newsletter will be sent to those who participate in our surveys to explain improvements that have been made resulting from their expressed views.
- A prize draw will be offered to panel members to encourage a better response rate.

**Contact: Sam Partridge, Strategic Research and Information Team, Chief Executive's Department on 01384 814175.**

### Fife Council

The Policy team in the Council's Economic Development Service is developing an extensive range of local economic information and analysis delivered through a local partnership web-site.

All existing publications, including monthly reports on unemployment rates (down to Council ward levels); a

statistical Fife Economic Profile; a quarterly Labour Market Bulletin (based on a company survey); and annual Economic Review and Visitor Attraction Monitor are now downloadable from the web-site.

In recent months further analysis, available only on-line, has been added. This includes a mid-year update analysis of the Fife economy and headline local economic indicators. It is planned that this range of indicators will be further developed in order to inform policy making in all the main issue areas for economic development, including business performance, labour market and economic inclusion.

**For more information refer to:**

**[www.fifedirect.org.uk/business/fifeeconomy](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/business/fifeeconomy)**

**or contact Mike Hill at [mike.hill@fife.gov.uk](mailto:mike.hill@fife.gov.uk)**

### Manchester City Council

#### Housing Information Unit

Manchester City Council has recently launched a brand new Housing Information Unit. The team are responsible for research across the housing service, rent initiatives, IT development and performance evaluation. Currently assisting with Manchester Housing's work into Market Monitoring, Neighbourhood Warden Schemes, tenant and staff consultation, sheltered housing, and customer care, the team have several research projects planned over the next year.

Black and Minority Ethnic needs in both private and social housing are an area of growing expertise in the Unit. Research into rehousing, access to housing grants, medical housing needs, complaints monitoring and legal action will make an important contribution to Manchester's 3-year BME Housing Strategy plan. Integral to this is the ongoing development of Manchester Housing's ethnic monitoring systems.

Recent initiatives from rent experts in the team include the development of Manchester's new on-line rent and benefits calculator. The team is also responsible for ensuring good practice in the rents service with provision of statistical information, development of mainframe IT systems, staff training in rent matters, and internal audits of rent collection and arrears recovery.

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

Public Service Agreements are a challenge for all Local Authorities. The team is responding by joining up different IT systems and developing GIS mapping systems to ensure that strategy decisions are based on comprehensive information about current stock condition, voids and grant expenditure across tenures. Neighbourhood Renewal is a high priority: a new networked computer system will monitor private sector enforcement activity, contractor performance, Environmental and Renewal Schemes, and fast-track renovation grants.

Future plans for the Housing Information Unit include research into the housing experiences of young people, homelessness prevention, and attitudes to rent arrears. Publication of research findings about BME Housing needs is planned in October this year.

**Contact: Mark Slater, Principal Team Leader  
Manchester Housing, Manchester City Council.  
Tel: 0161 234 4770  
m.slater@notes.manchester.gov.uk**

### Rent and Benefit Queries Made Easy

Manchester City Council has launched a new on-line service to help council tenants and prospective tenants work out their entitlement to benefits and rent allowances in a simple way. The unique computer package offers a user-friendly, step-by-step route through the maze of benefit rules. It can be accessed by home computer, at the local library, community centre or at an internet cafe - wherever there is internet access.

Internet access is being developed in many public buildings in the city. The City Council is also half-way through a project supplying free computer packages and training to all 130 residents' groups.

The rent and benefit calculator covers almost all combinations of individual and family circumstances with fast and reliable results. No training or benefits knowledge is needed - applicants simply answer a series of plain-language questions about their household, health, income and expenditure. Press return, and the calculator does the rest.

The results show the rent an applicant would have to pay, plus entitlement to Housing Benefit, Working Families Tax Credit and Council Tax Benefit. It even spots if an applicant should be getting Income Support, too.

An inquiry can be stopped and saved part-way through and then continued later. An adviser can also help an applicant remotely by getting a simultaneous view of the inquiry after being supplied with a password.

At the moment, the calculator is only available to council tenants but will soon be expanded to include private tenants and housing association tenants. The new system can also be easily adapted for other local authorities and landlords.

The new service is a key strand in the City Council's drive towards e-government targets. It is the result of a year-long partnership between housing staff and local web-development company, Team Netsol. The product has been exhaustively tested by experienced housing advisers before going live.

**The calculator can be accessed by logging on to:  
[www.manchester.gov.uk/housing/rent](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/housing/rent)**

**Contact: Mark Slater, Principal Team Leader  
Manchester Housing, on 0161-234-4770.  
m.slater@notes.manchester.gov.uk**

### Merseyside Information Service (MIS)

A joint research and information resource led by Wirral Council and co-funded by the other Merseyside authorities has been transferred to management and engineering consultancy Mott MacDonald Limited.

Merseyside Information Service (MIS) was originally set up in 1986 on the abolition of Merseyside County Council. It has provided, amongst other things, consultation services, support for local transport planning, analysis of census and crime statistics, employment data and development of software applications such as GIS.

The transfer to Mott MacDonald Limited is a result of an invitation to tender placed last for the delivery of these services. Mott MacDonald were the successful bidder and the new partnership will provide, from its existing offices in Liverpool, an exciting new development providing continuity of quality services, business development opportunities as well as significant cost savings to each of the partner organisations.

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

Based in Croyden, Mott MacDonald has offices located across the UK and abroad. The new partnership will provide a range of county-wide information services to the five Merseyside districts, and to Halton BC, Merseyside Police and Merseytravel, initially for a five year term.

### Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

#### New Corporate Policy Team

The new team in the Chief Executive's Division is currently involved in:-

- Undertaking a review of the Community Plan published in April 2000. This will involve assessing progress against 2000/2001 objectives and preparing an updated draft Community Strategy for wider consultation.
- Policy Mapping - An in-depth review of existing policies to assess areas of potential overlap and duplication. The output of this work will be a policy map detailing relationships to act as a tool in service business planning.
- Policy development Support - Where service areas need to invest resources in developing new resources or amending existing ones, the team can provide objective advice formed by awareness of best practice.

#### Area Regeneration Partnerships

Rhondda Cynon Taff's Regeneration Strategy identifies 12 Economic Renewal Areas within the County Borough. These areas recognise there are certain common characteristics that help to define them, in terms of economic, social and environmental needs which make sense to local people in terms of a shared identity with the locality.

Area Regeneration Partnerships are to be established for each of these areas. These will take regeneration and renewal of local towns and villages as their main focus and will create Area Strategies and Action Plans for improving the economic, social and environmental well being of the area as a whole.

**For more information contact the Corporate Policy Team.**

**Chris Ashman (Corporate Policy Co-ordinator)**  
**01443 424064**

**Chris Davies (Research and Development Officer)** 01443 424036

### Norfolk County Council

#### 2001 Census – corporate web-based project

The Demographic Services section is carrying out a short project to investigate and cost the development and management of a corporate web-based browser with mapping capabilities for the internal dissemination of 2001 Census data on the County Council intranet. We have discussed a high level product specification with a number of potential suppliers, to obtain expressions of interest and indicative costs for designing and supplying the products required. We are aiming for a cost-effective solution to meeting the priority business needs of our principal internal census users. It seems probable that we will find a supplier interested in taking on the project. This phase of the project will culminate in June with a proposal to secure corporate funding for the recommended solution. Assuming this is achieved, the next phase will aim to have the agreed solution provided and installed by February 2003 in time to handle the first release of Standard Area Statistics.

**Contact: Ian Coldicott**  
**ian.coldicott.pt@norfolk.gov.uk 01603 222732**

#### Demographic Services Web Site

Our Demographic Services web site went live on 14 April. It includes the latest news on the 2001 Census; population estimates (County, District, ward, parish, settlement, postcode sector and urban area figures); 1991 Census area profiles (County, Districts) to view or download; and all Demographic Information Notes published from 1997 to view or download. Selected Norfolk boundary maps are available, including ward, parish and parliamentary constituency boundaries. We aim to make the site as useful as possible by including links to important demographic sites, a frequently asked questions feature and regular updates. Demographic Information Notes will be available on the site at the same time as they are produced in paper form. We hope as many users as possible will choose to acquire their demographic information direct from the web site.

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

### Visit

[http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Demography/demographic\\_home.htm](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Demography/demographic_home.htm)

**Contact: Claire Sullivan**

**claire.sullivan.pt@norfolk.gov.uk 01603 223819**

### Norfolk Data Observatory

The Norfolk Data Observatory is an internet-based browser with mapping capabilities being developed by partner organisations within the 'Shaping the Future Norfolk Research Network Group'. Partners include Norfolk Learning and Skills Council, Norfolk County Council, District Councils, Further & Higher Education Colleges, Employment Service, Norfolk Learning Partnership and Norfolk Careers Services. The aim of the Norfolk Data Observatory is to provide increased accessibility to a wide range of socio-economic information for the analysis of learning and skills requirements.

The Observatory is undergoing Phase 3 of its development with consultants Geowise Geographic Solutions, who also undertook development of the mapping capabilities within the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) Regional Observatory. A regional seminar was recently held to explore opportunities for co-ordination and consistent protocols for all County initiatives within the Eastern Region for the development of local web-based data observatories. These include initiatives on regional and local health observatories. EEDA are hosting further meetings of County representatives to take these ideas forward.

**Contact: Wendy Pontin**

**wendy.pontin.pt@norfolk.gov.uk 01603 222737**

### Wakefield City Council

Wakefield "Action for Health" is currently co-ordinating a research project for Wakefield's Local Strategic Partnership looking at deprivation in Wakefield. Stage one of the research is being undertaken by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at Birmingham University. It is concerned with analysing data sets (mainly relating to the Government's Renewal Floor Targets), where possible at the enumeration district level. This stage will show

different dimensions of deprivation at the local level, and provide an initial commentary on neighbourhoods of particular concern.

Stage two is being undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. This stage will endeavour to get behind the headline figures generated by stage one and piece together an understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of local stakeholders and residents to deprivation. Stage two will comprise a district-wide household survey, an in-depth study in selected areas, focus groups and stakeholder interviews with service providers.

**Contact: Tony Todd, Research Officer, Action for Health. Tel: 01977 727174 email: [ttodd@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:ttodd@wakefield.gov.uk)**

### Worcestershire County Council

It's an exciting time for the R&I Unit at Worcestershire County Council. With the imminent public re-launch of the JUIS website (Joined Up Information System [www.juis.org.uk](http://www.juis.org.uk)), and the Unit's relocation from Environmental Services into the Chief Executive's department, it's a busy time too!

As of April 1st, R&I will form part of Policy and Review headed by the recently appointed Diane Tilley. The move will improve links with central policy and the community and corporate planning processes.

### Joined Up Information System (JUIS)

Principal Research & Partnership Officer David Onions leads the Unit's partnership support programme, with Hannah Shrimpton focussing on the development of the Joined Up Information System.

Following the successful Partnership Development Fund application to the Government Office for the West Midlands late in 2001 (as referred to in the last edition), the R&I Unit is now well on the way towards finalising the second phase of development of the JUIS website.

Building on the initial site, launched about 12 months ago, the most advanced Geographical Information

## Local Authority R&I News cont...

System (Mapping software) will continue to be used to provide partner agencies (including the police, schools and district councils) and now the general public with access to Ordnance Survey basemaps overlayed with a range of social, economic and deprivation information "at the touch of a button". This should assist partners with policy and strategy development and monitoring, and help the public with a myriad of tasks.

A significant development for JUIS in the medium to long-term will be to assist the six district community safety partnerships in Worcestershire with the monitoring and evaluation of their crime reduction strategies, which are due to be published this month.

**Contact:** [donions@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:donions@worcestershire.gov.uk)  
**Tel:** 01905 766712



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## LARIA People

### Worcestershire County Council

In the last year we have seen the appointment of four new Research Officers, all recent graduates in geography, mathematics, psychology and economics. Our enthusiastic and knowledgeable team now stands at 10, which includes two valuable support staff.

Principal Research Analyst **Anna Sansom** and Research Officer **Mike Rice** lead population and housing research activities as well as managing OS data and analysing BVPI and ACPI data. Anna heads survey design and analysis work for the council which includes managing the council's long standing Citizens' Panel.

Contact [asansom@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:asansom@worcestershire.gov.uk)  
Tel 01905 766715



Back row (l to r): Alison Rogers, Emily White, Janine Billinge, Mike Rice, Val Walsh  
Front row (l to r): David Onions, Anna Sansom, Clive Lloyd (Unit Manager), Hannah Shrimpton, Gareth Wrench

### MVA

**Clare Lowe** has been promoted to Managing Consultant. She has more than sixteen years' experience in policy evaluation, public consultation and attitude surveys and has been responsible for regeneration studies, crime and community safety surveys and Local Transport Plan consultations for local authorities throughout the country. She is a Full Member of the Market Research Society and Member of the Social Research Association.

**Kate Jones** has been appointed Principal Consultant. A statistician with over fifteen years of experience she joined MVA in 1987. She is highly skilled in the application of special techniques such as ServQual and Stated Preference. She is currently managing a child pedestrian training scheme for DTLR and a concessionary travel survey on buses in London.

**Carry Stephenson** has been promoted to Principal Consultant. She has managed a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative research projects for both the private and public sector, including community safety strategies and surveys of leisure and tourism. Her recent projects include a 2 1/2 year study for the DTLR determining reasons for the high child pedestrian accident rate in Great Britain.

**Imogen Stenhouse** becomes a Senior Consultant. She has wide experience in studies related to tourism, leisure, culture and transport and has managed community projects for Heathrow Airport and for Southampton City Council and a survey of rural services for the Countryside Agency.

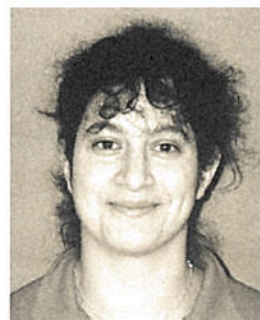
**Jan Cassels** has been promoted to Consultant. An experienced social researcher, she has been responsible for a number of key public consultation exercises, including the Central Scotland Transport Corridor Studies and North Derbyshire Citizens' Panel.



Clare Lowe



Kate Jones



Carry Stephenson



Imogen Stenhouse



Jan Cassels

## Manchester City Council

**Rachel Cossey**, formerly of Manchester Geomatics, joined the Housing Strategy Division of Manchester City Council as a Research Officer in April.



## The Market Research Group (MRG)

**Jim Reed** has worked in the research industry for six years, and for MRG for four years. In the past he has worked in the areas of tourism, heritage and healthcare, but has recently been promoted to Research Manager for MRG's Local Government division. This includes responsibility for all the Best Value, Citizens' Panel and ad hoc research projects conducted on behalf of MRG's clients. He is a member of the MRS and CIM, and is also soon to start a part time MA in marketing, having studied this to degree level.

## NEWS from Elsewhere

### Department of Health

#### PSS User Experience Surveys - Consultation

##### Background

"Modernising Social Services", published in 1998, committed that "from April 2000, all authorities will carry out local user satisfaction surveys". To ensure the surveys would be nationally comparable the Department of Health published guidance in July 2000: "PSS user experience survey: What needs doing for 2000-2001". This was updated, and "What needs doing for 2001-2002" was published in October 2001.

In November 2000 the Department commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Social Policy research Unit (SPRU) to design a practical model survey tool for all service users (not just new users as with the current survey), children, and carers, plus guidance on its use and reaching services users. These proposals were put out to consultation in Spring 2002.

##### Consultation

The Department of Health consultation paper invited views on:

- the new survey methodology for the surveys carried out by councils of social services users;
- when each of the proposed surveys should be carried out;
- what questions should be collected centrally;
- which of these should be specified as performance indicators.

The consultation document gave details of eight surveys, covering varying categories of service user and their carers. although the Department was not proposing to run all eight surveys every year. Two of the surveys (of elderly home care users and elderly people in residential care) were to take place in Year 1 (2002-3). These would provide data for

- BV 182 - users who said they were satisfied with the help they received from social services
- BV 190 - users who said that if they asked for changes to services those changes were made.

##### Outcomes

Responses to the consultation were coordinated by the Social Services Research Group (SSRG), and have had considerable influence. Already the Department has streamlined the original proposals in various respects.

Even while the consultation was under way, the decision was taken to withdraw two of the surveys (those of chronically ill and disabled children and their parents), in recognition of the fact that local sample sizes would be too small.

It has now also been decided that there will only be one survey in 2002-3, of elderly home care users, instead of two. The list of compulsory questions to be asked has also been reduced, from fourteen to four, and this survey will be repeated every three years instead of annually. In response to SSRG concerns, the draft survey guidance for 2002-3 emphasises the importance of the emerging Research Governance Framework, and will be supplemented by ethical guidelines on the web later in the summer.

The final shape of the full programme of surveys beyond 2002-3 is still awaited, but the impact of the consultation process so far has been most encouraging.

For background information about the consultation, and SSRG's input to it, visit the new SSRG website at - <http://www.ssrq.org.uk/briefings/usersur/usersur.htm>

**David Henderson, Tel 01743 253786, email [dave.henderson@shropshire-cc.gov.uk](mailto:dave.henderson@shropshire-cc.gov.uk)**

## NEWS from Elsewhere cont...

### Association for Public Service Excellence

A report just published by the Association for Public Service Excellence examines how the inspection of Best Value has evolved differently and at different rates throughout the UK. It examines these differences and comments on the strengths and weaknesses.



### INSPECTING BEST VALUE



In summary, 5 key areas were highlighted as causes of concern to local authorities.

#### - Cost and Bureaucracy

The cost of inspection was highlighted with many considering that the costs outweigh the potential savings whilst others questioned whether the inspection process provided 'value for money' in view of the time and resources spent on it and suggested some form of cost benefit analysis be carried out. Overall most respondents agreed with the principles of inspection if its purpose is to improve services but disagreed with the process seen as an expensive bureaucracy being borne by taxpayers at the expense of services.

#### - Preconceived agenda

Concerns were voiced that some inspectors appear to have adopted a narrow approach to Best Value. A number of criticisms were made of the inspectorate's perceived assumption that externalisation can be used as a short cut to Best Value. Whilst the bringing in of private sector expertise may help in some circumstances it cannot be seen as the only route to improvement. If services are poor what is needed is thoughtful and thorough review and not an assumption that externalisation is automatically the answer. To be successful and to be viewed as a body that is there to help, it is essential that the Inspection Service be seen to

be constructive and truly free of any preconceptions about the best way to provide services.

#### - Consistency of scoring

Although commenting on their own service experiences, there were common remarks about the consistency of inspections carried out within a single authority especially in areas such as levels of technical expertise and attitude. Additionally, a number felt that when compared with neighbouring authorities the inspectors had made incorrect assumptions.

#### - Effect on morale

In the opinion of the majority of respondents, there had been far too much criticism which had alienated staff from the Best Value process and had a serious effect on morale. This was an area that could have been handled differently if more constructive language had been used.

#### - Process involved

Many commented that although good in theory the process in practice is too standardised and bureaucratic. In particular the use of templates does not allow for regional and/or service variations. Overall the service would benefit from being streamlined and better timed in relation to service reviews. The delay in producing reports was also perceived as harmful to the potential positive impact of the experience. Many respondents commented that although it had been a valuable learning experience, they had not learnt anything new from the inspection. Others felt that even the learning experience was limited, arguing that future inspections may benefit but would services improve as a result?

For further information or comments contact [jmarsh@apse.org.uk](mailto:jmarsh@apse.org.uk)

### Centre for Management and Policy Studies (CMPS)

CMPS has launched an on-line resource to help improve the way public policy is shaped and delivered.

'Policy Hub' has been developed by CMPS to support evidence-based policy making. It carries examples of successful policy making and delivery, and supports the exchange of information and ideas through innovative 'knowledge pools', designed to break down organisational and geographical barriers and improve collaborative working within and beyond government. Initial knowledge pools cover 'strategic futures', 'excellence in policy making', and 'regional initiatives'.

Policy Hub also carries an electronic version of the 'International Comparisons Toolkit', a new CMPS initiative designed to help officials learn valuable lessons from their counterparts in other countries. This includes guidance on principles and methods, case studies, a directory of information sources, and news of training events, and it is hoped that it will foster a more outward-looking approach to policy making.

Policy Hub can be found at [www.cmeps.gov.uk/policyhub](http://www.cmeps.gov.uk/policyhub).

## NEWS from Elsewhere cont...

### BRE Centre for Resource Management

#### Developing A Construction And Demolition Waste Guidance Note For Local Authorities

A key element of sustainable construction is the need to adopt a more strategic approach to the way industry deals with its material waste. In order to facilitate a cultural change on- and off-site, it will be necessary to integrate the various interests of the construction, demolition, haulage and waste management sectors. This will require a strategic alliance where the costs and rewards are shared and where continual improvement is addressed. Local Authorities will play a crucial role in this alliance, given that they are one of the largest clients of the construction industry. However with little information and guidance on how to bring about this change, there is an urgent need to develop a common auditing and performance measurement system that all LA's can use. It is for this reason that the Movement for Innovation (M4I) is funding this investigation.

James Hurley, Senior Consultant in the BRE Centre for Resource Management, is currently under secondment to M4I to develop a construction and demolition waste guidance note (C&DWGN) for Local Authorities. This project is being funded by DTI as part of the process of implementing the improvements promoted by Rethinking Construction. It was initiated by DTI to provide BRE personnel to work closely with those Teams involved with the key initiatives (M4I, Housing Forum, CBPP, LGTF) in promoting new and emerging best practice, technologies, processes and management strategies which can be disseminated through demonstration and tool-kits into the construction industry.

An initial questionnaire survey of 30 LA's suggest that there is a need and desire for such document so long as it is practicable, adaptable, affordable, and adds value to the procurement process. This is crucial to the success of the C&DWGN, which is being fashioned around the redeveloped SMARTStart web-based auditing tool. This will also provide LA's with the opportunity to measure the performance of the contractor, an essential requirement under best value and continual improvement. It will also appeal to the contractor as it requires little time and effort to set targets and monitor progress.

The first phase of the secondment was to scope out the development of the C&DWGN. This included 7 Interviews with City Councils, County Councils and the Corporation of London. Each interview utilised a template C&DWGN sheet and each authority was asked the same set of questions. The results of these interviews included in this report are being adopted by the second phase of the secondment, which is to pilot the C&DWGN system with LA's. Initial results of phase 1 show that authorities are very supportive given the nature and benefits of the system to them i.e. the system provides a performance measure of waste that fits with their best value assessments. The authorities welcome the idea of a self-generating system, and recognise the added value of adopting an existing auditing tool - SMARTStart. Eventually the adopted system will include a tracking system of reuse & recycling.

The system in operation would provide a web homepage for each LA so that data from each project would be easily entered and visible to the project team. Information gathering at site level could be paper based but it would be preferable to use electronic information gathering systems. Yet to achieve a suitable and workable C&DWGN, it is important that representatives of LA's who are responsible for procurement and assessing tenders offer pilot studies to the project. James would like to hear from LA representatives who would like to be involved at this pilot stage.

If you would like to assist then contact James Hurley on 01923-664675 or at [hurleyj@bre.co.uk](mailto:hurleyj@bre.co.uk).

#### Best Practice of Construction, Refurbishment and Demolition Waste Entering Civic Amenity Sites

The Centre for Resource Management at BRE will be investigating the amounts, types and management routes of construction, refurbishment and demolition (CRD) waste entering Civic Amenity (CA) sites from a national, regional and local perspective. Case studies will be carried out in a number of waste disposal authority areas.

If you have any examples of Best Practice or would like to be involved with the project then please contact Katherine Adams on 01923 664478 or email [adamsk@bre.co.uk](mailto:adamsk@bre.co.uk)

### LGIU/TEN/DHN

The Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) and its sister organisations, The Education Network (TEN) and the Democratic Health Network (DHN) are all involved in research. For further information:

LGIU [www.lgiu.gov.uk](http://www.lgiu.gov.uk) contact Ines Newman, Head of Policy, 020 7554 2839

TEN [www.ten.info](http://www.ten.info) contact Martin Rogers, Ten co-ordinator 020 7554 2812

DHN [www.dhn.org.uk](http://www.dhn.org.uk) contact Fiona Campbell, DHN co-ordinator 020 7554 2836

#### Local Government Information Unit

##### Some recent publications:

1. Accountable Partners? A guide to Housing Associations By Nigel Long
2. A Democratic Future edited by Hilary Kitchen
3. Open to Scrutiny? by Jo Dungey
4. Parish and Town Councils....the quiet revolution by Nigel Long
5. Local Authorities and Companies; Partnership working by Ramani Chelliah

## NEWS from Elsewhere cont...

6. Public Private Partnership-opening the public private debate by Janet Sillett
7. Area Committees and Neighbourhood Management: Increasing democratic participation and social inclusion by Helen Sullivan et al. (with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation)
8. Developing Local Strategies for Social Inclusion by Ines Newman and Mike Geddes
9. Best Value and Social Inclusion by Mike Geddes and Dave Spencer
10. Monitoring and Evaluating Social Exclusion by Amanda Root
11. Best Value and Social Services by Alyson Morley

### Forthcoming Publications:

The report of the Commission on Local Governance. The LGIU has initiated and managed an independent commission looking at the local government White Paper which was published in December 2001 and identifying a long term action plan to strengthen local democracy and encourage democratic innovation. The Commission's final report will be launched at a conference on June 13 2002

Social inclusion - How can local authorities make a difference? By Mike Geddes and Ines Newman. This report brings together three years work by the Local Authorities and Social Exclusion (LASE) network on benchmarking social inclusion. The LASE network is a research and action learning network of 26 local authorities that has been supported by the Local Government Centre at Warwick University and the LGIU. Reports 7-10 above also are LASE reports. This report will be launched at a dissemination conference on 9 July 2002.

PPP factsheets. A series of 12 factsheets on Public Private Partnerships developed with the support of APSE and public sector trade unions. These will start to go on the LGIU web site in June/July

The Effective Executive by Nigel Long. This will draw on good practice case studies to identify what makes for an effective executive in the new democratic structures. Publication date September 2002

### Other areas of work

Regional governance: We have produced 2 papers on regional governance, one outlining what we would like to see in the forthcoming White Paper and one looking at the regional dimension of 5 key functions, planning, housing, waste, education and health. We are planning more work on the process of regionalisation and regional chambers when there are the first elected regional assemblies once the White Paper is published.

We will be doing more work on the scrutiny role of local authorities, looking at what can be learnt from other institutions and user involvement.

We have a learning network with 25 local authorities on community planning. We are producing a series of web publications from this work.

Comprehensive performance assessment. We are just starting some research in this area.

### Democratic Health Network

#### Some recent publications:

Health and the new political structures in local government by Fiona Campbell. The publication is free and can be obtained by emailing [amudat.adesina@lgiu.org.uk](mailto:amudat.adesina@lgiu.org.uk)

Local Voices in Primary Care: a survey of councillor lay members on primary care groups and trusts by Alyson Morley

Partnership Arrangements under the Health Act 1999: issues for councillors, non-executive directors and lay members of PCGs and PCTs By Fiona Campbell

A series of Papers written by Fiona Campbell and Alyson Morley for the DHN and Kings Fund. Two are published and four are forthcoming

The primary care system - Up-to-date information on PCTs, their role, governance and funding

Local government and health -Partnership working to improve health and reduce inequalities

#### Forthcoming Publications:

Four further publications with the Kings Fund due out May- July 2002

Public participation in health - From consultation to evolving policies jointly with patients and communities

Non-statutory partnerships - The role of the voluntary and private sectors in health

Democratic renewal - Accountability, legitimacy and self-determination in health and health services

Glossary - Frequently used terms in health and local government

Health Scrutiny ToolKit - Due out September 2002

### Other areas of work

Further work is currently being done on care trusts and on health inequalities.

## NEWS from Elsewhere cont...

### The Education Network

#### Some recent publications:

Focus on Education and social inclusion - a series of 6 booklets to support the essential integration of education and social inclusion policies and practice

Adding Value to School Improvement – By Simon Bird

The foundations of high standards- early years and childcare provision – By Pam Baldwin

What makes a good LEA – edited by Martin Rogers  
The Government Inspectors Call - by Simon Bird

New Democratic Structures – Education By Kathy Baker

#### Forthcoming Publications:

Governance matters – by Simon Bird due out Sept 2002

Education Scrutiny – Due out early autumn 2002

#### Other areas of work

LEA support for school improvement. The Education Network is working through a number of specific themes, generally with an input from Ofsted, to increase support for LEAs' work in this area.

### Community Data Services

Funding support from the Housing Corporation and the Improvement and Development Agency has allowed new business start up Community Data Services to establish a web based data service. The new service provides time series data for key indicators in farming and other business activity, benefits take up, crime, education and training, employment, health and housing. Population estimates and projections and likely gross household income data is also supplied.

All data, excepting that on income, is sourced from official sources and is available from the CDS website in graph, table, and Excel spreadsheet formats. All formats and data definition details can be downloaded to users' own computers. Where available, data is backdated to 1995 and is supplied to the most recent data release.

Data trends covering all regions and local authority areas in England are available free. The data supplied is likely to be of interest to researchers engaged especially in rural and urban regeneration initiatives. Community Data Services also offers a subscription service to supply more detailed data trends for the same indicators for sub district geographies which users define by ward and full post code aggregations. These small area statistics are likely to be of interest to area based regeneration and community planning partnerships.

The all England data base can be accessed at [www.comdata.co.uk](http://www.comdata.co.uk). For further details about the service contact Lesley Andrews or Dick Drinkrow on 01672 540180 or email [cds.admin@virgin.net](mailto:cds.admin@virgin.net).

### ESRC CENTRE FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RESEARCH – Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow and School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol.

The Centre for Neighbourhood Research (CNR) is one of seven topic-specific nodes established in 2001 as part of the UK's Economic and Social Research Council Evidence Network. It is a collaboration between researchers at the Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow and the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. The co-directors are Professors Ade Kearns (Glasgow) and Ray Forrest (Bristol). Other core members include Gary Bridge, Emma Holland, Patricia Kennett, Alex Marsh and Paul Burton (Bristol) and Rowland Atkinson, Alison Parkes, Annette Hastings, Ken Gibb and Keith Kintrea (Glasgow).

The CNR aims to complement the considerable amount of policy attention currently focused on urban neighbourhoods and neighbourhood revitalisation by providing a distinctive and critical academic commentary in this policy area and a research resource for a wide range of users. The ESRC has provided initial funding for three years. Work in this period will concentrate on identifying, evaluating and synthesising existing social science research on social, economic and political processes relevant to neighbourhood policies. This will involve a wide range of activities including seminars on research methodologies; conferences on substantive themes; the production of academic papers in the form of systematic and narrative reviews; and the identification of gaps in the existing knowledge base. As the Centre develops it will also pursue its own programme of primary research and extend the comparative scope of its activities. International links are already established with associates in the USA, Hong Kong, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands. CNR Papers are available online. These currently include: The Determinants of Neighbourhood Satisfaction; Neighbourhood in a High Rise, High Density City; Residential Perceptions and Housing Mobility in Scotland.

#### ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research



A member of the ESRC's  
Network for Evidence-Based  
Policy & Practice

### ESRC CENTRE FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RESEARCH LAUNCH THE NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD QUESTION BANK

One of the strategic aims of the new ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research (CNR), which exists as part of the ESRC Evidence Network, was to develop a web-based resource for use by social researchers, professionals and practitioners involved in the evaluation of neighbourhood interventions. As a result the Neighbourhood Question Bank (NQB) was launched by the CNR in

## NEWS from Elsewhere cont...

December 2001. The Neighbourhood Question Bank displays various neighbourhood-related questions that have been asked in major national and sub national social surveys since 1990. Already there are 250 separate records on the database, covering 10 major national surveys and this is set to grow during the course of the Centre's development. Recent additions to the database include further analysis of the Survey of English Housing, the General Household Survey and the Scottish House Condition Survey. The most recent update will include further analysis of the British Crime Survey. The NQB has already received positive feedback from practitioners in the area and it is a popular resource on the CNR's new website.

The Neighbourhood Question Bank complements the type of information available through the CASS Question Bank and the UK ESRC Data Archive. Users are able to determine their own search criteria and search specific or multiple surveys by keyword, date and geographical coverage online. The results then display the methodology related to the selected neighbourhood questions, the most recent findings, how frequently the question is asked and useful links to other online survey resources. The NQB is a useful source for gathering research evidence for writing or review purposes and to identify suitable neighbourhood related questions, with national comparable results for use in local surveys. Some of the key areas that are already covered in the NQB are factors such as social capital, crime and disorder, neighbourhood perceptions, and neighbourhood satisfaction. The Neighbourhood Question Bank will be continually updated by the Centre to cover new surveys and data sets as they are produced. The Neighbourhood Question Bank is accessible via the Centre's website, which is located at <http://www.neighbourhoodcentre.org.uk>

### Promoting Change Through Research - Policy Research Institute

Local authorities, in common with other public agencies, are under increasing pressure to provide an 'evidence base' to justify policies, programme and projects. Research is, potentially, an important part of that evidence base. But what impact does research actually have on policy and practice in local government? This was the key question that was addressed through a study commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in partnership with the LGA and COSLA and undertaken by a team of researchers at the Policy Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University over the past year.

The study built on earlier work on research in local government by looking at:

- The sources of research used by local authorities
- The ways in which research outputs are accessed and move about within local authorities
- How research is utilised at strategic and operational levels
- The role of research in encouraging policy and practice change
- The processes through which research impact occurs.

The research involved a survey of local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland followed by in-depth case studies of six contrasting authorities.

Key findings and issues to emerge from the research include:

- While there is evidence that research is regarded as increasingly important this is not always reflected in the priority actually given to research within local authorities.
- The way in which the research function is organised within local government is highly variable. Researchers typically work reactively in response to demands made of them rather than to a planned programme of work.
- Accessing research reports and research outputs produced by external organisations is typically the responsibility of individual officers resulting in considerable duplication of effort and under-utilisation of the research resources that exist.
- Research undertaken in-house or commissioned by the authority in response to a specific issue is most likely to be utilised although the impact on policy is often relatively small.
- Policy officers and members often lack the skills to interpret, analyse and apply research findings to their own authority.

The overall conclusion of the study was that much research undertaken by, for, or of relevance to, local authorities is under-utilised. While there is widespread recognition that research should be important, in reality systems and practice are not geared up to make full use of the research resources that exist. The report concludes with a series of action points to improve the impact of research on policy and practice, aimed primarily at local authorities and the producers of research.

The research report, *Promoting Change through Research*, will be published by Joseph Rowntree Foundation later this year followed by a series of dissemination events. For further information contact: Professor Janie Percy-Smith, Policy Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University, email: [j.p.smith@lmu.ac.uk](mailto:j.p.smith@lmu.ac.uk).

### Institute of Public Sector Management

The Institute of Public Sector Management (in conjunction with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders – NACRO – and the Public Administration Research Centre) is aiming to run two streams of workshops between October 2002 and June 2003. Both streams will disseminate information about entrepreneurial activities in the field of Community Safety and Crime Reduction. The first stream relates to Social Entrepreneurs – individuals and small groups acting outwith established organisations – and the second to Civic (Corporate) Entrepreneurs – individuals and teams acting within established organisations.

The seminars will be held at a variety of Regional venues and it is intended to cover a range of topics. Those proposed so far include Gun Crime, Car Crime, Security of Public Transport, Neighbourhood Wardens, etc.

What we're looking for at present are nominations for schemes, projects etc. which could be used as case studies around which a workshop could be built. We would very much welcome suggestions from LARIA members, which should be addressed to Dave Jackson at IPSM ([info@ipsm.org.uk](mailto:info@ipsm.org.uk))

## Guide to Contributors

The newsletter editorial group positively encourages and welcomes all relevant contributions – articles, news items, reports about the work of Research and Intelligence units and the work of other organisations/agencies involved in research and policy analysis activities. Details of relevant courses, conferences and services will also be published.

The aim is to make the newsletter of interest and benefit to as wide a range of research practitioners as possible, from those more involved in complex statistical analysis to those more involved in social qualitative research. It is important, therefore, that all contributions are as user-friendly and jargon-free as possible. Explanation of any acronyms used is particularly important. All researchers will then be able to understand and appreciate the work being undertaken in different research fields.

We also seek to make the newsletter visually appealing by incorporating cartoons, graphics, pictures, etc. into the text. So please consider these when submitting your contribution.

Provision of copy by email (email address on back page) to the editor in Microsoft Word or compatible documents is preferable, although disks may also be sent to the editor (address on back page).

## Next Issue

**October 2002**

**Copy should be sent to the LariaNews editor (address on back page) to arrive by 19th July 2002.**

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily of their employing organisation or of LARIA. Readers are advised to ascertain for themselves that courses, conferences or services advertised are appropriate for their needs.

## Noticeboard

### CCSR

CCSR's new, enhanced Short Course Programme provides a range of courses in research design and analysis, all with a practical emphasis and applied focus. The programme is structured so that participants may either select an individual course which meets their needs, or build up their expertise through a portfolio of courses.

The courses are available to those from outside Manchester University, to University staff and to graduate students who may take the courses as part of their research training programme. The courses on data analysis are all PC-based and provide participants with the opportunity to complete detailed practical exercises on their own PC. Staff from CCSR are available to provide help and advice throughout the practical sessions and each course will be supported by full documentation.

LARIA readers may be particularly interested in the course on Demographic Forecasting with POPGROUP which will run on 13/14 November 2002 (course organiser - Ludi Simpson, course tutor - John Andelin).

This course trains participants in using the Excel-based POPGROUP software now used by many local authorities in the UK. POPGROUP uses standard government forecasting methods. The focus will be on methods and data for forecasts of District populations. Forecasts for ethnic groups and for electoral wards

will be discussed and participants may use the practicals to pursue those interests.

**For further information see our web page:**  
**<http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/courses/short2002.htm>**  
**or**

**contact Nasira Asghar ([nasira.asghar@man.ac.uk](mailto:nasira.asghar@man.ac.uk)),**  
**phone 0161 275 4736.**

### BSPS CONFERENCE 2002

**Castle Leazes Hall, University of Newcastle. 9/10/11**  
**September 2002**

#### **Plenary theme: Population, Mobility and Migration**

The plenary sessions will be on the theme of Population, Mobility and Migration, with international speakers. The intention is to give not only an appreciation of the population aspects of mobility and migration, but also an insight into their determinants and effects.

Invited plenary speakers are:

- Michel Poulain, Catholic University of Louvain
- Jeanette Schoorl, The Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute

## Noticeboard cont...

- Tony Champion, University of Newcastle
- Hania Zlotnik, Population Division, United Nations.

### Strands for Contributed Papers:

1. **Methods and Models.** Papers on any aspects of population studies that have a focus on the development or application of mathematical models, quantitative methods or similar techniques.
2. **Mortality and Health.** Mortality and health in developed and/or developing countries, excluding reproductive health.
3. **Reproductive Health.** Papers dealing with reproductive health, including, amongst others, issues of contraception, STDs, HIV/AIDS, MCH, abortion, infertility, from a wide range of geographic contexts are called for. This strand is wide-ranging, including: all aspects (inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes) of reproductive health as a service, determinants and outcomes of reproductive health, the needs of population sub-groups.
4. **Ageing and older people.** Papers on the circumstances of older people, including living arrangements, proximity and frequency of contact with kin, provision and receipt of care, social relationships, socio-economic, health and disability status, demographic forces affecting population ageing and societal responses, impact of early life events on later life outcomes.
5. **Population Decline.** Population decline, as well as population ageing, is on the agenda for almost all populations in the developed world in the 21st century. Papers which address the process of population decline and its demographic, economic, political, social and environmental consequences over all ranges of space and time. This includes historical and ethnographic examples and from village depopulation to the relative position of a diminished Europe in a global context.
6. **Local Planning.** Including those focussing on the need and use of demographic statistics and analysis to support local planning and policy issues. Papers which consider the contribution of demographic analysis and modelling to developing local policy issues; the use of administrative data to inform local policy analysis and the development of methodological approaches to planning and policy issues.
7. **Families and households.** Papers on family and household formation, transition and composition (and factors, both demographic and non-demographic, which influence or are associated with these changes and states), attitudes about, trends in, and histories of families, households and their members, and other analyses whose predominant subject of study is family or household based, either theoretical or practical.
8. **Fertility.** Analysis of the determinants of fertility (both proximate and remote), quantum and tempo of fertility, fertility in the context of families and kinship, international and intranational fertility comparisons, causes and consequences of lowest low fertility and fertility projections.
9. **Historical Demography.** This strand will focus primarily on the issue of infant mortality.

For more details, see <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/bsps>

General queries: **BSPS Secretariat, G204, London School of Economics, London WC2A 2AE.** [pic@lse.ac.uk](mailto:pic@lse.ac.uk) phone 020 7955 7666

## Caption Competition

Unfortunately none of you felt inspired enough by the last caption competition photograph and consequently there are no winning entries to report.

This edition's caption competition shows Roger Sykes from the LGA at this year's conference ....

If you have any suggestions for future caption competitions post them to Rachel Cossey at the address on the back page or email them to: [r.cossey@notes.manchester.gov.uk](mailto:r.cossey@notes.manchester.gov.uk)



**LARIA** was established in 1974 to promote the role and practice of research within the field of local government and provide a supportive network for those conducting or commissioning research.

There are three forms of LARIA membership - full membership and associate membership for individuals and corporate membership for organisations. LARIA is managed by a Council, mainly elected by the full members.

LARIA is registered as Specially Authorised Society under the Friendly Societies Act 1974. Its activities are of interest to all people working on Research and Intelligence activities for Local Authorities or allied fields, and depend upon active participation of such people to promote, maintain and develop professional practices.

LARIA in Scotland (LiS) has its own steering group, whose chair is also on the LARIA Council. It plans workshops, and other events, and is developing networking at a Scottish level.

ALGIS in LARIA is an autonomous group affiliated to LARIA. It represents the interests and concerns of information specialists within local government. The group organises small events and visits, publishes a quarterly Newsletter and undertakes any other activities designed to raise awareness of the potential and actual benefits of the work of information specialists within local government.

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#### **ADVERTISING**

LARIA welcomes copy for the Newsletter from advertisers, subject to the material not being in conflict with the interests of LARIA's members. Laria may sell its mailing list to other organisations. Please let the administrator know if you do not wish to be included in any list sold.

#### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

LARIA wishes to encourage participation in its Steering Group, its events and its other activities. It aims to remove barriers to participation associated with race, gender, disability and sexuality. It expects delegates and contributors to help in achieving this aim.