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# LARIA News

LOCAL AUTHORITIES RESEARCH + INTELLIGENCE ASSOCIATION  
[www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk)

Inside this issue ▶▶▶▶ LARIA Conference 2006, Improving Population Statistics, Area Profiles

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This edition was produced by  
Anne Cunningham, Alan Holcroft, Spencer Payne, Dawn Price, Graham Smith, Richard Stevens, Joy Thompson, Mike Towers and John Wicks.

## From the Chair – David Karfoot

### Creating Effective Research in Local Government

The new LARIA/LGA toolkit “Creating Effective Research” received a very successful launch at the sell-out workshop held in London on 23rd November. For those of you who have not seen the toolkit yet, copies may be downloaded free of charge from [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk) (click on ‘Publications’, then on ‘R’, and enter ‘Effective Research’ as the keyword.)



In the same week a leaflet jointly produced by LARIA and the LGA, “Local government needs effective research”, was sent to all chief executives. Further copies are also downloadable from the LGA website as described above. I hope that this is by now having an impact up and down the country.

All in all, I regard the total “Effective Research” research programme, with its four separate outputs, as possibly the best research programme LARIA has been associated with during the whole of my time with LARIA. I would like to pay tribute to Roger Sykes, formerly of the LGA, in helping to bring this about, but most of all I would like to express my thanks to Janie Percy-Smith and Alison Darlow who undertook the research and produced the various reports. I trust you agree with me that they have really delivered full value.

By the time you read this, another new LARIA publication will have appeared on [www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk). “Managing Research in Local Government” has been written by Bryan Hall, formerly of Cheshire County Council and a past Chair of LARIA.

### Representing Local Government

Every now and then LARIA receives requests to provide a person to represent local government researchers on various boards, study groups and so

on. In the past we have endeavoured to meet such requests by nominating a LARIA Council member, but this has become increasingly problematic as the number of such requests has been steadily increasing.

From one point of view this is, of course, a positive development which shows that efforts to raise the profile and credibility of LARIA are gradually bearing fruit. However, that very credibility may be put at risk if we, as an organisation, are unable to respond positively to such approaches.

I would therefore like to say to all LARIA members: if you have any interest at all in taking on such a representative role, please make yourself known. There’s no need to be backward in coming forward! All you have to do is to let our Administrator, Graham Smith, know of your interest. We will do the rest and, should a suitable opportunity crop up, you will be contacted and the position discussed with you. Your only obligation would be to keep the LARIA Council informed about your participation and you would be likely to make significant additions to your network of contacts as a result.

### Statistics User Forum

LARIA has been invited to join the Royal Statistical Society’s new Statistics User Forum, which is chaired by Keith Dugmore, whom many of you may know. This forum is intended to:

- Establish strategy and policy for coordinating the statistics user community, and in particular:
- Appoint members to the Statistics User Executive Committee in accordance with the constitution of the Committee
- Consider and advise on any issues referred to the Forum by the Statistics User Executive Committee

Discussions are in hand with the RSS to arrange for LARIA to become affiliated to the Forum or to be co-opted on to it.

I have, so far, attended one meeting of the Forum (as an observer) and I believe LARIA’s association with the Forum could well develop into something very worthwhile.

## From the Chair – David Karfoot cont...

### Goodbye

This will be my last “From the Chair” column, as I will be standing down as Chair at the AGM in March to coincide with my retirement from local government. I will be attending the Annual Conference in Exeter, however, and hope to be able to say “farewell” in person to as many people as possible at that time.

It would be invidious of me to single out by name any particular individuals for thanks. There have been (and still are) too many excellent colleagues I have worked with through LARIA to try to name them all. I would therefore just like to say a big, big “thank you” to all the myriad people who have helped me along the way and made my time with LARIA so rewarding.

**David Karfoot**

## Research at Chester

**By Beverley Wilson**

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### Introduction

Chester District is situated where the North West of England meets Wales and the West Midlands. It covers a large rural area, within which is set the historic walled City of Chester and its suburbs. Chester faces all of the challenges of modern urban and rural life and although is considered to be quite ‘affluent’, there are parts of the District that are in the top 10 percent most deprived according to the Indices of Deprivation. In essence, Chester is a district of contrast. And yes, this is where Hollyoaks is filmed...enough said!

### Research at Chester City Council

Chester City Council is a fairly small district authority, serving a population of around 120,000 people. It is rather unusual for a small district authority to invest in a centrally-located research team; nevertheless, we have been in operation since 1997. The team was set up by Pete Stratford (who spoke at a recent LARIA seminar on ‘building an effective research unit’). Pete has since left Chester for Poole and the current team consists of a Research Manager, three Research Officers, one funded from external sources, and a temporary Research and Policy Assistant. In July 2005, we merged with the Corporate Policy team, with a view to forging stronger links between research and policy and ensuring research findings are used more effectively.

Our team comes from a range of different disciplines, from Psychology and Criminology, to Geography and Economics. This mix of skills and experience enables us to undertake a wide range of research in-house, and in the past we have administered self-completion questionnaires, run focus groups, undertaken in-depth interviews, run Deliberative Polls®, analysed secondary data such as the Census and analysed data spatially using GIS (Geographical Information Systems). We also regularly work in partnership with, and for, the Police, the Primary Care Trust, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the voluntary and community sector. Our partnership working helps us to fund an additional Research Officer and enables us to develop new systems that we otherwise would find difficult to do.

## Research at Chester cont...



**The Research Team - Carly Lightowlers (Research Officer), Lois Hughes (Temporary Research and Policy Assistant), Rory Strand (Research Officer), Anna Wallace (Research Officer), Beverley Wilson (Research Manager)**

### Our main research tools

We are fortunate in having a variety of 'tools' or processes to help us undertake effective research. Perhaps the most important of these is the Research Standards Panel.

#### **Research Standards Panel**

This is a panel consisting of elected Members from both Cabinet and Scrutiny, together with an external representative from University College Chester (who is a lecturer in social research methods). The Panel was set up in November 2001 with the aim of ensuring that all the research and consultation undertaken by the Council is of a high quality. This is important so that research findings can be used effectively to inform decision-making and to ensure research methods are ethical.

The Panel also co-ordinates research and consultation, in order to prevent different service areas from consulting with the same groups of people at the same time, helping to prevent consultation fatigue and to maximise value from findings. As part of this role, the Research Standards Panel also sets the Council's Annual Research Plan,

which outlines all the Council's planned research and consultation for the year ahead.

#### **Self-Completion Surveys**

We undertake surveys in-house and have survey-designing software. This enables us to print questionnaires with unique reference numbers on, produce e-forms, scan incoming forms, verify the data and export it to a range of software packages for analysis.

#### **Residents Survey Panel – RSvP**

The Residents Survey Panel is our citizens' panel of 1,300 local residents, which we manage in-house. The Panel is set up to reflect the population in terms of age, gender, economic activity and area of residence. We undertake four surveys per year, including a refreshment exercise, where we replace one-third of the Panel. We also use our Panel for other research such as focus groups and Deliberative Polls®. The Panel was set up in November 2001 and we achieve response rates of between 60-80 percent.



#### **Spatial Impact Model**

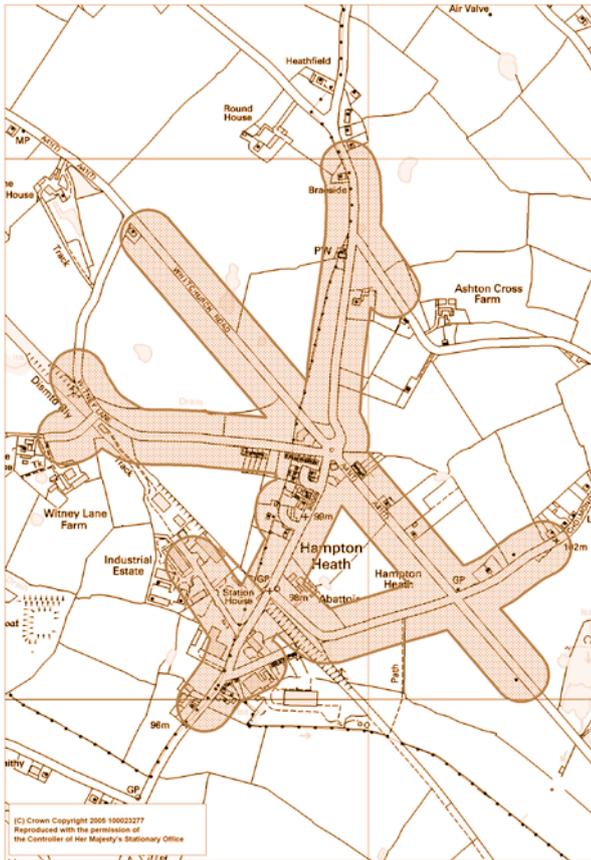
Our 'Spatial Impact Model' uses a number of data sets, together with a GIS (Geographic Information System), to look at where services can best be located. It can create bespoke demographic profiles for catchment areas around different facilities and can produce detailed profiles of small populations. By creating catchment areas surrounding particular services (based on travel times or distance), we can estimate key characteristics of the population served by that service. This is especially useful for considering the impact of service closures and investigating where best to introduce new services and facilities for maximum impact.



A good illustration of this is our work in partnership with the "Northern Marches Leader+" Programme, a European Community initiative for assisting rural areas. We have been using the Spatial Impact Model to help prepare funding bids. When potential projects are being put forward, we are able to

## Research at Chester cont...

provide funding bodies with accurate and detailed demographic information relating directly to their designated project area, improving their chances of a successful funding application.



### Looking to the Future

All the systems in the world can only go so far. For us, one of the keys to our further development is the confidence Members have in research, such that we are able to use new and untried methods. So far, the primary research we have undertaken has given us a good understanding the 'general' public view but we must make sure that we understand the needs of our diverse community. In the near future, we are planning to undertake more research with children and young people, disabled residents and people from ethnic minorities. The Council is currently drafting a new Corporate Plan and has recently implemented a revised Community Plan, both of which have research implications. Plus, there are Local Area Agreements, Floor Targets and a range of social issues to get to grips with, all requiring evidence-based decision making. We are planning to work much more closely with our colleagues in the Policy team, to make sure that research really adds value to service improvements. Like many of you, we are finding that the demand for research has never been greater!

**For further information please contact Beverley Wilson, email [b.wilson@chester.gov.uk](mailto:b.wilson@chester.gov.uk)**

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## Creating Effective Research in Local Government - A Toolkit

By **Bob Cuthill**

### One-day Seminar held at LGA London, 23rd November 2005

This Seminar and Workshops, jointly organised by LARIA and the Local Government Association (LGA), launched the Creating Effective Research Toolkit publication with speakers from local government and the co-author of the Toolkit, Janie Percy-Smith. It was well attended by more than 80 delegates at the LGA Headquarters in Smith Square, London.

### Background

Intended for use by local government researchers and research managers, this Toolkit is the final output from a piece of work commissioned by the LGA and LARIA and was undertaken by Alison Darlow from the Policy Research Institute and Janie Percy-Smith, an independent researcher.

The Toolkit together with the three other pieces of research leading up to it can be downloaded from [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk). Click on 'Publications', select the letter 'R', then enter 'Research Effect' as a keyword (for one of the outputs) or 'Effective Research' (for the other three).

### Presentations

**Janie Percy-Smith** in launching the Toolkit highlighted the underlying problems with research in local government, based on the evidence gathered in her research into the issue, and set out the need for and the means of undertaking effective research. She explained how the Toolkit is designed to provide a comprehensive guide to the elements that contribute to research effectiveness as well as giving practical examples of good practice from a wide range of local authorities and a check-list of possible actions. These covered developing a research culture in authorities, creating research capacity, ensuring good quality of research output, and ably communicating research findings.

**Pete Stratford**, currently from Poole Borough Council, described how an effective research unit had been established in his former authority, Chester City Council, making the point that effective research is possible in small councils. He argued the case for setting up a Research Standards Panel of elected members to steer and co-ordinate the authority's corporate research resources and to oversee quality and dissemination.

**Bryan Hall**, recently retired Research Manager at Cheshire County Council, gave an outline of the forthcoming guide to Managing Research in Local Government which he had been commissioned by LARIA to undertake. Based on his long experience as a research manager, the Guide complements the Toolkit and goes into great depth on the issues surrounding the effective management of research.

### Workshops

Two hours of the day were given over to discussion workshops which looked at how the Toolkit could be implemented and what the main barriers were to be overcome. The morning workshops included short presentations from research practitioners from West Sussex County Council (Kate Bloor) looking at research training issues; from Luton Borough Council (Paul Barton) taking up issues around research quality; and Leicestershire County Council (Harry Mistry) focusing on effective dissemination. The output of these sessions was summarised into a list of "top tips".

## Creating Effective Research in Local Government - A Toolkit cont...

### **Research Training**

- Engage with the Higher Education sector
- Provision
- Personal skills development/quality raising
- Helps to retain staff (and skills)
- Ensure consultants leave skills legacy
- In their best interests over long-term
- Improves commissioning skills
- Share and swap knowledge and skills with community partners

### **Research Quality**

- Have a set of research standards/ethics
- Have an "Experts" list for various research disciplines in the organisation
- Have good research project plans and management

All these should be underpinned by a "senior champion" (plus a forum) able to influence.

### **Research Dissemination**

- Effective presentation
- Plain English; easy to understand
- But must maintain standards (eg confidence levels etc)
- Get out there!
- Promote research (even if it only comes to the fore when things go wrong!)
- Fairs, seminars
- Research champion
- Product availability
- Website
- Newsletter, bulletin, register

The afternoon workshops comprised facilitated discussions on identifying and overcoming the barriers to making research effective which generated the following list of suggestions:

### **Identifying Barriers**

Limited resources; organisation culture and resistance to change; low status of research and researchers with little or no support; low research confidence; misunderstanding of what research is; policy led rather than research led; no perceived use for research to identify knowledge gaps; research ignorance amongst political decision makers; prevalence of common knowledge; media cynicism regarding research results; ease of commissioning consultants; unqualified researchers and lack of research skills in analysis, design, software; resistance to research dissemination; long lead time & often too late; research undertaken too far from service delivery; misuse of results; poor sharing of information; lack of incentives etc.

### **Overcoming Barriers**

Identify training needs for researchers and make available appropriate and affordable training programmes; firm up research job descriptions; develop career paths for researchers; raise awareness of research needs in organisation; bargain for resources and look to bring in partner resources; consider selling services to external partners and market; identify means of proper research management; identify research champions among politicians and senior officers; raise research awareness among service heads and politicians; manage expectations; ensure consultants leave skills legacy; work with partners in joint research programme etc.

## Improving Migration and Population Statistics Project (IMPS)

**Amanda Blunden of the ONS brings us up to date on this major initiative, including the outcomes of a recent Local Authority Workshop.**

In 2005 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) announced the establishment of the 'Improving Migration and Population Statistics' Project (IMPS).

The aims of this project are to:

- Improve migration and population statistics produced by the ONS
- For the 2011 Census, avoid the problems that occurred with the 2001 Census when there was a large difference (1.2 million) between the Census and the rolled-forward mid-year population estimates (MYEs)
- Gain a better understanding of the causes of any difference that does occur

### Background

Producing population and migration statistics is increasingly challenging. The population structure is changing rapidly as a result of changes in society which include increased mobility and different living arrangements. These changes have coincided with a drive for 'evidence-based policy' which demands improvements in accuracy and timeliness and statistics at smaller levels of geography. ONS recognises that the ability to successfully measure the population is key to its reputation.

Through the IMPS project, ONS are making a substantial investment to improve migration and population statistics. This is in addition to the ongoing work carried out as part of the annual mid-year estimates production round. The IMPS project is primarily research based, allowing ONS to investigate if there are ways to improve the population statistics and establish where it is possible to introduce changes to sources and methods that will improve the quality of statistics.

In 2004 ONS published the results of the Local Authority studies which focused on problems with the 2001 Census which contributed to the large difference between the Census results and the inter-censal estimates. The IMPS project will now concentrate on potential issues with the estimates

including how they might be improved to reduce the risk of a large difference in 2011.

### Components of IMPS

#### 1. Taking forward recommendations from the National Statistics Quality Review of International Migration Statistics

Migration, particularly international migration, is the most difficult component of population change to estimate. ONS recognised this issue before Census 2001 results were released by initiating the National Statistics Quality Review on International Migration Statistics.

The Quality Review made recommendations for improving both (i) the estimation of total migration flows to and from the UK, and (ii) the allocation of international migration to local areas.

The research to take forward these recommendations is currently being pursued by both ONS and the Home Office. An implementation plan was published in January 2004 and can be found at:

**[www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/quality/reviews/population.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/quality/reviews/population.asp)**, along with a brief update of progress.

#### 2. Improvements to the demographic analysis capability

Specific aims of this work include exploring the requirements for population base definitions in addition to 'usual residence,' and using demographic analysis to better understand more complex living arrangements. Both of these areas are key inputs to the 2011 Census.

#### 3. Studies of local and national data sources for improving the Mid Year Estimates (MYEs)

These studies aim to:

- examine where there is an appreciable risk of the MYEs underestimating or overestimating the population as a whole and/or for particular population age/sex groups, Local Authorities (LAs) or types of LA;
- investigate the potential usefulness of particular data sources at a national level, across all LAs and for particular types of LA;

## Improving Migration and Population Statistics Project (IMPS) cont...

- work in partnership with a small number of Local Authorities to investigate whether national and local knowledge and sources not used at present could be used to assist the compilation of intercensal population estimates.

Research into the use of national data sources is already under way and progress will be reported on the IMPS web page. Four LAs have agreed to participate in the first round of LA case studies. They were selected using an evidence-based framework which clustered LAs according to where there was potential risk of over- or under-estimation. More information can be found at:

**[www.statistics.gov.uk/imps](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/imps)**.

### **LA Workshop**

To complement the LA case studies, a workshop was held in London on 29 November 2005. This gave LAs an opportunity to feed their ideas for researching improvements to the MYEs into the IMPS research project. There were several recurring themes; in particular the methods and sources for measuring and distributing migrants (internal and international) and special population groups (e.g. armed forces personnel).

Delegates discussed the data sources, analysis and local knowledge which could be used to improve the estimates in problem areas by considering:

- How ONS could improve the estimation of total in- and out-migration
- What further research could be carried out to better understand the relationship between housing, dwellings and population
- How ONS could better measure armed forces personnel, civilian staff and their dependents within the population estimates
- The patient register as a data source, and if anything could be done to improve it and its use
- How ONS could improve measures of internal migration especially for special population groups, e.g. transient populations, young adults and students
- How ONS could improve the distribution of international migrants including asylum seekers
- How ONS could make better use of local knowledge and expertise to improve the MYEs e.g. second homes, change between censuses

These sessions identified some useful sources and ideas. Many of the outcomes from the workshop have been incorporated into the IMPS Research Plan which will be published on the National Statistics website. Consideration is also being given to holding further workshops in 2006.

### **4. Developing a vision for the Integrated Population Statistics System (IPSS)**

The final component of IMPS is the Integrated Population Statistics System. A vision to combine census, survey, and administrative data, linked at individual person level, to create a single, comprehensive population statistics database was set out in an ONS consultation document in October 2003. ONS recognise that there are both legal and technical issues to overcome in creating this vision and these will be investigated in the next phase of the work.

### **Contact details**

**For more information on the IMPS project see [www.statistics.gov.uk/imps](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/imps) or email your questions to: [IMPS@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:IMPS@ons.gsi.gov.uk)**

## 2011 Census Outputs: Aims and Principles

By Angele Storey

In an article carried in full on the LARIA website ([www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk)), the Office for National Statistics (ONS) sets out key high level aims and principles for 2011 Census outputs. The aims are as yet aspirations and, because of the necessity to work within set cost constraints at the outset, it may not be possible for all to be delivered. Nevertheless, ONS are looking to start discussions early in order to understand user priorities and use them to inform the overall 2011 planning process.

The aims are grouped into those that relate to **data access, statistical disclosure control, geography and quality**.

The Registrars General of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have, subject to the need for approval where appropriate by the relevant legislature, agreed to aim for harmonisation on a number of key aspects of the 2011 Censuses. These are also discussed in the article, and include:

- agreeing common methodologies on disclosure control and estimation methodology in advance of the Censuses;
- consistent, coherent and accessible statistics for the UK and for each component country, with a joint database seen as a desirable way of facilitating that outcome; and
- a common approach to output specifications, data quality, data formats and timing of releases.

To read the full article, please go to [www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk) and click on 'LariaNews'. For further information please contact Angele Storey (2011 Census Outputs, ONS) on [angele.storey@ons.gov.uk](mailto:angele.storey@ons.gov.uk)

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## 'Diary Room' Research with Teenagers

By Sara Childs

### Background to the Youth Leisure Day

On Saturday 24th September 2005, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council held a Youth Leisure Day event targeting young people in the Borough between 13-17 years of age. The philosophy behind the day was to offer a programme of exciting activities organised and supervised by young people in order to encourage as wide a participation as possible. Approximately 1,000 young people attended the event – more than we anticipated.

The chosen venue had the advantage of an outdoor square where the event was centred, but the space and meeting rooms available inside were also utilised for activities. Initiatives on the day included a skate ramp, basketball shooting, art and dance workshops, a seminar from Medecins sans Frontiers, a press office containing information on local clubs and activities for this age group, a makeover with stylists, DJ sessions, a catwalk fashion show and a full line-up of music by local young people.

### The Big-Brother-style Diary Room

When organising the event, it was decided that the captive audience of 13 to 17 years olds at the Youth Leisure Day would be too good an opportunity to miss. How to consult with them in an interactive way was a challenge. How could we capture the imagination of the young people in the Borough, engage them, and foster enthusiasm for activities that the Council is involved in? The answer was inspired by the latest series of Big Brother, and came in the shape of a "Diary Room", where young people could express their views on the services and facilities provided in the Borough for their age group.

The Council worked closely with Lightrush (a local youth group organised by Surrey County Council) to help develop and film this consultation using their specialist filming equipment. The young people in this group ran the Diary Room on the day so the consultation was very much run by young people for young people. The Market Research Society was approached for advice on the relevant ethical and legal considerations, and a member of the Council's

Service Improvement Unit (with responsibility for consultation) was there on the day to ensure that these guidelines were adhered to, and to help out if required.

Crib cards were prepared containing broad question areas along with specific queries, so that the young people running the Diary Room could ask questions in a professional way. Areas of enquiry included things young people are happy / unhappy about; their views of the Council; what they do in their spare time or would like to be able to do; what sports they participate in or would like to participate in; their thoughts on public transport, parks, and the youth café held at Starbucks in Epsom each Friday night; how they would like the Council to communicate with them; what music they like; what entertainment they would like to have; and their concerns about community safety.

Participants of the Diary Room were given the opportunity to enter a free prize draw, which was held at the end of the day.



Prizes, donated by local businesses, included beauty products, vinyl records, beauty bags, vouchers for a free hair cut and blow dry, cinema vouchers, art canvasses, fitness centre membership, free meal vouchers and high street gift vouchers.

## 'Diary Room' Research with Teenagers cont...



The consultation was held in an inflatable "Office in a Bucket", which the Council hired for the day. An inflatable sofa was purchased very cheaply, which was used for the young people to sit on when interviewed. The film equipment was also set up inside the "Office in a Bucket". One young person (female, aged 15) commented: "This is great. I love it. Especially in a big inflatable thing. What better way could there be to hear our voice?". 96 young people were interviewed on the day.

### Research Findings

A report on the research findings has been written, and was presented to Councillors and partners in December. Lightrush also produced a short video of the proceedings, which was presented to the full Council. The findings will be used to inform youth development in the Borough, and in particular to provide direction as to what services and facilities this age group wants to see.

The Council recognises the importance of using these research findings to make decisions regarding services and activities for young people in the Borough that will make a difference to this audience. Action will be taken as a result of these research findings, as we need to demonstrate that we are listening to what young people have to say. These actions will help to ensure that the Council delivers its corporate priority of improving services for young people.

### The Success of the Day

The day itself was an undoubted success. The response and excitement of the young people on the day was fantastic. A key factor in its success was their involvement in planning the event as well as running it.

Although some of the young people interviewed were very giggly, making it difficult to transcribe what was said, and a minority were mucking around with silly answers (some of the things they said they did in their spare time left nothing to the imagination), those who did get involved really enjoyed being able to have their voices heard. There was a continuous queue of people waiting to be interviewed, with some trying to come back again and again. At the end of the day, young people were still queuing to be interviewed, and had to be let down gently by the people organising the Diary Room. It was appreciated how openly they spoke about their thoughts and feelings on a wide range of issues.

Plans are now under way for this year's Youth Leisure Day... the challenge is how to make it even better in 2006!

**For further information regarding this consultation, please contact Sara Childs, Service Improvement Manager on 01372 732182 or email [schilds@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:schilds@epsom-ewell.gov.uk)**

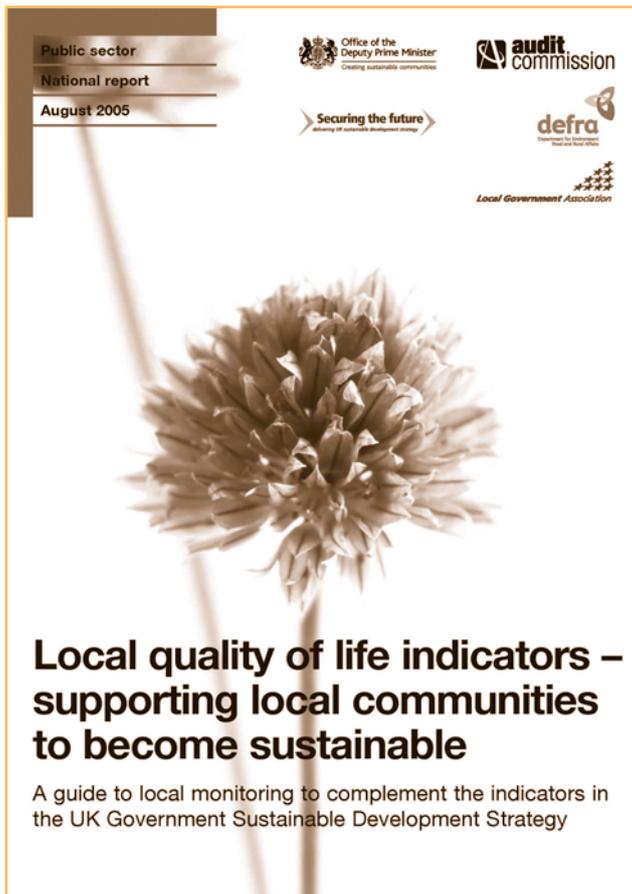
## Area Profiles – a key tool for helping to improve local areas

By Davy Jones

For over two years the Audit Commission has been developing and refining its Area Profiles project. Our aim has been to develop tools that can help public service managers and others get a better picture of the health and well-being of their local areas.

In October this came to fruition, with the launch of our ground-breaking Area Profiles website ([www.audit-commission.gov.uk/areaprofiles](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/areaprofiles)). It's the first website of its kind – bringing together a library of public service data to paint a rounded picture of the quality of local public services. The website comprises some 300 key contextual and performance indicators which cover all local authority areas in England, the judgements and assessments of other regulators, and the results of surveys of residents and service users for each local area. And this is just the start.

Later versions of the website will include more data and even cost information, giving a more detailed perspective.



### Background

The Area Profiles project grew out of my involvement in developing a set of 'quality of life' indicators with Defra, the ODPM and the LGA some four years ago. The idea of identifying and then collecting a small number of indicators, from which we could extrapolate the health and well-being – the quality of life – of a local area, was a major challenge. We have revised these indicators in a new 'quality of life' report this summer, which sets out 45 indicators which will complement the national indicators in the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy. But the original concept led the Commission to think seriously about how we could go about developing a more rounded picture. A small project team was established, and we were given resources to come up with a series of tools through which we could analyse the different components that contribute to local quality of life and services.

It's an ambitious project - one that reflects the Commission's commitment to be at the leading edge of public service improvement. If regulators, service providers and even citizens have easy access to a comprehensive assessment of the quality of services on an area basis, the opportunities are clear. The website can be used to lever change, to encourage managers to look at how the best perform, and to help focus the energies of regulators on those areas where action is most needed.

### Area Profiles Website

This first phase launch of the website (October 2005) provides public service managers with comprehensive performance and inspectorate information for their local areas. Want to know how people feel about crime in

## Area Profiles – a key tool for helping to improve local areas cont...

your area? Click through to the Area Profiles website and you can find the answer. Want to know how one district compares to another in a county area, or any other in England?

The website is structured around ten 'themes' to make searching for relevant data easier. These themes include 'community cohesion and involvement' and 'community safety' to name two. Linking back to our work with ODPM and Defra, the website, of course, features the 45 indicators that present a snapshot of 'quality of life' published in our report this summer.

One of the concerns we faced was the burden of collecting more data from local authorities and other public service providers. But, uniquely, the Area Profiles website brings together data already collected for other purposes.

In its first stages, we expect the website to be particularly helpful for policy and performance leads, service managers and senior officers across local public services. The next phase of the project, due in April 2006, will incorporate more data and assessments, from even more service areas, making the Area Profile website the first stop for all those involved in service planning.

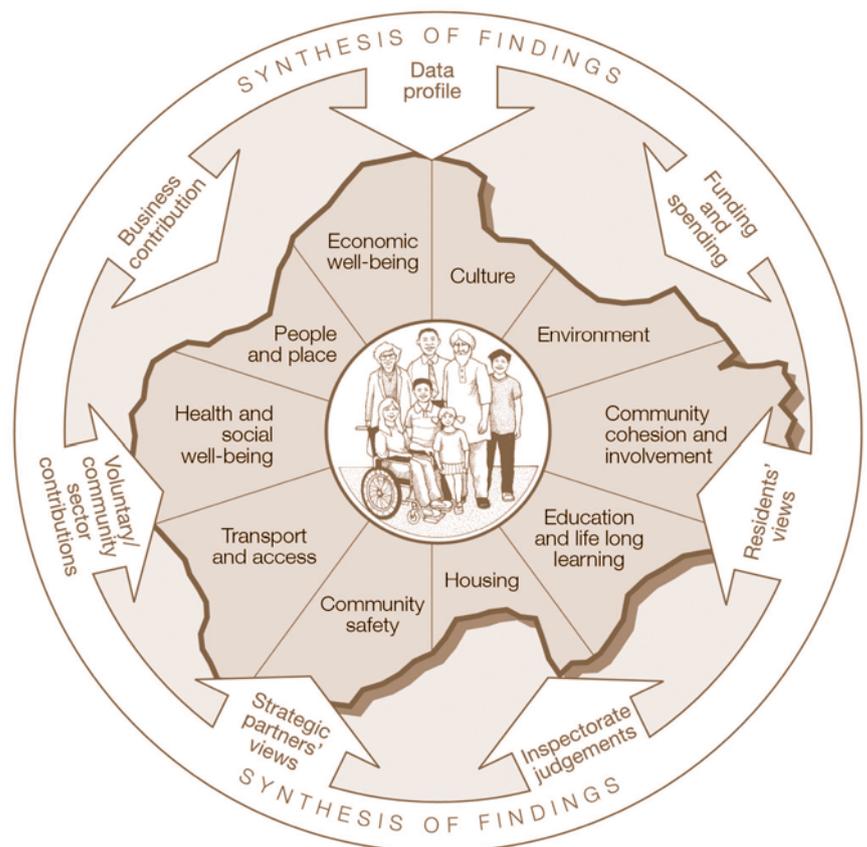
### The Wider Picture

But the website is only one manifestation of the work of the Area Profiles team. Much of our work, piloted over two years with dozens of local authorities across England, has been on developing the tools that analyse the contribution of a far wider group of factors. We are designing ways to assess the capacity and contribution of the voluntary and business sectors and review the quality of life and local services from diverse perspectives such as those of older and black and minority ethnic citizens. Brought together, all this information can be moulded into an overall picture of the quality of life and local services.

The illustration shows how we expect the Area Profiles project to link together.

Our work in this area fits comfortably with Government policy. It provides helpful context information and key performance data that can be used for Local Area Agreements (LAAs), Joint Area Reviews (JARs) and the Commission's own Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). With the focus of local public services shifting towards outcomes, multi-agency working and value for money in each locality, area-based assessment of local public services is expected to become more common. Area Profiles can play an important role in supporting this important shift in focus over the next few years.

**For further information, please contact Davy Jones, Head of Area Profiles Project, Audit Commission**  
**Email : [area-profiles@audit-commission.gov.uk](mailto:area-profiles@audit-commission.gov.uk)**



## LARIA Conference 2006

### RESEARCH THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE Monday 20th - Wednesday 22nd March 2006 - University of Exeter

#### Conference Programme

##### Monday 20th March 2006

11.00 - 13.45	Registration and Coffee
12.45	Lunch
13.45	<b>Plenary:</b> Research That Makes A Difference - A Personal View: <b>Mike Emmerich (Institute for Political &amp; Economic Governance, University Of Manchester)</b>
14.50	Conference announcements
15.00	Tea/Coffee
15.20	<b>Plenary:</b> Changing Thinking, Changing Behaviour - Making More Impact With National Studies <b>Roger Sykes (Audit Commission)</b>
16.25	Break
16.30	<b>Plenary:</b> Are You Planning To Make A Difference?: <b>David Allen (Independent Researcher)</b>
17.35	Break
18.30	<b>Wine Reception</b>
19.15	<b>Conference Dinner</b>

##### Tuesday 21st March 2006

	Stream 1	Stream 2
9:00	The State Of The Countryside – Emerging Trends And Patterns: <b>Ken Roy (Commission For Rural Communities)</b>	Claims And Evidence On Race Integration – Getting A Research Message Heard: <b>Ludi Simpson (University Of Manchester)</b>
10:10	Coffee/tea	
10:30	Agricultural Change And Policy Delivery By Local, Regional And Central Government - Some Observations <b>Matt Lobley (University Of Exeter)</b>	Population Definitions And Preparation For The 2011 Census: <b>Chris Smith (Office For National Statistics)</b>
11:35	Break	
11:40	So What Does Performance Mean To People And Communities In Rural Areas?: <b>Graham Biggs (Chief Executive, South Shropshire District Council)</b>	<b>“Showcase”</b> : 10-minute presentations as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Of Research To Drive Customer Service Improvement And Stakeholder Engagement: <b>Ellie Broughton (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council)</b></li> <li>• Promoting Race Equality In Rural Scotland: <b>Adrian Shaw (South Ayrshire Council)</b></li> <li>• Local Authorities’ use of the 2001 census: <b>Ed Dunn (Warwickshire County Council)</b></li> <li>• A Quantitative Survey of Travellers’ needs - The Cambridgeshire Experience: <b>Trevor Baker (Cambridgeshire County Council)</b></li> </ul>
12:45	Lunch	
13:45	<b>Plenary:</b> The Importance Of Local Information And Intelligence In Improving Local Government Services: <b>ClIr Des Hannon (Devon County Council)</b>	
14:25	<b>Plenary:</b> Community Cohesion In Pendle – From Research To Policy And Back Again: <b>Christine Collingwood &amp; Sarah Gaskill (Pendle Borough Council): Winner of LARIA Excellence in Research Award 2005 (Sponsored By CACI Ltd)</b>	
15:10	<b>LARIA AGM</b>	
15:50	Tea/Coffee	
16:15	<b>Visit To The Met Office</b> (Places allocated on first come, first served basis - request places on booking form)	
18:15	<b>Informal Discussion Groups</b> (with wine/fruit juice provided) (1) Co-ordination Of Research And Consultation: (2) Researching Young People (3) Your Biggest Research Disaster! - Lessons Learned: (4) Using Computer Technology To Design Questionnaires And Capture Data	
19:30	Dinner	

## LARIA Conference 2006 cont...

Wednesday 22nd March 2006

Stream 1	Stream 2
9.00 Cohesive Commissioning? The Pleasures And Perils Of Research Partnerships: <b>Adele Smaill (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council)</b>	Root Causes – Understanding How Perception Impacts On Reputation: <b>Robin Horsfield (Brahm) &amp; Brad Webster (East Riding Of Yorkshire Council)</b>
9.50 Break	
9.55 Filling The Data Gap – ODPM Town Centre Statistics: <b>Mark Thurstain-Goodwin (Geofutures) &amp; Darren Stillwell (Office Of The Deputy Prime Minister)</b>	Modernisation Of DWP Statistics – The Tabulation Tool: <b>Catherine Edwards (Department For Work &amp; Pensions)</b>
10.45 Tea/Coffee	
11.05 Reviewing Strategic Partnership Activity In Calderdale - The Impact Of Research Definitions, Participation And Context On Shaping Council Policy: <b>Martin Purcell (Leeds Metropolitan University)</b>	Examining The Ecological Footprint Of New Housing: <b>Chris Doyle (South Ayrshire Council)</b>
11.55 <b>Plenary: Research Councils And Local Government – Building Bridges: John Mawson (Warwick Business School &amp; Chair Of Local Authority Research Council Initiative)</b>	
13.00 Lunch (Optional)	

**Cost:** £295 for full three days (other options available). Discounts are available for LARIA corporate members and early bookings.

**Venue:** The University of Exeter is on the outskirts of Exeter with excellent motorway links nearby (M5), rail links (ten minutes walk from Exeter St Davids), and near Exeter Airport with cheap flights from around the country.

**Booking:** A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter, or can be obtained from the LARIA website [www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk), or from Graham Smith, LARIA Administrator and Events Organiser. Tel 01642 316576 Email: [larioffice@aol.com](mailto:larioffice@aol.com)

**Last year's conference was yet again fully subscribed, so please book early to avoid disappointment.**

**Sponsors:** Sponsors of the 2006 LARIA Annual Conference include:

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**Local Authority Research Council Initiative (LARCI)**  
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**mruk research**  
**MVA Ltd**  
**QA Research**  
**RBA Research**

## Tackling deprivation in Rotherham

By Michael Hellewell, Research and Statistics Officer, Rotherham MBC; Tom Smith, Director, OCSI.

### How detailed analysis can make the difference in identifying inequalities at a local level

The Rotherham Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) sets out how the Strategic Partnership is tackling deprivation and exclusion across the Borough. As part of the strategy, Rotherham's own local 'Neighbourhood Statistics' project has developed information about Rotherham that enables the identification of inequalities at a small area level within the Borough. This has included the creation of a bespoke 'Local Index of Multiple Deprivation' at Output Area level. This approach has contributed greatly to the understanding of Rotherham's population at a much more local level than previously possible.

The "Deprivation in Rotherham" study was commissioned by Rotherham as part of the process to review and refresh the NRS, and to develop a wider and deeper understanding of the deprivation trends and patterns across Rotherham. The Council commissioned Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) to carry out the study. OCSI, a spin-out consultancy from the University of Oxford team that developed the Indices of Deprivation 2004 and 2000, have carried out a number of local studies analysing the social and economic deprivation evidence-base.

The project carried out a wide range of analysis, including: identifying how Rotherham and its most deprived areas were "closing the gap"; developing an atlas of deprivation; validating the Rotherham NRF targeting strategy; and helping update the way Rotherham monitors the impact of programmes.

Data sources that were used in the project included the Indices of Deprivation 2004 (ID2004), Census 2001, DWP benefit datasets, and DfES pupil attainment data (from the residential-based PLASC dataset). Detailed datasets from local partner agencies were also used in the study, including Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit information, LEA datasets, life expectancy and mortality rates, teenage pregnancies, Higher Education applications, and crime and housing datasets.

The sections below represent just some of the key findings from the Study.

### Tackling deprivation

The high multiple deprivation levels across Rotherham are mainly driven by Income, Employment, Health, and Education and Skills deprivation, with the Borough ranked among the most deprived 20% of Districts in England on these domains. Education and Skills show the highest levels of deprivation, with Rotherham ranked in the most deprived 10% of English Districts and more than one-quarter of its SOAs among the most deprived 10% in England.

Although multiple deprivation levels across Rotherham are high, the Borough made progress in reducing deprivation between the ID2000 and ID2004 time points<sup>1</sup> in the context of other Districts across England. This change appears to be due to improvement in levels of Education and Skills deprivation, and to a lesser extent Income and Employment deprivation.

## Tackling deprivation in Rotherham cont...

### Helping target unemployment and worklessness programmes

The study showed that employment rates across Rotherham increased at a faster rate than England, the region and the other NRF areas in recent years, from 66% in 1997/8 to 73% in 2003/4. This was also reflected in unemployment levels, with large falls in people receiving Jobseekers Allowance benefits. However, not all groups are benefiting equally from the increase in employment opportunities across the Borough - employment rates among older people, lone parents, those with no qualifications, and non-white female groups show significantly poorer levels and rates of improvement.

The most deprived areas across Rotherham show some of the best progress in reducing unemployment levels, but the picture is very different when looking at sickness levels. Across Rotherham, people on sickness benefits (such as Incapacity Benefit) outnumber those on unemployment benefits by four to one, and in some areas this ratio is even higher. The numbers of people on sickness benefits was fairly static over recent periods, with the most deprived areas showing increases in the numbers and rates of people receiving sickness benefits.

### Improving adult skills in BME groups

Although adult skills are low across Rotherham, with 37% of all adults having no qualifications (compared with 29% across England and 33% across the region), both employment-related training and working age qualification levels are increasing across the Borough, likely to be linked to the rise in employment levels.

However, there is evidence of an adult skills generational effect in the BME groups. Older age groups (those aged 50 and over) are not significantly less qualified than the same age white groups. But the difference is striking at the younger age groups, in particular the 25 to 49 year olds, who are significantly less qualified than the same age white groups. This points to an increasing disengagement with education and training among the younger BME groups across Rotherham, and Rotherham is targeting additional NRF support to BME groups.

### Targeting the right areas and communities

The OCSI study found that the Local Index of Multiple Deprivation was an effective and accurate method for identifying the geographical target areas for neighbourhood renewal resources. Additionally, there was a strong match between the LIMD and national deprivation datasets including the ID2004 and key benefits datasets.

Evidence from the study and the validation of the Targeting Strategy supported two extensions to the way neighbourhood renewal support was targeted:

- The NRS target areas (see map over page) were extended from the 20% to the 25% most deprived areas, resulting in the identification of 13 Target Areas.
- The study further highlighted that geographical targeting alone would not tackle multiple deprivation in Rotherham, and four target groups have been highlighted for NRF support:
  - Minority Ethnic Communities and Asylum Seekers
  - Disabled People and their Carers
  - Vulnerable Older People and their Carers
  - Deprived Children and Young People

## Tackling deprivation in Rotherham cont...

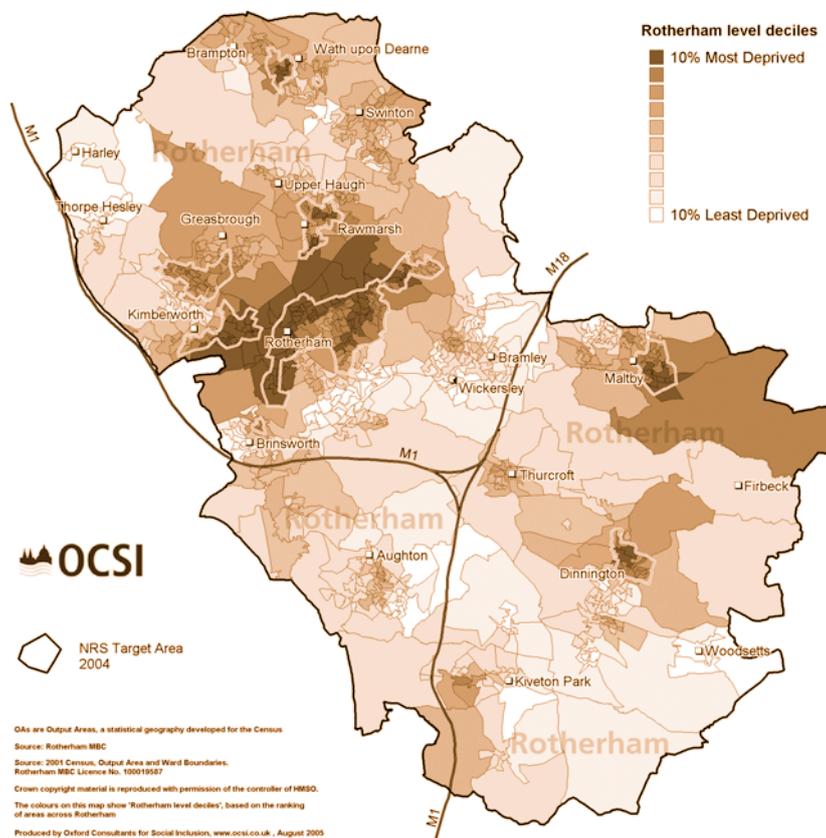
### Future Benefits

The study has provided a robust analysis of the trends and patterns across Rotherham, helping the Rotherham Partnership tailor the revised Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and programme commissioning to the needs of local communities. And monitoring the success of the strategy over time will enable additional support to be directed to those areas and groups that are doing less well across the Borough, as well as evaluating the impact of the NRF programmes in helping Rotherham close the gap.

**Michael Hellewell can be contacted directly on [Michael.Hellewell@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Hellewell@rotherham.gov.uk). Tom Smith at OCSI can be contacted directly on [tsmith@ocsi.co.uk](mailto:tsmith@ocsi.co.uk), 0870 240 1474.**

<sup>1</sup> Analysis took account of differences in methodology between the ID2004 and earlier ID2000

### Rotherham Local Index of Multiple Deprivation (LIMD)



## Prioritising and Predicting

### An insight into how a small council has developed an innovative and effective approach to performance management

By Geoff Bushell

While councils nationwide are debating the merits, or otherwise, of the latest larger set of Best Value Performance Indicators, most are resigned to getting on with the business of setting targets, collecting data, and producing reports. **South Oxfordshire District Council**, meanwhile, has been doing something rather different on performance management, and finding that it works.

#### What really matters?

The government's palette of measures is arguably a bit lumpy, with many measures in some areas, and none at all in others. While some performance managers have been arguing that BVPIs are 'overkill', and others have said that the BVPI set should be more symmetrical, South Oxfordshire DC has posed a more fundamental question – what matters to our residents and to us? The first step in breaking out of the mould was when the Council published its first Corporate Plan in 2004. This struck a balance between what the government said councils should measure, and what local politicians and communities thought was important – informed by extensive consultation through a Citizens' Panel.

#### Linking objectives and targets

Having gone down the recommended route, like many other councils, and agreed a 'Statement of Strategic Intent' and a set of Strategic Objectives, the Council reflected that there was no way to tell whether it was delivering its Strategic Objectives. There was simply too large a gulf between high-level aspirations and detailed performance targets. Therefore, it reviewed its Strategic Objectives and developed a set of Key Aims in between.

Strategic Objectives now set out what is broadly important over a long time period (a four-year plan linked to political administrations), while Key Aims set out what matters this year. The Council chooses BVPI targets, and the parallel set of Local Performance targets, to measure the progress and delivery of Key Aims. The Council reviews the Corporate Plan annually, and replaces completed Key Aims, or those no longer relevant, with new ones reflecting new local priorities.

There are five 'service-based' Strategic Objectives, with the remaining two focused on 'Excellence' and 'Leadership'. 'Excellence' contains underlying Key Aims and targets which focus the Council on delivering value for money – the key test for the local community – and being 'excellent' at its next CPA inspection, while 'Leadership' focuses on proactive involvement in improving quality of life for residents and other stakeholders. The Corporate Plan is subject to a major review every four years, coinciding with elections. Politicians say they find this approach helpful as delivery of the Key Aims is a benchmark against which the public can judge the success of the administration.

#### Setting priorities

Despite these innovations, it has not all been plain sailing. In 2004, the Council made the mistake, with hindsight, of setting high aspirations to be top quartile in every BVPI by the year end. It failed. Now, however, the Council has established a priority for every target, and aims to achieve top quartile performance in all 'key'

## Prioritising and Predicting cont...

priority BVPIs, and in 50 per cent of 'supporting' BVPIs, within three years. Management Team and Cabinet have taken a conscious decision not to invest the Council's limited resources in BVPIs categorised as 'not a priority'. The actions needed to reach the target level of performance are included in annually updated service plans, and the delivery of service plan actions is further cascaded into individual appraisals and development plans.

### Forget the past: worry about the future

Even more fundamental to its approach is South Oxfordshire's focus on future outcomes rather than past performance. When you turn on the TV to watch the weather, it is quite interesting to know how cold or wet it was in any part of the country, but surely it is much more useful to know whether it is going to be hot or rainy where you are travelling to tomorrow.

Heads of Service are empowered to use current and trend performance information, with professional knowledge and judgement, to forecast year end performance. At the end of each quarter, progress indicators are used to forecast whether the target is likely to be achieved at the year end – 'exceeded target', 'achieved target', 'on track', 'below target', or 'not yet known'. For those not paying attention, there is the threat of the performance management system recording 'no information supplied'!

For every target that is 'below' or 'not yet known', Heads of Service are required to propose actions to get back on track. Depending on the priority of the target, the action could be to invest further resources, review processes etc, but it may include stopping doing something else to meet a priority which is under-performing. Revised targets are sometimes set, so that an original target that is likely to be missed can still be managed towards a new level.

### Know early if things are going astray

The important thing about all this is that it is in real time. The performance team collects data every quarter, so that indications that a target might be missed can be acted upon very early in the reporting year. This means fewer surprises at the year end. An internally published list of targets 'on track' at quarter 3 which are subsequently missed at quarter 4 has sharpened realistic forecasting skills. Progress towards individual targets is tracked through 'exception reports' which list only those targets which are 'below', or 'not yet known'.

Management Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee reviews the associated remedial actions, thus ensuring that there is a continual focus on performance throughout the organisation. The involvement of Heads of Service in setting targets, entering forecasts into the performance management system, and regularly updating the Management Team on progress of their targets and service plans, has significantly increased ownership of performance management throughout the organisation. Importantly, Heads of Service own all performance data, not the corporate performance team.

### Contractors as well as internal services

Recognising that a high proportion of its services are outsourced, the Council has implemented a system for assessing the performance of contractors, based on key performance indicators, customer satisfaction, and satisfaction of the Council as client. The Council uses these factors to calculate an annual CPA-like rating. Contractors have responded positively to this. As well as being able to record feedback on the Council's assessment, they can suggest changes which the Council could make to improve the strength of the partnership.

## Prioritising and Predicting cont...

### Key learning points

The combination of agreeing what is important in the short and long term, setting meaningful Key Aims, agreeing priorities - and what is not a priority - for every target, forecasting future outcomes, and regular intervention from senior management focused on exceptions in priority areas, is already leading to increased performance.

**For further details, please contact Geoff Bushell, Performance and Improvement Manager, South Oxfordshire District Council at [Geoff.Bushell@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:Geoff.Bushell@southoxon.gov.uk)**

## LARIA Excellence in Research Award 2005

The Member Development Group met in mid-November to consider the submissions for the LARIA Excellence in Research Awards. We had a good response with submissions from district, county and unitary authorities. The range and quality of research presented was impressive.

This year's **winner** is the Borough of Pendle for their project on 'Measuring and Understanding Community Cohesion – a holistic approach.' We were very impressed with their mixed method approach to this subject, demonstrating methodological innovation in their engagement and involvement of communities and individuals. This research will be presented at the LARIA Conference in March and will feature in a future edition of LariaNews.

The research projects submitted were of a high standard and we would like to **commend** Essex County Council for their Children's Fund consultation. This project was well conceived and delivered, demonstrating innovation in the involvement of young people as researchers.

We also **commend** Stoke City Council for research undertaken as part of their Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative. This was a very thorough, well researched proposal, involving a multi-agency approach combining existing evidence with original data.

Thanks to all the authorities who took the time and effort to submit projects for the award. It was very encouraging, once again, to receive such a good response and to examine the range of good quality research that is taking place across the country.

CACI have confirmed sponsorship of the award for three years with the winning authority being given a free place at the LARIA Annual Conference and provided with up to £2,000 worth of CACI data for their use.

**For further information on the Award Scheme or the above projects please contact Ann Atkinson, tel: 0191 211 5037 or email [ann.atkinson@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:ann.atkinson@newcastle.gov.uk).**

*Research Award* 2005

## ALGIS in LARIA Update

By Jane Inman

### ALGIS in LARIA AGM

ALGIS is delighted to announce that the brand new **Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI)** will be hosting our AGM on **28th March 2006**. The day will include a presentation on the work of the Office of Public Sector Information and in particular its role in promoting the re-use of public sector information. It will conclude with a tour of the Cabinet Office Library. We are very grateful to OPSI and the Cabinet Office for agreeing to host this event and it promises to be a really good day so please book the date in your diary.

More information will be available soon but numbers will be limited so members should watch out for the booking form. If you are not a member, details of how to join are on our web site ([www.algis.org.uk](http://www.algis.org.uk)).

### Freedom of Information etc.

ALGIS was invited to an initial meeting to consider forming a forum of information professionals who would lobby for changes to the legislation and represent the interests of information professionals working in this area. It was a good first meeting and it was decided to widen the remit of the group to other areas of information legislation such as Environmental Information Regulations, the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act.

### Website

Work continues on our website and progress is being made in developing the content. We hope to make it a first port of call for anyone seeking help on local government information issues. Please let us know what you would find useful. Presently we plan to include information on copyright, Freedom of Information, e-government, legal deposit, official publishing, managing information, information competencies and knowledge management. What have we missed?

**Jane Inman**

**Chair of ALGIS in LARIA**

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

## R & I News

### Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

#### Demographic Sustainability in the Outer Hebrides

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, in partnership with Western Isles Enterprise and Communities Scotland, has commissioned a study to provide detailed information on population decline and migration as it affects the Outer Hebrides. The study will offer a comprehensive analysis of the situation in the Outer Hebrides and a clear conclusion in regard to a proposed policy of demographic sustainability for the future.

The Outer Hebrides (also known as the Western Isles) are a chain of islands stretching 130 miles in length and lying off the North West coast of Scotland. Over the last century these islands have experienced a high rate of depopulation, and with it a consequential 'ageing' effect as young people migrate off-island and the birth rate declines. Future predictions from GROS (General Register Office for Scotland) reveal this trend is set to continue and accelerate.

Over the last census decade from 1991 to 2001, the population of the Outer Hebrides experienced a decline of 10.5%; the highest of any Local Authority in Scotland. The islands' population has been falling steadily over the last century from a high of 46,000 in 1901 to 26,502 in 2001; a fall of 42% over 100 years. GROS predict that the population of these islands will fall to 21,725 by 2018, a decline of 17% from 2002 (the highest projected decline in Scotland).

The age structure of the islands has also changed considerably, with a fall in the proportion of young people being most pronounced. From 1981 to 2003 the percentage of the Outer Hebrides population aged 0-4 years old dropped by 39.5%, compared with a Scottish average of 17%. Similar analysis for the 5-29 yrs age group showed a drop of 38.4%. Based on the continuation of current trends, the Outer Hebrides is set to see the largest decline across Scotland from 2002 to 2018 in: those under 5 years of age (-39%); those aged 5-14 (-38%); and those in the peak migration range of 15-29 (-40%).

To meet its objectives, the study will seek to predict

population movements based on present trends and give an indication of the consequential social and economic impacts / policy implications. It will contextualise the local situation with National and European trends by undertaking comparative studies of areas where the population has been increasing / decreasing. A key component of the study will be an investigation into the key factors and motivations which contribute to the decisions of in- and out-migrants. An assessment of what represents a 'sustainable' population in the Outer Hebrides will also be made and the study will evaluate whether depopulation can be reversed via a policy of in-migration.

The Glasgow based consultancy firm 'Hall Aitken' have been contracted to undertake this research project and they will be working in partnership with 'I'onad Naiseanta na H-imrich', the National Centre for Migration Studies (which is based at Sabhal Mor Ostaig College in Skye). The report is anticipated to be released late in 2006.

**For further information please contact  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Research Officer:  
Isla.macdonald@cne-siar.gov.uk**

### Norfolk County Council

#### Black and Minority Ethnic Communities Inclusion Project

In partnership with Norwich and Norfolk Racial Equality Council (NNREC), Norfolk County Council has appointed Ewan Kennedy as a Research Officer on a fixed term post until the end of June 2006, to research the capacity of the voluntary sector to cater for black and minority ethnic (BME) needs. The funding for the post is through the Government's ChangeUp programme, intended to develop support infrastructure for voluntary and community sector organisations.

Reporting to a joint-agency management team, Ewan will be managed within the County Council's Planning and Transportation Department (Demography and Information Team). His job will be primarily: to carry out a detailed needs analysis of existing and newly identified BME support groups; to carry out a skills audit of Norfolk BME voluntary

## R & I News cont...

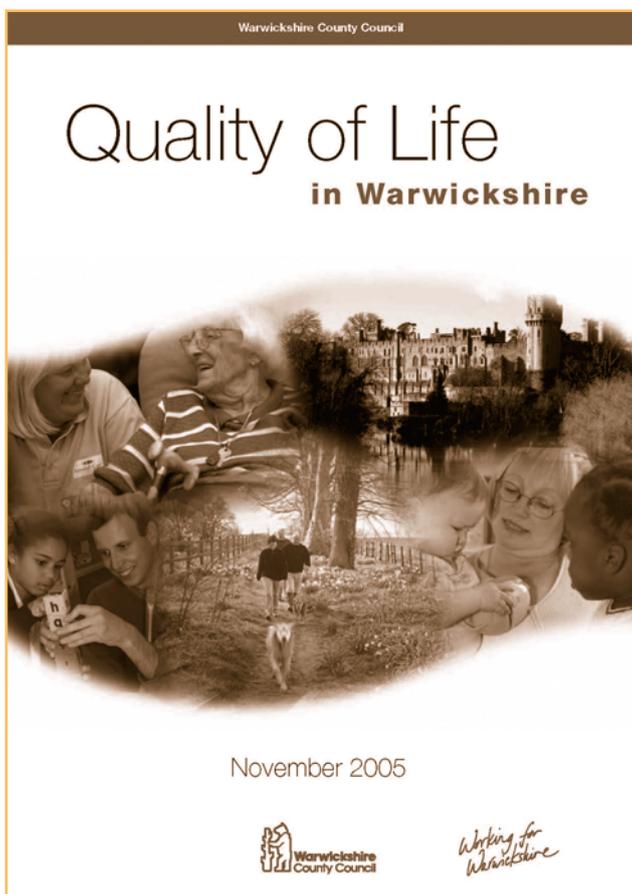
support organisations and frontline organisations that have specific BME projects; to source and gather information to provide an ethnic profile of Norfolk that can be published and kept up to date; and to devise an action plan for meeting the needs of BME communities. He will also be responsible for promoting a community cohesion toolkit, and producing recommendations for future work.

Ewan started work on 12 December and can be contacted on 01603 222 349, or email [ewan.kennedy@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:ewan.kennedy@norfolk.gov.uk).

**For more information contact Wendy Pontin (Demography and Information Team Leader) on 01603 222 737, or email [wendy.pontin@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.pontin@norfolk.gov.uk)**

### Warwickshire County Council Research Unit

#### Quality of Life in Warwickshire 2005



Warwickshire County Council's Research Unit has just published its sixth annual Quality of Life report, providing an update on a wide range of economic, social and environmental indicators. The report will continue to inform policy development, monitoring and review across the County.

For each of the individual indicators, a brief description is provided with an assessment of local performance. These are used to illustrate how Warwickshire's Districts compare with each other and with regional and national data; it also demonstrates how the quality of life in the County is changing over time.

Many of the indicators used in this report have been included in the Audit Commission's Area Profiles project and the Research Unit will be exploring how additional suggested indicators could be monitored in the future. Warwickshire's Quality of Life Report 2004 was featured as a case study in the Audit Commission's 'Local quality of life indicators – supporting local communities to become sustainable' publication in August 2005.

The associated Quality of Life web pages are updated regularly. They contain all the information included in the Report, but also updates on these and other indicators as data is released throughout the year.

Quality of Life in Warwickshire can be accessed on the web at [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/qualityoflife](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/qualityoflife)

#### Accessibility Planning

Accessibility Planning has been introduced in Warwickshire as a result of the Social Exclusion Unit's report 'Making the Connections'. Warwickshire County Council, as the local transport planning authority, is taking the lead on accessibility planning within the County.

Accessibility Planning in Warwickshire aims to enable people, especially those who are regarded as socially excluded, to reach a range of education, training, employment, healthcare, shopping and leisure opportunities, thereby helping to improve overall life chances.

## R & I News cont...

It is important to remember that accessibility is not just about transport, it is also about the location, delivery and design of services. By working with key partners we hope to breakdown some of the barriers currently in existence. To achieve this, a five-stage process is being undertaken; we are currently at stage one of this process, which involves using Accession software to develop a strategic accessibility assessment.

When carrying out accessibility assessments consideration has been given to:

- the different needs and problems of urban and rural communities in the area;
- the different needs and problems of different sections of the local community;
- the different barriers associated with different journey purposes

Results of the strategic assessment will help to shape Warwickshire's detailed local accessibility assessments.

### Nuneaton and Bedworth People's Panel



The Research Unit has recently won the contract to manage the People's Panel on behalf of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council. The team has since refreshed the panel to include a representative sample of more than 1,000 residents from the Borough. So far, two waves of consultation have taken place, helping to shape the Borough's new Housing Strategy and a more general analysis of satisfaction with Council services. The Research Unit was also involved in organising and presenting at the People's Panel 'Annual Event' in October, where

panel members received presentations on previous waves of consultation and had the chance to question the Borough Council Cabinet. A third wave is planned for January 2006 considering sport and recreation services.

**For further information on these topics and the wider work of the Research Unit please contact Spencer Payne on 01926 418645 or email [spencerpayne@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:spencerpayne@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

### Worcestershire County Council

#### Local Area Agreement Performance Management

The Research & Intelligence Unit is leading this work stream in the development of the Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire. Utilising software called TEN, which has been applied to performance in other activities such as Community Safety and the Local Public Service Agreement, the Unit will be producing an on-line system, which will be accessible to partners to drill down from high-level outcomes to detailed indicators. The system will need to be fully functioning by the end of March 2006, and R&I is currently advising the leads for each of the themes of the Local Area Agreement in identifying meaningful performance indicators and targets.

**For more information, please contact David Onions, Tel: (01905) 766712, e-mail: [donions@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:donions@worcestershire.gov.uk)**

#### Worcestershire Economic Assessment 2005/2006

The eighth annual Worcestershire Economic Assessment has recently been published. This year it has again been produced in partnership between the Research & Intelligence Unit at Worcestershire County Council, the Learning and Skills Council, Herefordshire and Worcestershire and the Chamber of Commerce. The assessment is an analysis of current trends and developments in Worcestershire's economy and contains a wealth of information to provide an overview of recent national economic policy in order to establish a framework for, and give meaning to, development in the county.

## R & I News cont...

The success of previous Economic Assessments highlights the need for good quality local labour market and economic information. It maintains the tradition of providing a comprehensive analysis of the local economy, including an assessment of our future prospects to generate and attract inward investment into the local area.

A downloadable PDF version of the document is available on the R&I website at [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/research](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/research)  
For more information, please contact Stephen Russell, Tel: (01905) 766715, e-mail: [srussell@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:srussell@worcestershire.gov.uk)

**Problem:**  
Research & Intelligence Unit needs interactive maps, charts and tables for easy dissemination of key indicators and profiles to partners over the Web and on CD

**Solution:**  
InstantAtlas provides a cost-effective, quick and adaptable tool which needs no underlying software and can be updated with new data with minimal effort.

**“Overall, we would give a recommendation for organisations with similar needs to consider using InstantAtlas”**  
David Onions, Research & Intelligence Unit,  
Worcestershire County Council

**For more information visit: [www.instantatlas.com](http://www.instantatlas.com) or call Pierre Jenkins on 0131 624 8935**

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Worcestershire  
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Worcester 93  
Wychavon 49  
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## LARIA People

### A profile of the LARIA Events Group's new Chair, Gerallt Evans-Hughes

Gerallt has worked for BMG Research for almost eight years. He was first appointed to BMG as its Qualitative Research Manager, a position which he held for some eighteen months before being offered the position of National Account Manager for Local Authorities. This was a very interesting time for Local Authority researchers as they were all trying to work out how they were going to address the Best Value agenda, particularly the Big "C" - Consultation. Much of Gerallt's time and energy for the next two years was taken up travelling around the UK, visiting up to three local authorities a day, promoting BMG as one of the UK's leading Social Research Agencies.



It was during this time that Gerallt attended his first ever LARIA Conference in Manchester, back in 1999. He has not missed any since then!!! Very soon after his first encounter with LARIA, Gerallt became an active member of the LARIA Council and he has been a member of the Member Development Group and the Marketing and Promotion Group, and has recently taken up the position of Chair of the Events Group.

Gerallt fully recognises and has a great deal of respect for the way in which LARIA provides an important and an invaluable network for many professional researchers working in the Local Government arena. He himself has learnt a great deal from attending many of the LARIA Conferences and Events and he greatly values the friendship and camaraderie that the LARIA network offers to him at both a personal and at a professional level.

Gerallt is currently the Business Development Manager at BMG Research. He still occasionally gets involved with many of BMG's Qualitative Research projects. Some of his most recent work has been on behalf of the ODPM looking at a wide range of issues such as Procurement, Leadership and Empowerment.

Prior to working at BMG, Gerallt had an extensive and a very rewarding career in Education. He was a Senior Education Adviser for Continuing Education for ten years having been appointed to the Advisory team at the tender age of thirty!! He worked for a period of some nineteen years in a number of different Local Authorities, namely: Dudley MBC, Solihull MBC, Walsall MBC, Knowsley MBC and Watford Borough Council. Gerallt also spent two years working behind bars as the Headteacher/Education Co-ordinator at HMP Stafford. He recently went back on 14th December to HMP Stafford to their Christmas Carol Concert.

Gerallt is still very active in his spare time as he is the Chair of Governors of his daughter's school in West Lancashire. He recently arranged a visit to Lancashire for 25 Swedish Girls (aged 13-15) who were part of the girls' choir from the Karl Johans School in Orebro, and they performed the traditional St Lucia concert at Blackburn Cathedral. Gerallt is also a very keen fly fisherman, gardener (through necessity) and photographer.

### Camden Council Strategy & Research Team

The corporate strategy and research team at Camden Council has been strengthened with the arrival of a new Policy Manager, Halima Khan.

Halima joins the team on secondment from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, which is part of the Cabinet Office. Halima brings with her experience of strategy development, consultation and policy analysis. Prior to working at the Cabinet Office Halima completed a Masters in Public Administration and worked as a policy analyst in a number of non-governmental organisations.

## LARIA People cont...

Halima will head up Camden's corporate strategy and research team for 18 months. Key pieces of work will include:

- supporting the development of a new community strategy 2006-2011
- developing ways of co-ordinating different aspects of directorates' research and consultation work - particularly with a focus on user views which will feature in the new CPA framework
- commissioning, managing and carrying out research to support policy development at the corporate level including a major survey looking at social capital in the borough
- supporting civic engagement activities such as managing a programme of consultation and events with CamdenTalks, the borough's citizens' panel.

Halima is supported by three researchers:

- **Debbie Lee Chan**, Research Manager. Debbie Lee trained as a researcher at MORI's Social Research Institute and other posts she has held include Associate Director at ORC International, Director at MRUK Ltd, and Fellow at the Office for Public Management (OPM). Debbie Lee is a member of the LARIA events committee and LARIA Council.
- Two Research Officers are **Victoria Harkness** and **Fung-Yee Lee**. Victoria came to Camden from her post as a Research and Learning Network Manager at Shared Intelligence Ltd., a consultancy engaged in community regeneration, economic development, social inclusion and Government modernisation. Fung-Yee joined us from her post as Policy and Research Officer within Environment and Leisure Services at the London Borough of Southwark. Previous to that Fung-Yee worked at the National Institute for Social Work.

The team at Camden would very much like to hear from colleagues and peers to share good practice, particularly around preparations for CPA with regard to user views. We look forward to hearing from you.

**Please contact Debbie Lee Chan by emailing [Debbie.chan@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Debbie.chan@camden.gov.uk) or by ringing 0207 974 5513.**



*Back row, left to right: Victoria Harkness and Halima Khan, Front row: Fung-yee Lee and Debbie Lee Chan*

## Worcestershire County Council

The R&I Unit at Worcestershire County Council recently appointed Fiona Dougan as a Research Officer. The role has a number of key functions, including the maintenance of the Joined Up Information System (JUIS) programme and the performance management of community safety strategies across the County.

Fiona studied Social Psychology at Loughborough University. She joins R&I having previously worked at the Head Office of a national Housing Association where she was involved in data analysis, particularly related to anti-social behaviour in the organisation's housing stock.



## LARIA Membership Renewal

We would like to remind all readers that membership renewals were due by 31 January. If you have not renewed your membership yet, please do so – if you do not renew your membership (full, associate or corporate) you will no longer receive LariaNews and be informed of LARIA events.

**To renew your membership, please write to or email Graham Smith, the LARIA Administrator at 9 Cortland Road, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough, TS7 0JX (email: [lariaoffice@aol.com](mailto:lariaoffice@aol.com))**

## 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.

## Next Issue

**Copy should be sent or emailed in Word format to the Editor (address on back page) to arrive by 31st March 2006.**

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

## Just the Job

Just a reminder that advertising research jobs on [www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk) is free to corporate members of LARIA. And with corporate membership costing only £60, it could soon pay for itself. Look under 'Job Vacancies' and 'Membership' on the website.

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.

#### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

LARIA wishes to encourage participation in its Activity Groups, 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.