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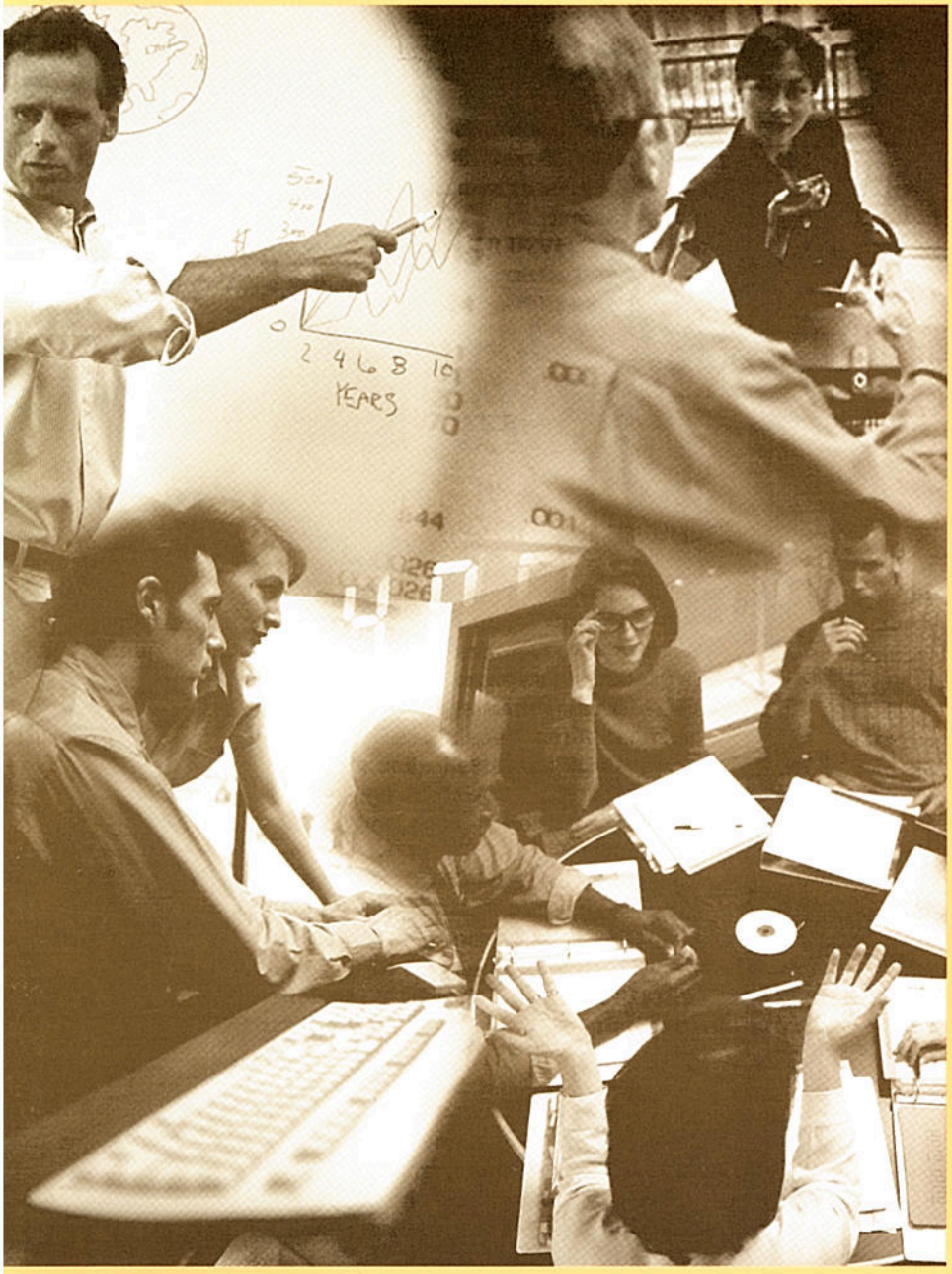
lariaNews



LOCAL AUTHORITIES RESEARCH + INTELLIGENCE ASSOCIATION

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This edition was produced by
Rachel Cossey, Debbie Wilson, Dawn Price, Graham Smith, John Wicks, Richard Stevens, Anne Cunningham.

From the Chair - David Karfoot

I wrote last time that LARIA was in excellent health as an organisation and that proposals were actively being pursued to develop the Association further. Well, I am very pleased to be able to announce that one of those ideas has already come to fruition with the appointment of Bob Cuthill to the new post of Promotion Co-ordinator. Bob will be working in a paid capacity for LARIA for an average of about two days a week. Bob's appointment took effect on 1st July and fills a big gap in LARIA's capabilities - one which has been apparent for some time. His primary role will be to undertake the wider promotion of LARIA to local government researchers, local and central government, the academic sector and the media. You can find his contact details on the back page.

Another development, intended to ensure that LARIA becomes even more focused on meeting the needs of its members, sees the replacement of the old Education and Training Activity Group by a new Member Development Activity Group. While the new Member Development Activity Group will continue to take responsibility for some of the areas looked after by the old group, its creation is intended to lead to an increased emphasis on the provision of services for members. More information about the Activity Group may be found elsewhere in this issue of LariaNews in the article written by the Group's chair, Ann Atkinson of Newcastle City Council.

The Audit Commission has been looking at what lessons can be learned from the experience to date of Comprehensive Performance Assessment. In its second briefing note on this topic (the full text of which is on its web site), there is one paragraph (11) likely to be of particular interest to researchers. I think it worth repeating in full here:

"More successful councils have good local intelligence about their area and communities. This can come from statistics (such as census data) or information from partners (such as patterns of illness tracked by the health authority). While some of these factors may be present in the fair, weak and poor councils these authorities have problems in making this information work for them. For example, one council had good information gathering but was unable to translate this into real priorities. The pattern is that fair, weak and poor councils have underdeveloped consultation mechanisms and do not collect intelligence corporately to assist in prioritization".

The key message we need to take from this is, I think, that good systems of data collection and information gathering, necessary as they are, are not enough on their own. It is only when effective use is made of what we have assembled that excellence is possible. As researchers it is all too easy to get bogged down in questions of methodology and regard the compilation of information and statistics as an end in itself. However, such work is pointless unless it influences real decision-making.

So, the positive aspect of this is that the importance of research to local authorities is clearly recognized. This Audit Commission briefing note provides good ammunition for those wanting to make the case for adequately resourced and effectively undertaken research within their authorities. However, this must go hand in hand with efforts to make sure that good use is made of the products of our research activity. As I said in the last issue of LariaNews, researchers need to "go beyond dissemination".

If any of you, our readership, have experience of ensuring that intelligence is used "corporately to assist in prioritization" in a positive, effective way, rather than it being left sitting on the sidelines, we would love to hear from you with a view to passing on your knowledge and advice through the pages of LariaNews. Please get in touch with Anne Cunningham, the editor, if you feel you could contribute.

Research in Norfolk - not just somewhere up the A11!

By Ian Coldicott

The fifth largest shire county in England, Norfolk has a growing population of around 800,000 with three major urban centres accounting for 300,000 people but a significant largely rural area besides. Although some might see Norfolk as a remote place somewhere up the A11 there is some interesting research going on at the County Council – here are some examples.

Norfolk County Strategic Partnership

Norfolk Ambition
The Community Strategy for Norfolk for 2003-23, known as Norfolk Ambition, is being developed by the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership around nine themes expressing desired outcomes for 2023, and by March 2004 there will be an action plan to take this forward.

Norfolk Knowledge Network
One of the key actions outlined in Norfolk Ambition is the development of Norfolk Knowledge Network (N3). This will require consultation with all partners to assess existing and planned data sharing and knowledge management initiatives, assessment of how best the partners can share knowledge and experience, and preparing a specification for what N3 should aim to achieve. Linking projects through N3 will add value and reduce potential duplication, whilst also identifying and plugging any gaps. The strategy will meet the needs for different levels of information sharing.

A project to co-ordinate all current partnership work on knowledge management under the N3 umbrella is being undertaken through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Partnership Work on Knowledge Management

These are the key areas in terms of facilitating joint working and sharing statistical information:

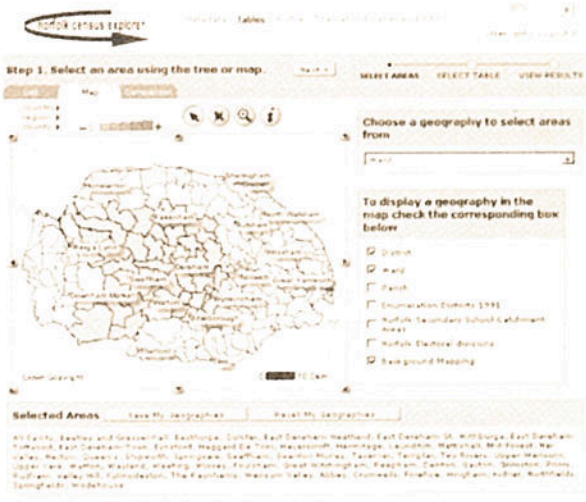
Shaping the Future and associated web sites: an economic development partnership for Norfolk. The sites provide ways for partner organisations to search, access and share labour market information and reports. For example, LMINET (www.lminet.info) is a database of labour market information relating to social inclusion, education, training and employment, maintained by Norfolk Careers Services.

Norfolk Connect e-Government Partnership: a wide range of central government and EU-funded projects about access to joined up information and services for the public, and sharing information between public sector bodies. The first phase partners have been the local authorities, but this will broaden out this year to other public and voluntary sector bodies. For example, the **Norfolk Portal** project is working to develop an easy way for the public to access information from us and all seven District Councils in Norfolk directly, regardless of which web site they start from.

The Norfolk Data Observatory (www.norfolkdata.net): this project has been widely featured in previous issues. This partner-led web-based facility allows free mapping and downloads of statistical information. The Observatory works closely with many other knowledge management initiatives featured here.

Norfolk Census Explorer: an intranet web browser with mapping capabilities developed for the dissemination of 2001 Census data customised for Norfolk, and being extended to allow internet access to Districts and other local partners and public agencies.

Demographic Services web site (www.norfolk.gov.uk/demography): part of the Council's web site providing a wide range of demographic information (in particular, results of the 2001 Census), plus publications and maps to view and download.



Screenshot example of the Norfolk Census Explorer

Communication and Consultation

Citizens' Panel
We are the lead partner in one of the largest citizens' panels in the UK. The Panel is run in partnership with 15 other local organisations, including Police, the Learning and Skills Council, District and Borough Councils and Primary Care Trusts. There are around 7,000 people in the Panel, which gives 1,000 in each district or borough council area.

The Panel is extensively used to draw off sub-sets for qualitative research. Over 50% of our Panel have internet access at home and we are exploring the potential of emailing out the questionnaires.

Research in Norfolk - not just somewhere up the A11! cont...

BVPI Survey
The success of the Panel Partnership has encouraged the District and Borough Councils and ourselves to work together on the BVPI surveys. By working as a consortium we have managed to get competitive prices for the survey work that we have tendered out, co-ordinated our PR campaigns and shared the costs of, for example, translations.

Public Involvement Group
Each department in the County Council is responsible for its own consultation and public involvement. We have a cross-departmental group to share good practice and help avoid duplication across departments. A public involvement skills audit led to staff training sessions and a draft policy on paying expenses for public involvement. E-government consultations have been carried out with staff, the public, potential partners and stakeholders - to get a 360 degree view of our customer interactions to inform the contact strategy, examine the role of market towns in service delivery and establish a benchmark for the way we deliver services and look at options for change.

Norfolk Public Involvement Forum
The Forum shares experiences and expertise in organisations across Norfolk. We arranged sessions on consulting hard to reach groups, such as travellers and people whose first language is not English, and developed a consultation and communications plan for the County Community Strategy.

Norfolk @ Your Service – Mystery Shopping
We are changing the way that local people access information about our services, by launching a new customer service centre and face-to-face customer information centres. As well as conducting a straightforward mystery shopping exercise, we are working with different groups of users to see how they experience our services. We have, for example, recruited people with visual and hearing impairments, people with learning difficulties and people whose first language is not English. This way, other aspects of how we provide information, such as fax and textphone can be explored, as can our provisions for interpretation and translations.

Size Matters
We have recently consulted on how many county councillors the authority should have, as part of the preliminary stages of Periodic Electoral Review of county electoral boundaries. We invited a cross-section of Norfolk people from the Panel to attend a discussion day facilitated by MORI. It was especially helpful to hear young people's views on why they thought younger people were not becoming involved in local politics and were not standing as county councillors.

Transport and Rural Issues

Freight Quality Partnership
We conducted surveys in part of inner Norwich to investigate the role a Freight Quality Partnership might play in resolving transport problems in the area. The results suggested that a partnership, based around a voluntary traffic ban, could provide an effective alternative to pedestrianisation.

Rural Transport
In Breckland District, voluntary and statutory organisations and the Rural Transport Partnership have collaborated to research the viability of a transport brokerage scheme. A pilot scheme under the Health Improvement Programme aims to research the co-ordination of health, social services and voluntary sector transport, focusing initially on community car and accessible minibus schemes.

Analysis of passenger transport needs in Great Yarmouth Borough, partly based on 2001 Census proxy indicators of mobility handicap, has pointed to various areas of unmet transport need. Potential solutions include establishing an operators' forum, employing a development worker, and establishing a single point for information and booking of door-to-door services and services to community groups.

Population Sparsity and the Personal Social Services
Research we commissioned on behalf of the County Councils Network in 1998 highlighted the difficulties faced by authorities in rural areas in providing the same range and standard of services as in urban areas. As a result the Government included a sparsity element in the Personal Social Services SSA. Further work showed that the sparsity factor alone did not fully reflect the complexities of population distribution and the travel-related costs of providing domiciliary care to the elderly, resulting in the Government increasing the sparsity element from 0.5% to 1.0%. We will continue to argue for a more adequate reflection of sparsity in the grant formulas.

Other Areas of Research

Millennium Library Impact Study
Shortly after the new Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library opened in 2001 (replacing the city library destroyed by fire in 1994) we asked the Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield to carry out research. This was funded by Resource (The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries) and included case studies of the impact of the new libraries in Norwich and Stratford (Newham). It assessed the local impact of a new library, both as a physical space and in terms of its role in the community.

Research in Norfolk - not just somewhere up the A11! cont...

It was found that the impact of a new library could be enhanced through appropriate planning, partnering with complementary organisations to augment the beneficial effects of the service, and applying good management practice to the entire library service including the building itself. Good design was seen to have the added benefit of creating valuable social space for community benefit.

The Forum (Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library)

An Open Policy Excellence Network
A feasibility study is under way for a joined-up, corporate approach to keeping departments abreast of issues that may affect the Authority. An Open Policy Excellence Network could promote cross-cutting issues throughout the organisation, provide a range of added-value services for users and ensure that the current ad-hoc arrangements are organised more efficiently. It could also provide data reservoirs for "hot topic" issues, and provide a "think tank" or scrutiny function allowing wider staff input to the creativity phase of major projects.

Effective CDRP Strategies for 2002/05
Norfolk Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) used a novel problem-solving approach to undertake their 2001/02 crime audits. The concept of the problem analysis triangle (constructed from the premise that to have a crime there must be an offender, a victim and a location) was used to produce pertinent data that would allow the CDRPs to focus on the real crime problems. The CDRPs drilled down into the data to produce their full local audits. Consultation with particular emphasis on contacting hard-to-reach groups has allowed real targets to be set for each priority crime theme.

The problem analysis triangle also provides an effective and structured approach for evidence-based crime prevention, and will help to ensure effective targeting of resources.

Youth Offender Geographic Profiles
In its 2002-05 strategy the Norwich CDRP identified the need to work closely with our Youth Offending Team to develop a preventive strategy and carry out research to further the evidence base for targeted community safety interventions. The Team has recently completed research for the CDRP using thematic mapping to present ward-level youth offender profiles for Norwich, with criminogenic analysis classified by age, gender and ethnicity, reasons why young people offend, recidivism analysis and correlation with deprivation. The team is presently involved with NACRO in a retrospective study of persistent young offenders.

Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) in the Fire Service
Norfolk Fire Service is working on identifying communities at high risk, as part of producing the draft IRMP for consultation. This will help to refocus the service on fire risk to life as opposed to risk to property. Historic incident data are being analysed in conjunction with demographic data to assess where people at greatest risk live and work, and then to judge how appropriately resources are matched to these areas. 2001 Census data are being used to build ward level risk profiles. Local information will inform decisions on how to provide extra resources, for example community fire safety initiatives or working with other agencies to increase the level of fire protection within buildings.

Identification, Referral and Tracking (IRT)
The Norfolk IRT project aims to improve information sharing across multiple agencies (including health, education, social services and the voluntary sector) to prevent young people slipping into social exclusion. This is a high profile project, with £100,000 of funding from the Children and Young People's Unit of DfES, aimed at supporting and improving multi-agency join-up and service delivery in a preventive rather than a reactive way.

The initial priorities will be to identify current practice and processes for information sharing and referral across all relevant agencies, to improve communication between education, social care and health, and to improve services to children identified by one or more agencies as being in need of additional support.

As these examples suggest, we're doing a great deal in Norfolk to show that we're far from remote in our thinking about research!

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2001 Census Update

New Estimates

The release of revised mid-2001 population estimates on 26 September has revealed cracks in the veneer of both the Census enumeration and the One Number Census (ONC) process. The estimates have now been decoupled from the ONC to the extent of 193 thousand people in England & Wales - of which 120 thousand are in Greater London.

There are small adjustments for unprocessed Census forms in 16 authorities, revision of the Census base between September 2002 and February 2003, and some armed forces double counting. However the largest increase is due to males aged 25-34 who were missed by the Census, probably due to having no clear and regular usual residence. These men were allocated to 68 local authorities on the basis of three variables – 'lone parent households', 'other non-family households' and 'born outside the EU'. Therefore it would appear that they were mostly missed from within households. Is this an admission of 'within household dependence'?

For further discussion of the ONC process, readers should refer to the review into 'The 2001 One Number Census and its quality assurance', led by Ludi Simpson and published by the LGA (see following article).

Census Outputs

ONS has now delivered most Census Area Statistics on a region-by-region basis. However, as with the Standard Tables, there are still delays in the migration and workplace tables, as well as the Univariate Tables relating to dwellings, population density and the same origin/destination topics. These omissions are due to be rectified with delivery at the same time as Part II of the National Report in October. Special Migration and Special Workplace Statistics were scheduled for November, but due to problems with both of them that date has slipped uncertainly into 2004.

ONS have started to deliver Commissioned Output, starting with requests from ODPM that relate to work on local government finance. A number of tables have been prepared to assist the production of *Multi-source Topic Reports*. Copies will be available to all; see the online *Output Prospectus* for details. For other users the service will not come on stream until 'later in 2003'. However, ONS will accept orders as soon as customers have developed their requirements. It is advisable to be completely specific in each request, indicating the precise table layout (ie categorise each variable) and the geography. All requests will need to pass disclosure control procedures. Consult the ONS Census website for the latest details: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/op15.asp. Eileen Howes at GLA is designing a set of tables and would welcome other users contacting her in order to consolidate requests and hence share costs on common requirements. She is designing her tables as SASPAC Framework Files to ensure there are no doubts about the specifics. Contact Eileen at eileen.howes@london.gov.uk or on 020 7983 4657.

Meetings

ONS held a Census Strategic Development Workshop on 23 October followed by a joint meeting of all five Advisory Groups. The morning event presented the findings of ONS research to date and the recommendations for the way forward in relation to the 2011 Census and for an Integrated Population Statistics System. Both discussion documents are on the ONS website with the request that comments reach ONS by 28 November.

The joint ONS/RSS Census Conference '*Census 2001 and Beyond: Learning from the past and building for the future*' is being held at Congress Centre, Great Russell Street, London WCI on 11-12 November. Please refer to: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/events/rss_ons_conf/default.asp for full details and booking arrangements.

Scotland

As far as Scotland is concerned, GROS have now made all the Census data, down to Output Area geography, available on a series of six CDs, except for the workplace and migration tables that are dependent on data for the whole of Great Britain being available. The SCROL website is also up and running on www.scrol.gov.uk, although there is less data available through that than appears on the CDs.

GROS are making a up list of 'Known Errors' on their website which flags up some of the little idiosyncrasies of the system; these may be viewed at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/grosweb/grosweb.nsf/pages/census-known-errors. If you are using Scottish data is it well worth referring to it as it is updated regularly as users inform them of any problems.

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One Number Census - the LGA review

Introduction – Ludi Simpson

The census has such an impact on development and implementation of social policy that its users rightly question its quality in many different ways. LARIA's newsletter and training days play a big role in encouraging best practice. The Local Government Association (LGA) review focused on concerns expressed about just one aspect of the census: the population statistics for local authorities that were derived with the methods of a One Number Census (ONC).

Census published results better in 2001 than in 1991

The 2001 Census is *not* like 1991, when local authorities had to fight for a reasoned distribution around the country of a national missing million. In winning that dispute, local authorities influenced ONS to devise a new strategy to cope with undercount in 2001. The output from 2001 is again unlike 1991, when the published census counts didn't include full adjustments for students and under-enumeration: users had to reduce the impact on their census analyses by adjusting census figures themselves, or more usually trust that the impact of using unadjusted census data was ignorable. In 2001, both these aspects have been taken care of by the ONC: those estimated as missed by the census have been distributed by sensible means agreed by local authorities ahead of their use; records to represent the estimated number of missed people have been added to all census counts, again using sensible methods agreed by local authorities ahead of their use; and students are counted in the census at their term-time address, as in population estimates. These are advances which I think most census users welcome.

The 2001 Census *is* like 1991 in two other ways. First, there is a suspicion that the national estimate of those missed by the census is an under-estimate, and in particular that some hundreds of thousands of young men may be excluded. Second, some local authorities have expressed strong concerns about the accuracy of their 2001 population, after comparison with local administrative data.

Another comparison is worth noting: there are now many more administrative datasets available to compare with the census results. But our ability to use them properly to evaluate the census has not improved.

LGA commissions review

Early in 2003, there was a lack of persuasive information from ONS to explain their rejection both of administrative data and of the previous population estimates as quality checks on the census. The agreed methods had been supplemented in unexpected ways. It was in this context that the LGA commissioned myself, with the support of Dave King and John Hobcraft, "to review the key concerns about the One Number Census. This will involve analysing the concerns expressed by local authorities; assessing the methodology used; and identifying further data analysis which may help quantify any bias in population estimates." This was to be a quick review, complete before Easter, which would encourage ONS to publish more relevant information. A final draft report was seen by ONS before Easter, and the report itself was published in September.

The executive summary below gives the main messages. The 'advice to local authorities' is the final part of the report. There is much more detail between these two in the full report (downloadable from http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/onenumbercensus.pdf) which explains and reviews each step of the ONC method. It did not attempt to evaluate the population estimate of any specific authority – that will be a disappointment to some.

All in all, my feeling is that there are too many unspoken stories about the conduct of the 2001 Census. Improvements to the census-based 2001 populations announced in September 2003 (as I am writing) may be followed by further changes as more evidence comes to light. For example we await ONS evaluations of the Manchester and Westminster census address lists. John Munson of Hull Council has expressed concern in the current issue of BURISA (no. 157) at the deficit of young unemployed in some areas. Unfortunately this means that the census published populations are again adrift from the full mid-year population. We need ONS to help quantify the quality of census data, particularly for small areas. Serious evaluation of the fieldwork would avoid gross errors in the post-back method for the future. The timely release of data in usable format will be a key issue of review. Above all, the information flow to census users can be improved now.

LGA: 2001 One Number Census and its quality assurance

Executive summary

The Local Government Association has commissioned a report to review population estimates based on the 2001 Census, from three leading academics in the field.

Local authorities regard the provision of complete and accurate population statistics as of vital importance and for that reason enthusiastically welcomed an initiative from the Office for National Statistics to produce a full and unbiased population database from the 2001 Census, by means of the 'One Number Census' process. The 2001 Census was the first in the UK to have procedures in place to estimate those missed by census fieldwork in each part of the UK. The strategy was discussed and agreed beforehand with main census users including local authorities. The report summarises each element of the One Number Census and reviews concerns about how the strategy worked in practice expressed by local authorities.

The addition of that estimated undercount to the raw census count makes the Census better – much less biased – than had it been issued without adjustment. The review recommends that Local Authorities should use the detailed census results as published.

One Number Census - the LGA review cont...

There remain concerns about specific areas of the population estimates based on the Census, partly due to outcomes that were not foreseen when the One Number Census strategy was drawn up. Some of these concerns would affect the interpretation and uses of census results. These must be addressed, and are being addressed. The key concerns are:-

- *areas of transient populations: students, armed forces, seasonal labour, recent immigration, and inner city multiple-occupied dwellings;*
- *areas with low response rates;*
- *the inability fully to disentangle estimates of emigration and estimates of non-response.*

These concerns have an impact in the affected areas on estimates of population but also and in particular on measures of housing stock, commuting and migration.

Work to avoid these concerns for future censuses, and for population estimates between censuses, needs to get to grips with two big issues:-

- *the most useful definition or definitions of residence for the main purposes of the census which include government distribution of resources;*
- *the development of administrative records, surveys and statistical records to provide accurate measures for total population and households that are independent of the Census.*

ONS are undertaking work on each of these. Local Authorities are contributing to this work and should continue to do so. Early release of the analyses that led ONS to accept the ONC will help local authorities engage in this further development work.

The review makes recommendations in these areas which require a timetable and a forum in which local authorities and other users of population statistics can contribute. For local government, the Central and Local Information Partnership (CLIP) Census sub group and the Liaison Group on Population Statistics should provide the fora. In that CLIP is about partnership, then local authorities, ONS and government departments should work together on these issues.

LGA: 2001 One Number Census and its quality assurance

Advice to Local Authorities

For the great majority of authorities, there is every reason to believe that the 2001 Census results are reliable. Whether they are accurate to + or - 0.2 per cent, as ONS believe is debatable, but margins of error are likely to be very low. The advice of this report is therefore that most authorities should use the Census results with confidence.

There are two groups of authorities who need to look carefully at their Census results. Firstly, those authorities with large numbers of students or armed forces. Secondly, those with high proportions of houses in multiple occupation or other types of temporary residents including seasonal labour and recent immigrants.

For those authorities containing populations in group one only – students or armed forces – there is no reason to doubt the Census results for the non-student and non-armed forces population. Where possible, authorities should compare the Census counts of students and armed forces and their dependents with their own estimates, since it is known that ONS had to have recourse to alternative sources to compensate for low response from these two groups. Authorities are advised to raise any serious discrepancies with ONS.

The Census results for those authorities in the second group above are the most prone to serious error because they are likely to contain the highest concentrations of the difficult to count populations. Low response rates in these areas require the highest margin of correction via the ONC process, and any under estimate of the degree of dependence between the Census and CCS would affect the Census results for these areas most severely. On the other hand, without a reliable alternative population figure, it is impossible to improve on the published census results.

The advice to these authorities is to furnish ONS with whatever evidence they have which would question the veracity of the Census, and to cooperate whole-heartedly with the recommendations to ONS above ***[see full report],*** *designed to increase confidence in the 2001 Census results, and to improve quality assurance in future censuses.*

Local Authorities should use the census as published. The One Number Census procedures emphasise that the census count should not be treated as exact truth, but contains a margin of error which should be respected when analysing and understanding the results. Investigations will continue into specific possible weaknesses of the Census, but there will not be an improved census database.

For further information contact Ludi Simpson at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, University of Manchester, Email ludi.simpson@man.ac.uk

The Demos Project

What is Demos?

Since February 2002, City of Edinburgh Council and Aberdeen City Council have been involved in the Demos Project, an EU funded network led by City of Edinburgh Council. Demos links eight city councils in seven countries with academic partner organisations across Europe, in innovation and action research on citizen participation in local government. Local government partners have developed innovative approaches to participation, and academic partners provide feedback in an 'action research' mode, as well as formal evaluation.

Demos is responding to concerns about citizen apathy and mistrust of government, but also to opportunities which exist to revitalise local democracy. Demos participants believe that healthy local democracy is the foundation of democratic participation at all spatial levels.

Demos in Edinburgh

In Edinburgh, the Demos pilot projects are linked with the new constituency-level decision-making bodies, the Local Development Committees (LDC). Across the city there are eleven pilot projects with Demos support, in addition to a number of other Community Planning pilot projects instigated by the council.

The projects can be broadly categorised under four headings:-

Promoting more participative working:

- Pentlands LDC - a number of different formats for LDC meetings have been tested, along with the provision of transport to enable local people to attend.
- North & Leith LDC - a Local Policy Hearing on Health was organised outwith the normal cycle of meetings. The preparatory work involved local people as well as service providers, and a further Hearing is now being organised.
- Central LDC - Gorgie Dalry Community Forum is looking at ways to promote local people's concerns to the LDC, including using video and minidisk. A number of local residents have received training in video.

New area and neighbourhood governance structures:

- East LDC - in the Craigmillar area, work is going on to develop neighbourhood service agreements
- South LDC – a project here aims to enhance the role of the community and the LDC in monitoring the work of the area-based Task Forces, which bring together services such as street cleaning and landscape maintenance.
- North & Leith LDC - in the Broughton Road area of the city, the local Community Council is using environmental improvements to promote community involvement. The group has produced landscape proposals, and applied for funding to redevelop a play area.

Hard to reach groups:

- South LDC - the Edinburgh Development Group are working with learning disabled people to promote their involvement, not just in the LDC but also in the local Social Inclusion Partnership.
- Pentlands LDC - the Playback Trust are working with disabled young people to promote dialogue with local leisure and informal education service providers.
- East LDC - The Positive Images project in the Craigmillar area is using alternatives to the written/spoken word for participation.

New approaches to ICT in governance:

- West LDC - a local community portal is being set up to provide access to LDC and other local community information and opportunities for interaction. A further project is looking at ways of using electronic communication to link residents in care homes with LDC meetings.

Demos in Aberdeen

Aberdeen City Council is using its involvement in the Demos Project to develop a Citizens' Panel and a youth participation website within the context of its Community Plan, and in particular to promote community engagement in community planning.

The innovative aspects of the Citizens' Panel are the involvement of community planning partners, and the testing of a virtual panel through the Council's website. An interagency editorial panel is developing questionnaires that meet the needs of individual partner agencies but also address issues within the Community Plan.

The Panel is only one (relatively limited) aspect of community engagement, but it is hoped that it will continue after the EU funding ceases. One of its advantages is the avoidance of the 'consultation fatigue' that might arise if several partners all ran their own citizens' panels. It is hoped that the Panel reports can also be used by participative bodies such as the Civic Forum.

The youth website - cyberyouths.com - was first established through the European Social Fund (ESF) "Listen Young People Speaking" Project (LYPS) and is currently being supported jointly by the Council and the ESF Demos Project. Cyberyouths.com is run and managed by young people supported by a subcontracted IT development manger, and contributes to the wider youth participation exercise. It is hoped that this project can be mainstreamed after the Demos funding expires.

Interim Project Findings

Demos partners met for their 5th transnational meeting in Krakow in May 2003, when they discussed the progress and problems of the various pilot projects and produced the following interim findings.

- *Asking people their concerns is never enough - bureaucracy needs to respond to citizen input*

  It is never good enough for local governments just to ask citizens for their views, or to invite participation - they must then respond constructively to the citizens' needs and aspirations. Not to do so reinforces apathy and cynicism, with citizens feeling let down by political processes.

- *Bringing democracy closer to the people*

  The most fruitful projects are in cities which have a structure of "localised" service delivery and/or devolved decision-making, serving populations between 25,000 and 70,000 at the sub-municipal level (as in Aberdeen, Antwerp, Turku, Utrecht). This seems to be about the right level for localised service management and planning. These cities are turning

The Demos Project cont...

their attention to neighbourhood participation – but not as a formal level of government, to avoid "professionalising" bottom-up participation.

- *Giving citizens a single portal to local government*

  A big advantage of localised governance is that it gives citizens a "single portal" through which to interact with city government over local issues, rather than going from "pillar to post" in dealing with different departments.

  This single portal can be extended to include other institutional players such as the police, the health service or the transport authority.

- *Balancing representative and participatory democracy*

  All Demos projects reinforce the view that elected, representative democracy and the participatory democracy of active citizenship are not in conflict, but reinforce one another as politicians and citizens learn about their mutual interests in better governance. Elected democracy is vital for supporting strong municipal leadership and control over local government finances. Citizen participation empowers residents and provides valuable feedback on planning and services between elections.

- *Importance of cross-party consensus*

  Experience in Antwerp and Aberdeen has shown that with cross-party consensus, and commitment from middle-ranking as well as senior officers, programmes of innovation in citizen participation and decentralisation can weather a temporary political crisis or change in party political control. This is appreciated by citizens, who are more concerned with the quality of local services than with party ideology or disputes.

- *Broadening the base of participation*

  Formal mechanisms of governance, however devolved, can miss out on reaching groups not in the usual circuit of participation. These include young people, ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, elderly people and residents in rural areas of larger government units. Demos projects are demonstrating that much can be achieved in fostering their participation, but that it needs to be tailored to the specific requirements of individual hard-to-reach groups. Innovative methods of participation can also empower citizens, such as IT (Chios), photography (Edinburgh) and drama (Utrecht). A related lesson is that the best mechanisms of participation are straightforward for citizens, such as neighbourhood planning (Aberdeen) and a "balance sheet of democracy" (Solingen).

- *Learning from experience*

  The Demos projects demonstrate that there is no one right answer to the issues of improved citizen participation. Hence the importance of 'capturing' learning from both successes and failures, and using it constructively to improve the next round of attempted innovation.

- *Countering the risk of institutionalising participatory democracy*

  Cities which are successful in fostering citizen participation need to avoid institutionalising the process and undermining bottom-up perspectives by 'professionalising' the process. One way around this is to empower neighbourhood action but not dictate how it unfolds. Another way is to bring citizens into decision processes at the beginning when ideas are still at the visioning stage, rather than leaving participation as an afterthought once decisions have been made. Utrecht is pioneering this approach, and recently all its residents voted on options for redeveloping the city centre.

Key Challenges

Certain key lessons emerge from the Demos project. One is the need for participation to be efficient and cost-effective so that citizens get maximum benefit from their input. A further challenge is to get service providers to reallocate resources to neighbourhood priorities. Another is to reduce the time-lag between neighbourhood participation and real changes in resource allocation. If it is too long, citizens lose interest in participation. The biggest barrier to localisation is the entrenched attitude of officers. Strong leadership by the leader or mayor, and chief executive, is critical to overcoming this.

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For Further information on the Demos Project, or if you would like to attend our final conference in June 2004, please go to http://www.demosproject.org or contact:-

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Cultural context & communication: understanding audience perceptions in marketing services for older people

ΩKezia Lavan, Research Officer, Housing Information Unit, Manchester Housing

Introduction

It's taken for granted today that research should support the services provided by Local Authorities. However, research usually focuses on the needs and views of service users rather than on communications materials about those services. Yet access to services depends almost as much on getting the message across as on the service itself. Audiences interpret communications through a cultural context: age, gender, ethnicity, personal preferences and prior knowledge, amongst other factors, affect the way a communication is "read". Manchester has a diverse population and therefore a complex cultural context where one communication may be interpreted in a variety of ways. Because of this Manchester Council has recently carried out research, described below, investigating perceptions of sheltered housing and reception of related promotional communications.

Sheltered housing residents tend to be highly satisfied with their accommodation, but many housing providers find it difficult to attract new residents into schemes, possibly because the service suffers from a "care home" image. Manchester Council wants more 55-65 year olds to consider using the service and understand that sheltered housing enables independent living. By basing decision-making about communications on rigorous research we hope to give potential service users an informed choice.

The Research

283 Manchester Council tenants replied to the postal survey which consisted of several multiple-choice questions, an open-ended question and pictures of two proposed booklet covers for sheltered housing. The questions aimed to find out what people know about sheltered housing, and what would be the best way to communicate about it. 94% of respondents had heard of sheltered housing, a third said they would like to live there, and most of the remainder said they would need more information.

Most respondents (73%) correctly identified sheltered housing as "own flat with support on call", but 17% gave "rooms in the same building where everyone shares the same facilities", a description more appropriate to care homes.

When respondents were asked why people lived in sheltered housing, 70% said it was because "they want to know someone is on hand in an emergency" and 80% "to help them stay independent". However, a third thought it was because "neither they nor their families can look after themselves", and 1 in 10 gave "terminal illness" as a reason, again suggesting a "care home" image.

Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed with various interpretations of two proposed sheltered housing brochure covers, which was their favourite and what it told them.

The first cover, "what you do behind your own front door is up to you" is bright pink with an older woman doing keep fit. The second cover, "a home from home" uses muted colours and a soft focus snap of a country cottage ornament.

37% of respondents preferred cover one, and 60% cover two. However, this does not necessarily mean that cover two is the better way to communicate a message of independent living for older people, especially as the target age group generally preferred the first cover.

Respondents were asked whether the covers suggested that "the Council wants older people to live independently", and 83% agreed with this for cover one and 65% for cover two. As 38% also agreed that cover two meant that "sheltered housing is for older people who need care", the second image was clearly not read as denoting independence.

15% of respondents agreed that "people aged 55-65 would be put off cover two because of the presence of older people's things", whilst 12% thought "people over 55 would be offended by cover one". Only 3% thought cover one meant that "the council didn't mind if tenants damaged their homes", although this interpretation was so strong amongst the commissioning housing staff that it was rejected on those grounds.

Cultural context & communication: understanding audience perceptions in marketing services for older people cont...

When asked to describe what their favourite cover told them about sheltered housing, those who preferred cover one described privacy and control over one's life, using words like "independent", "active", "privacy", "own space", and "do own thing". The word "home" was used as a place where life is lived from, rather than the focus of life itself. Age was mentioned in a positive context, suggesting that getting older doesn't mean being unable to look after yourself or stopping being active.

Although some who preferred cover two mentioned privacy and independence, most commented on the housing itself, as "pleasant", "nice" or "friendly". Probably because of the text in cover two, the words "home" or "homely" appeared in about half of comments. Words like "secure", "safe", "cosy", "comfortable" and "warm" suggest that here "home" means a nurturing place, for people who need to be cared for. "Elderly" and "old age" were used to describe who respondents thought sheltered housing was for. Metaphorically the language used to describe cover two was "housebound".

These research findings have implications for how services are promoted to older people. Generally, cover one was read as "independent living", and cover two "care and safety". As many people still confuse sheltered housing with care, Manchester Council needs to communicate a message of independence. This is particularly the case when the target age group are the most sensitive to ageist assumptions about their needs. By combining the successful aspects of each into a strong message about independent living, Manchester Council eventually used the findings to produce a third, different cover when the booklet was finally published.

Conclusions

Consulting audiences about promotional material should be part of all communications strategies. The complex research findings described above show that experts cannot assume that their interpretations are shared by service users. The housing managers commissioning the brochure rejected cover one because "it gave the impression that we allow tenants to mistreat their homes". Interestingly, one of the few respondents who agreed with this knew about sheltered housing from university study, and so probably understood housing law and tenancy agreements. Such expertise affects the interpretations of housing professionals and may hinder attempts to anticipate public reception. The surprising conclusion of this research is that expertise in service delivery can disadvantage decision making about communications, which is why continued research with audiences is essential.

For further information, please contact Kezia Lavan at email: K.Lavan@notes.manchester.gov.uk

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The Regional Information and Statistical Framework

Joby Blume

Background

In February the Chancellor announced a review, to be led by Christopher Allsopp, with the following terms of reference: "to deliver an assessment to the Chancellor, the Governor of the Bank of England, and the National Statistician, with a first report by the 2003 Pre-Budget Report... on the regional information and statistical framework needed to support the Government's key objective of promoting economic growth in all regions and reducing the persistent gap in growth rates between the regions..."

Christopher Allsopp is an economist by profession, appointed to lead his review following a stint on the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee. There is no doubt that the Allsopp Review will report extensively on subjects relevant to macro-economic policy - including the need for regional deflators to measure differing rates of inflation across the country, regional growth data, and the housing market. The hope for regional bodies, and possibly for Local Authorities, is that this important review is sufficiently wide-ranging to recognise the role that regional and sub-regional organisations play in driving regional growth.

The Regional Agenda

The Treasury (HMT), Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) share a Public Service Agreement to promote economic growth in all regions and reduce the gap in growth rates between the regions. However the long-awaited and much delayed release of regional Gross Value Added data confirmed a continued gap not only in wealth, but in rates of growth, between the greater South East (London, South East, and East of England regions) and the rest of the UK. If Government is going to deliver a reduced gap in growth rates between regions as diverse as the South East and North East, then it seems that a first step will be to put in place adequate information to inform policy making.

In attempting to deliver regional growth, Government set up Regional Development Agencies in the nine English Regions. In London, as in Scotland and Wales, the picture is actually somewhat complicated by different political arrangements - but in all regions there exists a regional responsibility for a number of functions central to development. A regional-level approach to planning, housing, and transport is now in place, and Regional Assemblies (Chambers) have been given crucial responsibilities. Regions now formulate economic strategies, spatial strategies, skills frameworks, and housing strategies - all clearly and directly related to the joint HMT/ODPM/DTI Public Service Agreement to promote economic growth. Higher levels of funding for regional bodies in the poorer regions suggest that people in Government hope that with appropriate support these regional strategies will also be able to go some of the way to reducing the gap in growth rates between the regions.

A number of regional organisations have submitted responses to the Allsopp Review, with one of the major ones being coordinated by the Association of Regional Observatories (ARO). Regional Observatories draw together data and intelligence for each region, and often do much to attempt to fill gaps in the regional knowledge base. For analysts involved in regional research the Allsopp Review represents a great opportunity to bring major data gaps to the attention of Central Government. Given the amount of money that should be made available to implement the findings of the review, there is every likelihood that sub-UK statistics will see significant investment.

The Local Perspective

Regional economic and spatial strategies are designed and implemented at a small geographical level. Regional economic development might require the development of a retail park in an area of low employment, intensive investment in skills in an industrial centre, and support for economic clusters and incubators around a certain port. Regional spatial strategies require detailed information about congestion on particular roads, housing affordability in Local Authorities, and public transport links to particular villages. In other words, regional strategies require detailed sub-regional and local information. If we believe that Government is at all sensible in attempting to further regional growth through regional bodies instead of just centrally, then we must hope that the Allsopp review will look not just at the information needed to support macro-economic policy, but also the gamut of intelligence needed to drive regional economic strategies.

That the regional and sub-regional statistical framework is due to change as a result of the Allsopp Review is something that has not been lost on the LGA, who have been quick to circulate requests for input into a Local Government submission. More generally, what the Review reveals is a certain commonality of purpose between regional and local research practitioners. Local Authorities and regional bodies need robust data at small geographies - often at NUTS-4 or NUTS-5 level, in order to inform the policies they have been charged with delivering. Both are committed to lobbying for improved data and intelligence at the local level. In all likelihood, ARO and LGA submissions to the Allsopp Review will bear certain similarities.

The Regional Information and Statistical Framework cont...

Economics and beyond

Some of the major elements of the ARO paper presented to Allsopp revolved, predictably, around economic information. Regional bodies too are concerned with the quality of the regional accounts, feel the need for regional deflators, and would welcome the use of administrative data in compiling better trade statistics. Other issues are more likely to be of interest to Local Authority analysts - calls for use of timely Inland Revenue data in putting together income data at small geographies, boosting the sample size of the Labour Force Survey to create a more robust dataset at the local level, and improving the quality and availability of business registration information to allow more fine-grained analysis.

Regional observatories are concerned with non-economic data and intelligence, and are also keen to improve the information framework in areas as diverse as energy, rural affairs, and culture. Although the Allsopp Review is unlikely to tackle every problem with data availability currently facing intelligence officers, an impetus has been created which is likely to energise Office for National Statistics and others.

Conclusion

Regional observatories will be active in encouraging better regional and sub-regional data and intelligence in the coming months and years. Lobbying is of course only a small part of the observatories' work - and research, analysis, and dissemination all play a part too - to different extents in different regions. If the Allsopp Review is successful, the regional observatories will soon find their work more focussed on analysis and dissemination - to the benefit of regional and local organisations across the country.

For more information on regional observatories or the Association of Regional Observatories please contact Joby Blume, 01924 331 587, joby.blume@regionalobservatories.org.uk

New Parish and Town Councils in Urban Areas

A new study published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Reviewed by Anne Cunningham

Local or 'parish' councils are still mainly found in, and associated with, rural areas. However since legislation in 1997, it has been possible for any group of residents to petition for the establishment of a parish council in their area. This new report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation follows the development of four new parish councils in relatively deprived urban areas, and examines their potential role in local governance and area-based regeneration.

The example followed in most detail is that of the new parish council serving Blakelaw and North Fenham in Newcastle upon Tyne, an area of mostly council housing with a population of six thousand. It was closely monitored throughout the transition from neighbourhood campaign to a functioning tier of local government. The other case studies are of Headland Town Council in Hartlepool, Offerton Estate Parish Council in Stockport, and the campaign to establish a parish council in Headingley, Leeds.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with residents involved in the Blakelaw & North Fenham campaign, both before the council was established and about eighteen months after it was formed. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the other three case studies, and with relevant national bodies and practitioners. Once the report was completed in draft form, residents from the three local councils that were up and running were invited to a seminar and asked to give feedback, which was incorporated in the final version.

The new councils in the study had all arisen out of residents' concern to have a greater influence on the local governance of their communities. Previous research has criticised the short-term nature of consultation in regeneration initiatives in the past, and residents in the JRF study echoed this concern. They were frustrated by the successive waves of consultation being conducted in their area, and saw a local council as having the permanence and independence to take a longer-term approach. The typically small size of a parish council was a further attraction to those who felt their neighbourhood's needs were being overlooked within a larger area such as a ward.

Anybody considering a parish council for their urban neighbourhood will find the JRF report provides a valuable overview of their role and powers, an inside view of the process of setting one up, and a frank account of the steep learning curve, tensions and other pitfalls awaiting the new councillors – plus some useful recommendations for overcoming them.

New parish and town councils in urban areas : Communities and DIY democracy by Mark Bevan is available from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation at £11.95 or downloadable free from www.jrf.org.uk

R&I News

Cheshire County Council

Community Survey 2003
Earlier this year we carried out a face-to-face omnibus survey with over a thousand of our adult citizens' panel members. We achieved a good response rate of 74%.

The aims of the survey were to inform:
- the Cheshire Community Strategy
- action plans for some of our services
- some corporate initiatives

So what did our residents tell us?

Most of them (92%) like living in their local area. 97% enjoy visiting the Cheshire countryside for the peace and quiet, to enjoy nature and the landscape and to walk. Almost half (47%) of them used some of its 3000 km of public rights of way once a month or more often.

Compared with a 1998 survey, more of them agreed that CCC 'keeps people informed' and 'listens to the public' and generally, a higher proportion correctly associated services with the provider.

Of those respondents in work, almost half (44%) thought that there were plenty of job opportunities in their local area and most felt their skills had increased in the last 5 years.

68% felt informed about their consumer rights and 46% would go to Trading Standards for advice about a consumer problem.

As the North West is one of the first tranche of regions to vote on elected regional government, and as Cheshire is a two-tier area where significant changes would take place, we were interested to find out what our residents' views were. At the time of the survey (February/March 2003), awareness of the proposals for elected regional assemblies was low - eight out of ten (80%) Cheshire residents felt they knew 'not very much' or 'nothing at all' about the proposals. The more information they were given, the more likely they were to oppose it.

The survey produced some interesting findings that have only been summarised briefly here. **Further information can be obtained from Judy Parry on 01244 602446, parryj@cheshire.gov.uk**

Liverpool City Council

Using CACI data to assess the mismatch of supply and demand for early years services in Liverpool.

Local Authorities are obliged to undertake an audit of early education and childcare provision on an annual basis to inform their planning of places. This year in Liverpool we have attempted to develop a methodology that looks not only at the aggregate supply of places and number of children within wards, but also at whether the existing supply of places at small geographies is suitable and affordable to parents.

The analysis has been based on the geo- and postcode-analysis of all children in the city aged 0-14. It draws on the Paycheck and ACORN profile data supplied by CACI to indicate the income and lifestyle groupings of parents across the city. Data from the IDBR (the Inter Departmental Business Register, maintained by National Statistics) was used for analysing employment opportunities in each ward and to assess the extent to which such opportunities might be taken by 'in-commuters'. As with many large cities many of the employment opportunities are taken by people who live in suburbs falling outside the city boundary, some of whom may make use of childcare facilities in the city. The IDBR data provides some context as to where this may be happening. It also indicates where parents are likely to have to travel to find work, a factor that impacts upon their childcare needs. The result has been a detailed and informative description of the childcare supply at small geographical levels, in the context of the income, employment and lifestyles of parents.

Mapping of the Paycheck income data to produce a map of each ward in the city gives a clear picture of the differences in the income of parents within each ward. Overlaying of this map with the different types of supplier allows the link between levels of affluence and the supply of different types of education and childcare places to be seen. The income data was used to develop a set of area typologies for grouping wards according to how income was distributed. These typologies show there is a need to adopt different approaches to increase the supply of places in different areas, rather than using "one size fits all". This extensive piece of secondary data analysis has formed a sound basis from which to structure representative primary research surveys of parents on their children's early education and childcare needs.
For further information contact: Helen Carlin, Email: helen.carlin@liverpool.gov.uk

Worcestershire County Council Research and Intelligence Unit

Connecting Worcestershire – improved access to information for stakeholders – development of R&I website

The R&I website (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/research) has undergone extensive redevelopment in order to make it more relevant and user-friendly. It has been recognised that the website can act as an ideal medium for communicating with members, partners and the public. The new website went live in mid-August, and enables users to view up-to-date information on a variety of topics such as the 2001 Census, housing, population and the economy in a quick and efficient manner.

The new website coincides with changes to our Joined Up Information System (JUIS) and the introduction of Census mapping. In order to ensure the success of the new site a marketing strategy is being considered. Added to this we plan to produce an online questionnaire to enable feedback from partners and the public.

In July 2003 the R&I section of the County Council website received more than 10,000 hits. As part of e-government the R&I unit hope to see these hits increasing and will be monitoring the progress of the new website over the coming months.
For more information contact Stephen Russell, email: srussell@worcestershire.gov.uk

R&I News cont...

Joined Up Information System (JUIS), Information Management for Worcestershire Partnership – Phase 3

The Research and Intelligence Unit established JUIS **(www.juis.org.uk)** on behalf of Worcestershire Partnership. A small team of data analysts provides partners with research support. Partners include the county and district councils, police, health, Learning & Skills Council and the Chamber of Commerce who all provide funding. JUIS has also been successful with a funding application to the Government Office for the West Midlands to further develop the website.

JUIS is at the forefront of national developments regarding the provision of data analysis support for partnerships. It emphasises the County Council's on-going commitment to community safety, which 94% of residents said was their primary concern regarding quality of life in Worcestershire. In addition, the work of JUIS is broadening to include other projects, such as performance management and the monitoring of the Worcestershire Community Strategy.

The website has recently been redeveloped to improve performance and provide additional functionality for users. It now incorporates the newly released Census 2001 data, complete with a search function to enable users to access information relating to their own local area. A JUIS user group has also been set up, which will enable our partners to feed into the future planning and development of the site and ensure it is used to its maximum potential.

Together with the maintenance and updating of the website data, the unit undertakes detailed analysis relating to levels of crime and disorder in the county. This is based on not only crime data but also data relating to demographics, deprivation levels, health data, and data collected from agencies such as the fire brigade and the youth offending service.
For more information contact Alison Rogers, email: arogers@worcestershire.gov.uk

2001 Census data – latest release of data and the launch of Censusinside

The Research and Intelligence Unit is continuing to provide access to a wide range of newly released 2001 Census material on the County Council website. The most recent additions of data and analysis to be added include Key Statistics for ward level, ward rankings by topic and area profiles. Area profiles are available at district, ward and parish level.

The Unit has also launched a facility called Censusinside that enables users to search for detailed Census information about local areas of interest, by entering a postcode or clicking on an area of a map. To access this facility, click on the Census 2001 link on **www.worcestershire.gov.uk**. From here, click on the Census Mapping link. Once you enter Censusinside, you can choose to enter a postcode or use the arrow to select an area on the map. Information can be obtained for county, district, ward or output area level and for population, economy, ethnicity and housing topics.
For further information click on the 2001 Census link on www.worcestershire.gov.uk or contact Helen Clive, email: hclive@worcestershire.gov.uk

Worcestershire Citizens' Panel Results

Results of the latest Worcestershire Citizens' Panel Survey based around the themes of the Community Strategy are now available. The response rate to the Survey was 73% - very high for a postal survey of this kind.

The purpose of the Survey was to provide baseline measurements for the Community Strategy. We will repeat the Survey in 3 years' time to see if attitudes have changed. It will be particularly useful for providing measurements against some of the "softer " statements in the Community Strategy.
Results are analysed by all respondents, District, Age, Gender, and Urban or Rural location. This report provides a wealth of useful information about what our residents think about the quality of life in the County.

We will be providing Panel members with feedback when we send out the next Survey in October.
For more information contact Anna Sansom, email: asansom@worcestershire.gov.uk

Survey Fatigue?

Many of you as you read this will be immersed in one of the various Best Value Surveys – or more than one if you're really lucky! When you've recovered, why not write to LariaNews and share your experiences? We'd like to hear your opinions of the whole process – its ups and downs, ins and outs, pros and cons, and how it could be improved next time. Please send your thoughts to the Editor by 15th December, and we will publish a selection in the February edition.

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If you think you can help us achieve our mission of being the best in our field, and ***the*** place to work, please send your CV with a covering letter explaining why you are the person we are looking for! If you want an opportunity to discuss these positions, please call 0113 285 6300 and ask to speak to Paul Vittles.

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LARIA People

Our series of profiles of LARIA Council and Activity Group members continues with LARIA Adminstrator and Events Organiser, Graham Smith and Vice-chair of LARIA and Chair of the Events Activity Group, Jill Tuffnell.

Graham Smith

Graham trained as a statistician at University College London and after graduating in 1968, he joined the Greater London Council Research & Intelligence Unit where he worked on information retrieval systems and operational research for the London Ambulance Service. Three years later he moved to the Research & Intelligence Unit in Cheshire County Council as a Research Officer, becoming Head of R&I there in 1974, managing a wide range of projects.

After 15 years in the post, Graham moved to the North East of England to become Director of Research & Intelligence (a Chief Officer post) in Cleveland County Council, managing the largest local authority research unit in the country outside London. In 1996, Cleveland County Council, together with its R&I Unit, was abolished as a result of Local Government Reorganisation. Graham then spent a year temporarily heading the Policy Unit of Middlesbrough Council and assisting the Chief Executive in setting up the new Council, before he took early retirement.

This "retirement" has involved Graham working for LARIA as Events Organiser, arranging conferences and seminars, and in 2001 he also took on the role of LARIA Administrator. These two roles make him a familiar name/face to the LARIA membership. He also acts as the Administrator for ALGIS in LARIA.

In 1974, Graham attended the first meeting of Heads of R&I Units, and this was to develop into LARIA. In 1977, Graham joined the LARIA Steering Group (now LARIA Council) and is now the longest serving member. He has been Chair of LARIA on two separate occasions and is currently a Trustee of the Association. He was also Chairman and Secretary of the Merseyside Group of the Royal Statistical Society at various times, was a member of the International Association for Regional and Urban Statistics, and served on the IDLG (now CLIP) Census Sub-Group for nine years.

Jill Tuffnell

Jill is currently Head of Research in the Chief Executive's Department at Cambridgeshire County Council – where she has worked 'for ages'. She graduated as an economist from Birmingham University and has subsequently gained regional planning and operational research higher degrees. She worked initially for the National Coal Board (and has crawled along a coal face), before moving into regional planning and subsequently structure planning. Although now working in a multi-disciplinary research team, Jill still maintains her main professional involvement in economic and labour market issues.

Over the years, Jill has helped develop Cambridgeshire's corporate research activities significantly, building on a small service covering demographics, the local economy and survey support. The team's current work stretches from health inequalities and crime research to supported housing, from school pupil forecasting to management of the Council's corporate consultation strategy. Current priority areas include the development of an internet-based Cambridgeshire Observatory, providing a map-based view of the county, and extensive research into the East of England's labour market, using the Census as the key source of information. Regional work, funded by the East of England Development Agency and the ESF, is critical in the run-up to new Regional Planning Guidance. Jill is the local authority side 'lead' on the Central & Local Government Partnership (CLIP) group on Labour Market Statistics.

Outside of the office, Jill has past experience as a Councillor, providing a useful insight into the pressures on elected members. She is involved in housing associations as a Board member and is a school governor. She is a very keen walker, chairing her local Ramblers Association Group, and has recently been appointed to the new Local Access Forum in Cambridgeshire. Jill writes newsletters and books of walks as an antidote to reports on hi-tech industry! Weekends will often see her miles away from the flatlands of Cambridgeshire!

Don't forget to tell LARIA People about appointments, promotions and other staff changes - and we'll tell all our readers. Send details, with if possible a photo in jpeg format, to John Wicks at jwicks@mva.co.uk

News from Elsewhere

Neighbourhood Statistics and Housing

www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

By Mick Johnston, ODPM

2001 Census Housing Data

The Neighbourhood Statistics website now contains a range of housing data from the 2001 Census at district, ward and Output Area level, including:-

- Household spaces and accommodation type
- Living Arrangements - people aged 16 and over
- Rooms, amenities, central heating and lowest floor level
- Tenure
- Household composition,
- Households with limiting long-term illness and dependent children

New Housing Datasets at Local Authority Level

Some local authority level datasets are being included in the Neighbourhood Statistics Service. In the case of housing these are being drawn from the annual returns made by local authorities on homelessness, Housing Strategy and Housing Revenue Account and from the Regulatory Statistical Return from Registered Social Landlords. The first three of these went up on the web site at the beginning of October 2003. These were:-

- Dwelling stock by tenure and condition for 2001 and 2002
- Social Housing Demand and Supply for 2001 and 2002
- Social Housing Rents for 2002

Others are in preparation but the ONS is at present unable to give a firm date for publication. They comprise:-

- General demand indicators
- Council housing stock in detail
- Homelessness

New Housing Datasets At Ward Level

All new ward level datasets will use 2003 ward definitions. Three new ward level datasets will be placed on the website over the next six months, although precise dates have still to be confirmed. These are:-

- Housing association lettings derived from the Housing Corporation's continuous monitoring system (CORE)
- Vacant dwellings provided by local authorities
- Mortgage lending
- Decent homes indicators

More tentatively it is hoped that a dataset on private sector rents, derived from the Rent Service, will also be available this year.

In addition the two existing ward level datasets will be updated. There will be a 2002 dataset on Dwelling Transactions by Price and the existing 2001 dataset will be reissued using the new ward boundaries. Council Tax Band datasets will be published for April 2002 and 2003, the existing 2001 dataset will be reisuued to the new boundaries and all three will be published at census output area level as well as ward and local authority.

LACORE

A pilot study has now been completed on the extension of the CORE monitoring system, which currently records housing association lettings, to include local authorities. Twenty-nine local authorities in England and Scotland took part, and many found the exercise so useful that they are continuing the pilot for their own benefit. It is now proposed to develop a full national system with regular data transfer starting in April 2004. The report of the pilot study has been published electronically www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/downloadable/odpm_house_023159.pdf and circulated to local authorities

Social Housing Property Database

The scoping study on the creation of national property database for social housing has now been completed. Key findings were that most local authorities and housing associations hold most of the key data on databases of some sort, but often on more than one system and without the NPLG reference which is crucial to data linkage. The costs and benefits of the project are now under investigation.

Housing Stock Condition

The Building Research Establishment has been contracted to update the modelling of housing stock condition which was carried out for the 2000 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This will go into the 2003 IMD review and will also form a housing dataset in Neighbourhood Statistics. The BRE will then go on to produce options for improving the modelling using new sources of data.

Housing Affordability

Now that the 2002 New Earnings Survey can be analysed by place of residence, both of the components of an affordability indicator - i.e. house prices and incomes - are available at the local authority level. It is proposed to produce a discussion paper setting out alternative ways in which the two variables could be combined to give an indicator which would have general acceptance. Anyone who is interested in contributing to this discussion is invited to forward their views to the address below.

Want To Know More?

For further information, please contact Mick Johnston at the ODPM on 020 7944 3302 or mick.johnston@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Consultation report on updating the Indices of Deprivation published

By Jane Todorovic, ODPM

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has recently published a consultation report that sets out detailed proposals for updating the Indices of Deprivation 2000 (ID 2000).

The update project has been divided into three stages. A previous consultation report provided broad options for strengthening the ID 2000 including initial suggestions on indicators and domains. The second stage is the publication of a more detailed 'Blueprint' setting out actual plans for updating the Indices including details on the proposed domains and the indicators that sit within them. This has taken account of the previous consultation responses and comments from an

News from Elsewhere cont...

independent academic assessment. The closing date for receipt of comments on the Blueprint Consultation Report is 14th November 2003. The third, and final stage, will be updating the Indices.

Some of the major proposals that the 'Blueprint' includes are:

- If data permits, the construction of new measures of crime and poor living environment;
- Adjusting income data for variation in take-up;
- Including an indicator on housing affordability, dependent on availability of data;
- The potential use of a more consistent geography to enable-in the majority of cases - the better identification of pockets of deprivation;
- Measuring other issues relating to access beyond simply measuring geographical distance

The current Indices combine social, economic and housing indicators into a single deprivation score for each ward in England, in addition to six summary scores and ranks for each local authority district. This enables wards and districts to be ranked relative to one another according to their level of deprivation. It is an important instrument used by Government and other agencies to understand where the worst deprivation exists and target resources and activity to turn around these communities.

When the ID 2000 was published, a commitment was made to revise the Index once new small area data had become available and could be incorporated. Last summer a decision was taken to investigate the feasibility of updating the Index to make sure that it was based on as up-to-date information and methodology as possible and take advantage of new data sources. This is important to ensure that the Indices remain as relevant a measure as possible.

Further details on the consultation process and a copy of the Blueprint report are available from the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit at www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/indices.asp

New LARIA / LGA Report - Councils Must Undertake Research

By Bob Cuthill

LARIA, in a joint publication with the Local Government Association, has brought out a new report* detailing local government's statutory responsibility for undertaking research.

This long awaited 35-page report, "Statutory Requirements for Research: a Review of Responsibilities for English and Welsh Local Government", is a result of analysis of all post-1980 legislation affecting England and Wales to determine explicit and implicit requirements for local authorities to carry out research. It clearly shows that a very wide range of research is not optional but a statutory responsibility on local authorities.

David Karfoot, LARIA's Chair, states "I hope this Report will put an end to attitudes that research is in some way an optional activity for local authorities to undertake."

The report provides a comprehensive check-list of legislative requirements for research ranging across all local government services. With around 150 Acts of Parliament scanned, the report is a valuable tool to guide and support local authorities in developing and maintaining a research capacity. The work was carried out for LARIA/LGA by William Solesbury and Lesley Grayson of William Solesbury Associates and is current to June 2003.

Providing an adequate research capacity to meet statutory requirements is an essential part of what a modern council should be about. Research in the local government sense is defined in the report as being the "systematic collection and analysis of data about the social, economic and environmental circumstances of council areas and the performance of the services they provide." Capacity is the ability to undertake and organise the research in an efficient and effective way.

The study distinguishes between legislation in relation to:

- Statutory powers to undertake research e.g. Housing Act 1985 – to consider the housing conditions in a district and the needs of the district for further housing provision.
- Research for planning and delivering local authority services e.g. Crime and Disorder Act 1998; Environmental Protection Act 1990; Local Government Act 2000.
- Research for managing local authority business e.g. Audit Commission Act 1998; Local Government Act 1999.

The resulting map of statutory requirements for research is summarised in the following matrix:

	Statutory Research	Research for Statutory Services	Research for Statutory Management
Explicit	For the GLA For selected topics	For a few services	For the Best Value regime
Implicit	The LA general power	For many services	For information For consultation For partnership working

* The Report is freely available via a link on the LARIA website.

Noticeboard

LARIA EVENTS

LARIA/CCSR/LGA Seminar: Race and Religion Statistics from the Census: What can you make of them?
8 December 2003 at the Local Government Association Offices, Smith Square, London. Details are on the flyer in this newsletter or on the LARIA website www.laria.gov.uk, or available from Graham Smith, LARIA Administrator (Tel: 01642 316576, or email lariaoffice@aol.com)

LARIA Annual Conference 2004: 23-25 March 2004 at St Catherine's College, Oxford
"Challenging Research: Challenging Researchers". Details of the programme will be sent to all LARIA members later in the year. The programme will also appear on the LARIA website www.laria.gov.uk

OTHER EVENTS

Insight 2003
Olympia 2 25th/26th November, 2003. In association with the MRS and supported by the BMRA, this is now the ONLY trade show in the UK for the MR Industry. Register to visit FREE by visiting www.insightshow.co.uk

Department of Education and Skills Research Conference 2003
'Learning by Comparison - International Experiences in Education and Training'. 1 Great George Street, London, on 5th December 2003.

This year's DfES conference is aimed at exploring how international comparisons can assist in the work of education and skills researchers and policy-makers.

Attendance is free. For further details and a booking form go to www.dfes.gov.uk/research/conference/index.cfm or contact the conference organisers on 01564 797 620.

Next Issue

Copy should be sent or emailed in word format to the Editor (address on back page) to arrive by 15th December 2003.

Any graphs, tables, photographs or adverts need to be supplied in jpeg format.

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.

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.

From time to time, we receive articles that are longer, more detailed or more academic than is appropriate for a publication that is essentially a newsletter. We are pleased to receive such articles as long as their content is relevant to the aims of LARIA. However, we shall publish only an abstract of them in LariaNews with a link to the full article on the LARIA Website. As a guideline, for publication in the newsletter, news items will generally be around 300 words and feature articles will be around 1000 words. Longer ones will sometimes be published in the newsletter but more usually on the Website as described above.

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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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.