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## LARIA Conference 2006 – University of Exeter

LARIA's Annual Conference was held at the University of Exeter from 20 to 22 March. The focus of this year's Conference was 'Research that Makes a Difference'.



**Mike Emmerich**

### Day One – Monday 20 March

The Conference began with a presentation from **Mike Emmerich** of the University of Manchester. Mike took us on a personal journey through his experience of working at the interface of policy and practice. He illustrated four themes with ten vignettes drawn from the whole span of his career. The four questions he raised were: Do researchers have the 'space' to get to the bottom of issues? How do we deal with 'unwelcome' results? Is consulting the best model for conducting research? and How do we better demonstrate cause and effect? Other points touched on included the need to make research findings fully open and not treat results as a private good; the poor transfer of practice between different authorities; and the need for more interdisciplinary working.



**Roger Sykes**

**Roger Sykes** joined the Audit Commission as Head of Studies in the Policy and Studies Directorate in June 2005, from the LGA. The Audit Commission has a long history of publishing national research reports about local public services, and commissioned OPM to research stakeholder perceptions of the quality and usefulness of those studies. Roger described the research and the steps the Commission is taking to establish a quality framework for the research and increase its impact in the future. He ended with a number of conclusions on how to make an impact.



**David Allen**

**David Allen** then gave a lively and thought-provoking presentation entitled 'Are you planning to make a difference?',

peppered with interesting quotes. Using the less-than-inspiring BVPI Planning Survey as an example, he challenged us to think more carefully about the 'who, what, why and how' in relation to the survey, if planning to make a difference. The importance was stressed of adding the right supplementary questions to make the information more meaningful, and including recommendations when reporting the findings. Only then can service managers use the information to greatest effect in terms of understanding and improving the services they provide.

Day One was rounded off with an enjoyable Conference Dinner, followed by the presentation of the LARIA Excellence in Research Award 2005 to Pendle Borough Council. Christine Collingwood and Sarah Gaskill are seen here receiving the award from David Karfoot, Chair of LARIA, and James Lennon from sponsors CACI.



This was one of David's last duties before retiring as Chair.



The evening culminated in the presentation to him of a specially inscribed LARIA decanter and goblets by Jill Tuffnell, the incoming LARIA Chair.

## LARIA Conference 2006 – University of Exeter cont...



*Conference Exhibition Area*

### Day Two – Tuesday 21 March

On the second day there were two streams, one covering rural issues and the other broadly covering two topics - ethnic minority groups and the Census, including four ten-minute 'Showcase' presentations.

#### Stream One

**Ken Roy**, Director of Rural Analysis at the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk), outlined the background to this newly formed organisation. It is a division of the Countryside Agency, but is expected to acquire legal status in the near future. Work includes studies into rural disadvantage and other aspects of living in countryside. Their reports form part of the CRC's watchdog role, and they aim to raise the profile and understanding of issues facing rural communities, and to enable and trigger an active and informed debate. Ken outlined some of the key findings of the 2005 report. He noted that as you travel into more sparsely populated areas you might see more older people, fewer services, lower incomes, more self-employment, more working at home, and working longer hours for less.

The 2006 report, scheduled for July, will build on the 2005 report and will include a more complete assessment of the direction of change, more reflections of living in the countryside, and work on the concept of sustainable development in rural England. Key challenges include application and recognition of 'urban' and 'rural', selection of indicators and evidence, and finding the balance between national, regional and local issues.

**Matt Lobley** spoke on 'Agricultural Change and Policy Delivery by Local, Regional and Central



*Matt Lobley*

Government'. Matt is Assistant Director of the Centre for Rural Research at the University of Exeter. This talk demonstrated his extensive experience of recognising and mapping the impact of agricultural policy development on patterns of business and effects on individuals. He set in perspective some of the commonly held

perceptions regarding cause and effect between regional and national policy and shifts in agricultural practice, and emphasised the need for appropriately disaggregated mapping data to support policy making and understand its effects. A lively follow-on discussion included consideration of how to engage farmers in local planning and development forums, how much rural research can influence policy, and recognition of the different timescales required for change where farming family histories are involved.

**Graham Biggs** has worked at South Shropshire District Council for over 30 years and became their youngest Chief Executive in 1998. He gave a thoughtful presentation covering issues about community engagement and performance management in partnerships and multi-agency working in rural areas. He emphasised that national targets that drive some agencies are not relevant to local needs.



*Ludi Simpson*

#### Stream Two

At the same time, Stream Two was hearing **Ludi Simpson** of the University of Manchester on the topic of 'Effective research on race and segregation'. Ludi used migration and ethnicity data from the 1991 and 2001 Censuses to challenge a few myths relating to racial segregation. He described a

number of indices of segregation that have been developed, showing clearly that these can be highly influenced by geography, especially the size of area being investigated. The smaller the area the higher the degree of segregation – so make sure that you compare like with like over time!

## LARIA Conference 2006 – University of Exeter cont...

Ludi illustrated his talk with examples of ethnic analysis in both Oldham and Rochdale. He showed that the likelihood of the white population moving away from 'settled Asian' areas was similar to the likelihood of out-migration amongst the non-white population. He showed that the Census contains a wealth of data to inform the analysis of segregation by different profiles of community. It is greatly underused - look at Table KS24 for starters!



**Chris Smith**

Planning for the 2011 Census is now under way and the Conference was very fortunate that **Chris Smith** from ONS was able to outline how this was progressing and in particular to talk about the work of the Population Definitions Working Group (PDWG). Clearly this work is fundamental to both the way that the information is collected

and to what can be released following the Census. The aims of the PDWG are to find out what external data users want from the 2011 Census in terms of population bases and definitions and to provide the 2011 Census team with recommendations based upon the data output needs of users. The talk gave an excellent insight into the vast amount of detailed work that must be undertaken prior to the carrying out of the Census.

The Conference **Showcase Session** involved four separate ten-minute presentations on a variety of topics:-

- The first, on the 'Use of Research to Drive Cultural Change', was given by **Ellie Broughton** from Tunbridge Wells BC. Ellie's paper focused on research projects to assist the Council in reviewing progress on becoming customer-led and engaging with stakeholders.
- The second, 'Researching Race Equality in Rural Scotland' from **Adrian Shaw**, South Ayrshire Council, demonstrated the research methodology needed to undertake surveys of ethnic minority populations in an area where their representation is especially low, and highlighted some of the difficulties encountered.
- The third presentation, on 'The Use of the 2001 Census in Local Government', given by **Ed Dunn** from ONS, examined the approaches to analysis and dissemination, research activities and the

contribution to policy making of local authorities' use of Census 2001 data.

- The fourth and final presentation was given by **Trevor Baker** from Cambridgeshire CC. Trevor's presentation on travellers in the Cambridgeshire area looked at survey aims and methodology, and examined some of the survey difficulties in producing valid results.



**Des Hannon**

The streams came together in the afternoon, starting with a presentation from **Des Hannon** of Devon County Council, who delivered an elected member's view of the place of researchers in local government. His key point was that researchers need to communicate their existence and what they can provide much more effectively. They must be visible and involved in face-to-

face dialogue. They shouldn't 'lurk' or hide themselves away. Other points were the need to provide a professional service which challenged poor briefs, and the need to make sure that new research was genuinely necessary and only undertaken where appropriate results were not already available elsewhere.



**Christine Collingwood**

**Christine Collingwood** and **Sarah Gaskill** of Pendle Borough Council presented with enthusiasm their wide-ranging research on measuring and assessing performance in promoting community cohesion and identifying key cohesion issues in Pendle. This piece of work was the winner of the **LARIA Excellence in Research Award 2005**. As well as



**Sarah Gaskill**

developing key indicators related to desired outcomes of cohesion activities, a postal survey was conducted looking at cohesion which mirrored the BVPI cohesion questions. A mapping exercise also took place on the current level of activity in building community cohesion. Storytelling workshops and a local weekly cartoon strip were

## LARIA Conference 2006 – University of Exeter cont...

also used to gauge perceptions and raise awareness and understanding of diverse communities. Clear evidence of a generation gap has emerged in terms of perceptions. The impact of the research is being considered in terms of service delivery and the integration of indicators into Local Area Agreements including setting targets. You can read more about this project on Page 9.

Seventy-five delegates took the opportunity for an all too brief visit to the **Met Office** in Exeter for an informative presentation on climate change projections by Peter Thorne of the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research (which is part of the Met Office).

Before dinner, delegates had the opportunity of joining one of four informal **discussion groups**. The first group focused on **Co-ordination of research and consultation** within councils and departments. Examples of good practice and emerging ideas to improve co-ordination included:-

- Providing departmental management teams with regular updates on the research and consultation going on in their department
- A central unit to provide advice and support early on in the planning of research
- Service managers to think through the what, why and how in planning consultation
- A research champion amongst senior management
- Identifying research/consultation implications of service plans
- Three-way discussion with service manager, communication manager and research/consultation manager about research requirements
- Three months after research/consultation project, ask what was learnt and the outcomes
- Providing an accessible database of research and consultation that has taken place

The second group, on **Researching children and young people**, was well attended by local authority officers and consultants. One key issue discussed was the use of incentives, felt to be essential in order for the young people to feel thanked for their input and involvement. Methodological issues were also shared, with reports of positive outcomes from innovative mechanisms such as text messaging,

puppets and peer working (young people commissioned to undertake the research with other young people). Key essentials for researching with children and young people were based on three main "must do's for success" :-

- Importance of building up a rapport with the young people
- Use of engaging, young-person-focused methodologies
- Feeding back of results to build up trust for future consultations

Participants in the third discussion, **Your biggest research disaster – lessons learned**, had an opportunity to share their experiences of research and intelligence related slip-ups. All this on the basis that "It's only a mistake if you don't learn from it". Participants were able to come up with plenty of suitable examples, many of which related to problems with surveys. Interesting questions were raised about the extent to which consultants should disclose to their clients any errors of which they became aware. As those present were assured that what they revealed would be treated as confidential, it would be inappropriate to go into more detail!

Finally, **Using computer technology to design questionnaires and capture data**. The received wisdom is that very few councils' research teams use automated data capture to process paper surveys. The discussion group proved that this is far from true. Fuelled by a rather fine Cabernet Sauvignon, the group members recounted their experience of various IT solutions from Snap to Survey Monkey. It appeared from the discussions that paper surveys are still dominant and are likely to be so for many years to come. The majority of the group, however, used some form of technology to process the results of surveys. It appeared from the discussion that some well known products are both overpriced and basically not very good. But there were some excellent products on the market that are both reasonably priced and effective. The conclusion of the discussion was that the wise researcher would do well to consult colleagues on the LARIA Forum before embarking on what could be an expensive folly!

## LARIA Conference 2006 – University of Exeter cont...

### Day Three – Wednesday 22 March

On the final day there was again a choice of two streams.



**Adele Smail**

#### Stream One

In the first stream, **Adele Smail** (Oldham MBC) and **Debra Malone** (Oldham PCT) delivered a joint presentation entitled 'Cohesive Commissioning? The Pleasures and Perils of Research Partnerships'. This examined the issues around the inequalities in health performance between the poorer and more affluent areas of Oldham, identified through a joint survey carried out in 2005 called 'You and Your Community', which also covered community involvement and neighbourhood satisfaction. A range of survey methods was used to gather information from a significant survey base for better comparison purposes.



**Debra Malone**

The advantages (pleasures) of the partnership approach

included financial viability, the development of data sharing and the pooling of resources. Some disadvantages (perils) included the challenges of reaching agreement on the questionnaire content and methodology. It is also essential to have a clear project leader supported by a lead person for each partner organisation. The main conclusions were that the partnership approach gives better value for money and research quality, and the ability to explore cross-cutting issues and reduce consultation fatigue.

**Mark Thurstain-Goodwin & Darren Stillwell** spoke on 'Filling the data gap – ODPM town centre statistics'. The ODPM had commissioned Mark's firm to develop a methodology for defining the boundaries of town centres and providing key data on employment and floorspace by main types of use. Using a lower threshold of four hectares, and combining data



**Mark Thurstain-Goodwin**



**Darren Stillwell**

from the Valuation Office and the Annual Business Inquiry, this project has produced maps of over 1,000 retail areas, with boundaries defined down to postcode units. Density maps can layer one use on another – including entertainment, retailing and offices. No surprises for guessing that the most activity in the UK is at Oxford Circus in London!

Mark and Darren now want the outputs of the project, (maps and data for 2000 and 2002) to be given a robust 'reality check'. That is easy – you can access the maps at [www.iggi.gov.uk/towncent](http://www.iggi.gov.uk/towncent). Get checking!

This was followed by an informative and thought provoking presentation from **Martin Purcell** of Leeds Metropolitan University, outlining his work with Calderdale MBC on Strategic Partnership Activity. Martin presented three main important characteristics that underpin any success in partnership working: transparency, commitment and a trustworthy approach to its coordination and development. He highlighted the importance of a clear leadership approach, married with a clear line of accountability and inclusivity, with support for the capacity and resources element.



**Brad Webster**

#### Stream Two

Meanwhile Stream Two was hearing **Brad Webster** of East Riding of Yorkshire Council. Brad has had a varied career that now brings him to research. His role includes responsibility for the development of a Data Observatory, and the co-ordination of all consultation carried out by East Riding of Yorkshire Council. Together with **Robin Horsfield** of Brahm, who has nearly 15 years experience in research and communications



**Robin Horsfield**

## LARIA Conference 2006 – University of Exeter cont...

planning, he spoke on how perception impacts on reputation. Recognising that perceptions of services are not aligned to performance, they conducted a communications audit prior to developing a communications plan for East Riding that is now under consideration.



**Catherine Edwards**

For some years the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have been in the vanguard of the movement to make administrative data available to assist researchers and policy analysts. **Catherine Edwards** of DWP talked about the new improved data sets and facilities which are now available as a part of the modernisation of the DWP statistics programme, and in particular about the new Tabulation Tool which can be used over the internet. The new data set deals with 100% of cases rather than just a 5% sample as was previously the case, and information on flows is now also now available. The speed of response and the ease of use of the system were both very impressive.



**Chris Doyle**

**Chris Doyle** of South Ayrshire Council gave an interesting and thought provoking presentation on the ecological impact of new housing developments. Chris outlined how over the next 20 years there would be an expansion of 10 to 20 per cent in the number of new dwellings in South Ayrshire. The issue will be to minimise the environmental impact. Chris showed how by using 'ecological footprint' methodology it is possible to plan for various scenarios.

Chris indicated how using the methodology it is possible to determine the direct and indirect impacts of housing and formulate an ecological footprint score for various house types. Minimising the environmental impacts can be achieved by using ecologically sound construction methods such as Ecohomes, BedZED and Z2. Chris reported that some ecological factors were outside a council's control,

but by focusing on house design and waste management it is possible to reduce the footprint of new homes by 15 per cent.

The Ecological Footprint for your council district can be found on the internet at [www.sei.se/reap/local.php](http://www.sei.se/reap/local.php).

To conclude the Conference, the streams merged for a plenary session. Professor **John Mawson** gave a hard hitting presentation outlining not only the benefits of collaboration between local authorities and academia, but also the institutional and other



**John Mawson**

difficulties preventing significant joint activity. In particular he highlighted the constraints placed on academics by the way their work is assessed at the individual level and funds distributed through the Higher Education Research Council and the various management constraints applying in our universities. He concluded by suggesting that perhaps LARCI

and LARIA could work together more formally to explore ways of overcoming some of these difficulties and drew some comfort from the recent changes in the way research is being organised by the LGA and its partner bodies.

**This summary was collated by Ian Coldicott (Norfolk County Council) from notes provided by the chairs and facilitators of the various sessions.**

**Next year's Conference will be held at the University of Lancaster from 27-29 March 2007.**

## From the Chair – Jill Tuffnell



**Jill Tuffnell**

Perhaps I can start my year in office with an overview of some of the key issues which I believe challenge LARIA – and reflect on how we might respond.

First – a look at how well LARIA itself functions. We have just organised another successful conference – successful that is, according to the participants. But for the first time in several years we faltered a bit, with numbers of full conference and day visitors lower than in recent years. Why? Was it the choice of topics? The speakers? The location (Exeter)? The cost? We want those of you who didn't come to tell us why. There will be a short questionnaire sent to members by email. Please take the time to fill it in. We, of all organisations, should consult our members to improve our services!

LARIA operates as a professional 'trade' organisation to researchers working in and for local government – but relies very heavily on volunteers for many of its activities. We have, in recent years, increased our paid help, with promotions, event organisation and administration the key areas so covered. But that leaves

the website administration, marketing, responding to consultations and above all the compilation of 'LariaNews' mainly the responsibility of people who have very demanding day jobs to do. The profile of people attending LARIA events crosses the age and career spectrum from new graduates to those who have worked through several local government re-organisations; however, the profile of our Council and Activity Groups is 'top-loaded'. Many activists, including our current staff, are due to retire in the near future. This poses LARIA with a very real problem. Are there 'younger' volunteers out there, ready and able to take on these roles? If there are, how do we attract them? If there aren't, can we use more paid staff and specialists, alongside volunteers? These issues will be discussed by LARIA Council this spring/summer and we welcome your input.

Secondly, what about the world we operate in? We face a government white paper on the future of local government in June. 'Double devolution' is likely to be a key element. It has a nice ring to it – but what does it mean in practice? What are the implications for both research needs and the organisation of research functions? Do we have 'best practice' models for dealing with this new world?

The year will also see major changes to the organisation of many partner agencies. Police forces look set to combine across large regions. Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities are also being combined. Yet for many local authority services it is the neighbourhood and 'locality' which could increasingly be the focus for delivery. All of this indicates a need for very flexible ways of collecting and depicting data – and a major challenge for establishing protocols for data sharing.

LariaNews, our day events, our conferences and our website provide you with the opportunity to contribute to these debates. Please make full use of them!

**Jill Tuffnell**

## Research in South Somerset

### South Somerset

South Somerset is geographically the largest district council in England covering 370 square miles. Its sizeable extent encompasses both a mixture of sparsely inhabited rural areas and a network of urbanised market towns. The towns of Yeovil and Chard make up just over 33% of the total district population of 155,100 (Mid-2004 estimate ONS). The rest of the district's market towns are small, with over 40% of the population living in settlements of fewer than 2,500 people.

The demographic profile of the South West has changed over the past ten years as the number of older people has risen steadily. It now has the highest percentage of older residents of any English region. Locally the district has a similar profile with 25% of the population being over the age of 60. Population statistics show that South Somerset has a smaller than average percentage (14%) of individuals aged 16-29 years, yet the under-15 age group is comparable to the UK national average.

### Research in South Somerset

The role of Research and Information Officer is a joint funded post between South Somerset District Council (75%) and The University Centre Yeovil (25%). This is a unique and very beneficial collaboration allowing close partnership working between local government and local providers of Further and Higher Education. By joining forces, they can tackle economic issues such as poor graduate retention, a declining manufacturing sector and a low-skills, low-wage culture amongst the district's predominantly small and medium-

sized enterprises. Access to services and rural isolation are also key issues for the district.

The post currently sits alongside officers responsible for voluntary sector development and support for travelling and ethnic minority communities, although it will soon be transferred to a Corporate Development team. Research is very much community oriented, with a lot of contact with voluntary organisations and community groups. South Somerset District Council has recently been awarded Beacon Council status for 'Getting Closer to Communities' and has been shortlisted for Round 7 'Improving Rural Services: Empowering Communities'. Research is undertaken using a variety of methods including questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, literature reviews and secondary analysis.

### Recent key projects for South Somerset District Council include:

- Migrant worker mapping exercise – this is being carried out for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) 'South Somerset Together'. The aim is to find out where our rapidly-growing population of migrant workers are employed and what their language needs are. As a result, the LSP hopes to produce a translated 'Welcome Pack' full of local information which can then be distributed via local employers and community offices.
- Funding events for local groups – community groups are shown how statistics can help to support applications to external funding organisations. They are provided with ward/parish-specific 'stat packs' and one-to-



**Research and Information Officer Tracy Caller**

- one guidance on form completion from the Community Development Officers.
- Development of ward, parish and area profiles combining information from Census 2001, IMD 2004 and Somerset Health and Social Needs Analysis 2004 (a database developed by the local information network SINE). An annual Quality of Life report is also produced combining many local and national datasets into a colourful, easy to read document for use by the general public.
- Yeovil Regeneration Business Survey – the lower end of Yeovil town centre is being improved as part of the Yeovil Vision for 2005-2025. Face-to-face interviews were carried out with the majority of businesses in the area to look at issues affecting local businesses including crime, parking and traffic issues and the appearance of the area. We received a great response and it is hoped that more businesses will be willing to work with South Somerset District Council to improve the area and that employer views will be considered when decisions are made.

## Research in South Somerset cont...

### Higher Education Research

The University Centre Yeovil (UCY) is a partner institute of Bournemouth University, Yeovil College and The University of Exeter. A lot of research is being carried out by the Research and Information Officer around student and employer perceptions of Foundation degrees, local skills shortages and widening participation in Higher Education amongst our rural population. A summary of research into sixth form pupils' perceptions of Higher Education has been published in 'Foundation Degree Forward' (Dec 2005) and the results were presented at a National Foundation Degree conference in June 2005.

### Raising the Profile of Research

As there is no central team for research in South Somerset, it is very important to raise awareness of the activities of the Research and Information Officer both internally and externally. 'Stat!' is a newsletter produced to do just that. It contains all recent and planned projects and is available to all officers, partner organisations and regional contacts.

The Research and Information Officer sits on the LSP working group, Community Development Network, Somerset Intelligence Network and various networks for the University Centre Yeovil. The post involves working closely with AimHigher and the Learning and Skills Council, supporting plans for

Local Area Agreements, and communicating with researchers across the South West.

A key part of the role is to make statistics user-friendly and interesting for the general public and partner organisations. In this way, we are empowering the community to make the most of the information available themselves. Local statistics have helped prioritise areas of health and social need where investment should be targeted, and we have had some great successes in helping groups to use statistics to attract funding for local projects.

**Contact: Tracy Caller**  
**tracy.caller@**  
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**Tel: 01935 462114**

## Community Cohesion in Pendle - Winner of LARIA Excellence in Research Award 2005

At the LARIA Conference in Exeter, the LARIA Award for Excellence in Research 2005 was presented to Pendle Borough Council. We bring you the award-winning project below, then catch up on last year's winners, and tell you how you can enter your project for the 2006 Award.

### Measuring and understanding Community Cohesion – a holistic approach

With high numbers of residents with an ethnic minority (mainly Pakistani) background, we at Pendle Borough Council wanted to explore issues pertaining to social cohesion in greater depth, thus informing the continued development of our Community Strategy. We developed a suite of inter-related pieces of research to look at cohesion from a number of perspectives:-

- Development of shared indicators
- Qualitative Approaches including Story Telling
- Spreading the word – 'Myths over Pendle' cartoons
- Evaluation of policy initiatives

### Development of shared indicators

The first task was to examine how we could measure community cohesion in our area, and to create a baseline to help us gauge our impact. Pendle Borough Council led an inter-agency group tasked with looking at this across East Lancashire. We decided we needed indicators which were **easy to collect, replicable, consistent and meaningful**.

In addition to the core indicators highlighted in the ODPM guidance, we decided to use datasets which

were common across the six districts. By a process of elimination, we settled upon a list of twenty extra indicators, which were then populated for East Lancashire to create a consistent baseline position.

### Qualitative Approaches

Quantitative data alone cannot tell us the full story of community cohesion, and we worked with consultants Drew Mackie Associates to develop qualitative research which had two major strands.

#### Mapping

We conducted interviews with many of the agencies and groups that have a role in the promotion of community cohesion in Pendle, asking representatives to describe what they do and how they see these activities relating to:-

## Community Cohesion in Pendle cont...

- the promotion of community cohesion
- the reduction of barriers between communities
- the promotion of greater tolerance and understanding between cultural groups

Interviewees were then asked to contribute to a "map" that showed a range of organisations involved in community cohesion matters, and the operational links between them. A list of community cohesion projects was also obtained from each organisation.

The map clearly demonstrates the inter-linkages between organisations and the robustness of the cohesion infrastructure.

### Storytelling

We wanted to gauge the attitudes and perceptions that people in Pendle have of other Pendle communities, but felt that the normal questionnaire-based approach alone would not give the richness and complexity we required. As a method for communication and information exchange, storytelling has the advantage of being accessible not only to different cultures but also different classes, genders and ages.

Groups of around six people were engaged in each storytelling session. These involved the

creation of fictitious characters drawn from the participants' community. Characters' stories were plotted on a "timeline" that took them from birth to old age. Participants used their own experience to create the character. This process allowed participants to:-

- "hide" behind the character in expressing unpopular or unacceptable views
- bring out subjects for discussion that are not normally aired in front of researchers or teachers (except perhaps in one-to-one in-depth counselling)
- describe the environments in which the characters act and the daily influences on their lives

Once the character was established we gave groups "crisis" cards describing events that might have a major effect on the character's life. The object of these is to see who the character will turn to in times of stress and to discuss the options available. At the end of the storytelling session, groups prepare a polar chart to show who the character trusts most.

Around 580 people from all over Pendle took part in the storytelling. Many of these stories were "self-administered" through kits that we gave to community groups to run themselves.

### Spreading the word – 'Myths over Pendle' cartoons

One of the problems of community cohesion as a subject is its seriousness, and the feeling of "walking on eggshells". We looked at using cartoon characters to debunk local myths. The cartoon strip Myths Over Pendle was inspired by the aforementioned storytelling consultation and is a creative collaboration between Pendle Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership), Pendle Council, the Leader/Times newspaper series and the community, reaching a wide audience across Pendle through a readership of 55,000 people.

A series of workshops have also taken place across Pendle's towns and villages, involving primary school children, senior citizens, Asian parents and staff from our partner organisations. Here, current issues are identified and new cartoon strips about our community have been drawn and written.

### Evaluation of policy initiatives

To ensure that the aims of the project are being met, over 250 people have participated in street surveys with a further 50 practitioners providing feedback at the recent Unity in East Lancashire conference. An interactive session has also been held with LSP partners, to ensure continued



## Community Cohesion in Pendle cont...

involvement and ownership, and to generate themes for future cartoon strips.



### Conclusions

This has been an exciting multi-disciplinary project. The Research Team led on the cohesion indicators work, and provided support for the whole project. However those who have to deliver policy implications arising from the research have also been deeply involved from the start, particularly the council's Diversity Officer, who led on the qualitative study and jointly leads the Myths Over Pendle project with the Communications Manager. This team approach has enabled us to utilize a wide range of skills and competences and ensure that the project was corporately owned.

The project has provided us with the quantitative and qualitative tools to evaluate cohesion, and empowered local professionals and activists with the skills to run storytelling groups, thus ensuring that we can continue to use this innovative and creative approach in the future.

**For further information please contact Christine Collingwood on [christine.collingwood@pendle.gov.uk](mailto:christine.collingwood@pendle.gov.uk)**

## Whatever happened to Kevin?



**Kevin**

The LARIA Research Award 2004 went to Cheshire County Council for its anti-bullying survey. This survey was commissioned by the anti-bullying co-ordinator and funded by the Children's Fund. The research included both quantitative and qualitative work, the latter using a puppet called "Kevin".

Many of you who attended the 2005 LARIA conference at Keele University would have met Kevin, a puppet with a very engaging personality. He and Cheshire County Council's Research and Intelligence Unit helped gather information on the nature and extent of bullying in Cheshire so that the anti-bullying co-ordinator (Kath Mapson) would have a clear idea of the task set out before her.

Sometimes for us researchers a report is published and we are left wondering what had been done with the work; not this time. Whilst in discussions about the follow-up survey I was able to learn from Kath Mapson that she had worked throughout Cheshire tackling specific bullying-related issues, helping teaching staff, revamping the anti-bullying policy, ensuring that a parents' guide to prevent bullying was sent to every pupil starting school, organising three countywide conferences with Esther Rantzen as the main speaker and gathering together best practice from schools into a manual "Developing Effective Anti-bullying Practice". Not bad eh!

In the follow-up quantitative survey (no Kevin this time), our research did not include the views of parents, governors and teachers this time, just the views of pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 (the first three years of high school). There were no drastic changes in the results – but then again, we were not expecting any. Bullying is one of those ugly issues where victims are not willing to say anything if they do not think it will be taken seriously and it will take time to engender a culture not only within schools but also society where bullying is not tolerated.

**For a copy of the follow-up survey, visit the Cheshire County Council Research and Intelligence Unit website: [www.cheshire.gov.uk/randi](http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/randi), email: [andrew.dunstone@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.dunstone@cheshire.gov.uk) or telephone: 01244 602889**

## LARIA Excellence in Research Award 2006

### Sponsored by CACI Limited

After another successful year with a good range of submissions for last year's LARIA Excellence in Research Award, we would encourage you all to give consideration to submitting research you have undertaken for this year's award.

Once again, the award is being sponsored by CACI Limited, a leading provider of marketing solutions and information systems. As well as paying for a place at the LARIA Annual Conference 2007 for the winner, up to £2,000 worth of CACI data will be provided for use by the winning authority.

In evaluating the research the judges, made up of LARIA Council members and external researchers, will consider:-

- the soundness of the methodology for conducting the research
- the extent to which the research demonstrates an impact on policy and practice
- the extent to which the research involves trying something new and being creative
- the overall presentation of the research which should include consideration of the above and why the research is deserving of an award

The submission should be no more than 1500 words long and in addition one report/document can be provided to support the application.

So please give thought to research you have done that has worked well and that you can be proud of. Maybe you have introduced an exciting new initiative to improve the quality of the research you carry out? The range of research to be included is open and not prescriptive to encourage as many authorities as possible to participate.

The award will be given to an authority, where it is anticipated that the beneficiary will be the employee or employees who have initiated or have had the primary responsibility for carrying out the research. The award will be presented at the LARIA Annual Conference in 2007, with an opportunity for the winner to present their research either there or at another appropriate event.

We want to build on the success of last year's award scheme so would encourage you as members of LARIA and readers of LariaNews to nominate and submit an outstanding piece of research by a local authority. We know there is a lot of good research being carried out by authorities, so share with us the best piece of research your authority has undertaken over the last year.

**Please send your submissions to Ann Atkinson, Performance and Improvement Unit, Chief Executive's Office, Newcastle City Council, Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne NE99 1RD or email [ann.atkinson@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:ann.atkinson@newcastle.gov.uk).**

**The closing date for nominations is 31st October 2006.**

**We look forward to hearing from you.**

## Exciting Part-Time Job Opportunity

### LARIA Events Organiser

**Are you wanting part-time work,  
are you retired, semi-retired,  
about to retire,  
or know someone who is?**

Graham Smith, LARIA's Events Organiser, is retiring from the role in March 2007 and LARIA is looking for a replacement to maintain the high level of professionalism achieved. The role involves organising LARIA's seminars (about six per year), and its three-day annual conference.

The Events Organiser works under the guidance of the LARIA Events Group and is responsible for putting their wishes into practice. This involves inviting and organising suggested speakers for events and seeking and booking appropriate venues. It means arranging all the details for the speakers and sponsors/exhibitors where appropriate before, during and after events.

Currently the role is undertaken on a self-employment basis and the pay is commission-based. LARIA would like to continue it on this basis. The Events Organiser can expect to earn about £6000 - £7000 per year (typically six one-day events and a three day conference). Appropriate travelling and other expenses are also payable. Each day event will involve about five full days' work, and the conference, about eleven days. The Events Organiser will be expected to attend four meetings of the LARIA Events Group each year and attend day events and the conference. Graham's assistance will be available during a handover period.

The role does not involve the booking of delegates for events – this task is undertaken by the LARIA Administrator. This role is also undertaken by Graham Smith at present and it is therefore possible to combine the two jobs. Graham will be retiring from the Administrator role in March 2008, and if applicants are interested in combining the roles from that point, this will be given consideration.

If you would like to informally discuss the role, then please telephone Graham Smith, the current LARIA Administrator and Events Organiser (01642 316576). A full job description can also be obtained from Graham (lariaoffice@aol.com). If you are interested, a letter of application should be sent to Graham at 9 Cortland Road, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough, TS7 0JX by 31 October 2006.

*LARIA, being committed to Equality of Opportunity, welcomes applications from all sections of the community.*

## Listening in Leicestershire

### Charnwood Borough Council's Consultation Toolkits

By Matt Wade

In 2005, Charnwood Borough Council in Leicestershire created the new post of Consultation Officer to provide a centralised focus for all our consultation work. That's me.

When taking up my post as Consultation Officer at Charnwood one of my first tasks was to create a second me – a virtual me. As my line manager said at the time “we need an alternative you just in case you are not around and your colleagues need to know how to carry out a consultation”. Setting aside the thought that I might one day be replaced by my own creation, I pushed ahead.

#### Virtual Reality

The outcome of this was to take the more traditional idea of consultation policy and guidance documents and turn them into a Consultation Toolkit for Council Officers and Councillors. This was something I had seen other authorities use and wanted us to have. However, as well as a toolkit to guide colleagues through the consultation process, I worked with our Equalities Officer to create a second toolkit with a specific focus on communicating and consulting with those people within Charnwood we had identified as potentially being hard to reach.

#### Features and Facilities

The Consultation Toolkit is a set of intranet based web pages, databases, lists and documents. The main aspects of the toolkit are a Consultations Database of all past, present and identified future consultations and a 'How to Carry Out a Consultation' step-by-step guide. The Consultations Database includes information on every aspect of the consultation and has links to various documents including action plans, business case information, questionnaire templates, consultation reports and evaluations highlighting the successes and lessons learnt.

It also allows colleagues access to a jargon buster; an explanation of methodologies (including when and where to use them); some top tips on carrying out effective consultation and a number of contact databases for consultation companies, local media

and recommended venues for holding public consultation events.

The Hard to Reach Toolkit works in a similar way but with a focus on those individuals and groups who may be hard to reach and how best to initiate and maintain an effective relationship in terms of communication and consultation.

#### Proving their Worth

These toolkits are living resources that are constantly updated so that they continue to be a repository for good practice to benefit Charnwood Officers and to make sure this information isn't lost when people move on. It allows us to point someone to a single location and say “if you want to find out what consultation we have done on X, you'll find it here” rather than “I think X did it but I'm not sure and there was a report, but I can't remember what happened to it”.

Both of these toolkits can be accessed by everyone who works for Charnwood. As well as highlighting best practice in terms of carrying out consultation it also provided a number of practical resources. They are an essential aspect of our wider commitment to consulting with residents, businesses, partners and others within our Borough. It will allow our Officers and Councillors to hone their consultation skills to ensure that everyone in Charnwood has the opportunity to have their say.

**For further information please contact me - Matt Wade – at**

**[matthew.wade@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.wade@charnwood.gov.uk).**

**You can also visit our website at**

**[www.charnwood.gov.uk/democracy/haveyoursay.html](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/democracy/haveyoursay.html) to learn more about how we consult.**

**For information on our equalities work please**

**contact Sarah Cromie at**

**[sarah.cromie@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.cromie@charnwood.gov.uk).**

## Tackling deprivation through research and action

**By Mandy Jones, Matt Sterling and Sarah Hardwick**

Colchester Borough Council's Social and Economic Regeneration group has been working to tackle deprivation and improve the quality of life for residents in the borough's four most deprived wards. The Indices of Deprivation 2000 highlighted major deprivation in these areas including high levels of child poverty. This raised the question of how resources should be targeted to most effectively make an impact in these wards.

Once the council had set strategic priorities to tackle deprivation and improve the quality of life for residents the group adopted an approach based on research combined with action through community development.

A three stage model was adopted for all four deprived wards. Firstly a Community Strengths Assessment was carried out based on the Community Development Foundation (CDF) model 'Assessing Community Strengths'. This research assessed the level of capacity of the community to help itself. The CDF model was taken one step further to include an assessment of residents' needs, opinions and ideas for improvements.

Secondly, action groups were set up involving residents, members of community and voluntary groups, local councillors, community development workers, local professionals working in each area, and local clergy. These groups took forward the research recommendations, set objectives and developed initiatives to increase community involvement and improve quality of life. The third and final stage of the process has seen an evaluation of the impact of the action groups.

### **Stage One: Assessing community needs and strengths**

Three surveys were carried out in each ward:-

- Existing voluntary groups were surveyed to assess their levels of community involvement, capacity to make a difference and their views on the needs of the local communities. The sample was selected through contacts made by community development workers, but 'snowballed' as each survey was undertaken. Around 20 one-hour, face-

to-face interviews were undertaken in each ward by community development workers, with training from the research team. This allowed networking between community development workers and community groups prior to action being taken, and in itself stimulated participation and action.

- One-to-one interviews were undertaken with support organisations, including the local authority, the PCT and any other large organisations providing support such as Registered Social Landlords. Semi-structured interviews with other people working in the area, including teachers, health visitors and community street wardens, were also carried out to triangulate the findings.
- Finally a household survey was carried out to gain residents' views on community activity and issues, and what they felt would make a difference. The fieldwork for this survey was outsourced to Priority Research, which surveyed 200 residents in each ward door-to-door, using a form of quota sampling linked to the 2001 Census, to ensure the sample was as representative of the local area as possible.

### **Stage Two: Action and delivery**

Once the surveys were complete, the research team produced one report for each ward. Recommendations were set and the team presented the findings to the new action groups which had been formed in each ward by community development workers. Initially, invitations to these groups were cast widely, with people able to de-select themselves later. From the outset, these groups were established to be action orientated rather than simply 'public meetings', with priority-setting an early task.

After setting priorities for their ward – chiefly from the research findings – teams started to deliver against these. Priorities have varied from ward to ward, but have included increasing community spirit and local volunteering, diverting young people from anti-social behaviour, and developing new community facilities. Some of the successes of the groups have included producing neighbourhood newsletters, organising community celebrations and commissioning activities for young people including street league football and DJ workshops.

## Tackling deprivation through research and action cont...



***Fun Day held in Harbour Ward to improve community cohesion***

### **Stage Three: Evaluation**

The process has been evaluated to gain an idea of its success using a combination of one-to-one interviews with voluntary, community and statutory groups working in the area, an assessment of police anti-social behaviour statistics, and focus groups with young people.

The questionnaire used for the one-to-one interviews covered the perceived success of specific actions in addressing community needs; levels of confidence in the community's ability to make a difference; reactions to improvements in communication and community activity; and assessment of levels of support in the area. Interviewees were key people who had an interest in the area, and were mainly representatives from local community and voluntary groups, or community workers from the statutory sector.

The focus groups aimed to gain the views of young people from the wards, using an interactive style to explore how they think and feel, and why they feel the way they do. Participants were encouraged to discuss their feelings about opportunities for them in the area, what they would like to see more of, and whether they perceived a change in levels of anti-social behaviour.

Finally, anti-social behaviour statistics were analysed. Both police figures (all incidents and disturbances

reported to police over a given time period) and recorded crime data (those crimes that are recorded by the police and are notified to the Home Office) were assessed, over the financial years 2002/2003, 2003/2004 and 2004/2005.

### **Findings and Outcomes**

The full report for Harbour ward is now complete and available on [www.colchester.gov.uk](http://www.colchester.gov.uk). Conclusions were very favourable. The main finding was that the action group had represented a major opportunity for networking between professional and community organisations, enabling them to share objectives and giving them the confidence to make an impact in the community. The report also showed that there was a marked improvement in levels of anti-social behaviour in the area. Police statistics highlighted a fall of 10% in recorded anti-social behaviour between 2002/2003 and 2003/2004. We cannot say whether this is as a result of task group and other interventions in the area (for instance community street wardens), but they may be contributory factors. Perceptions from people interviewed also suggested that there was less anti-social behaviour than before the intervention of the action group.

The Berechurch evaluation is near completion, and shows similarly positive feedback about the intervention and the support that has been provided. The evaluation showed that support was high for the action group and its work, particularly in improving communication and networking between professional and community organisations.

**For further information contact Mandy Jones, Matt Sterling or Sarah Hardwick at Colchester Borough Council on 01206 282501, or email [mandy.jones@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:mandy.jones@colchester.gov.uk)**

## ScotPHO – Public Health Information for Scotland



Scotland is rich in information about population health. But it doesn't seem that way when you want to find a particular bit of information. There are gaps in the information, unexploited potential, duplication (but always with irritating variations), and even when the information exists in the form you want, it can be difficult to actually find it.

That's why ScotPHO was invented. The **Scottish Public Health Observatory** is a new collaboration providing a single point of access to Scottish public health information: [www.scotpho.org.uk](http://www.scotpho.org.uk).

The collaboration aims to provide:-

- a co-ordinated and comprehensive source of information for those involved in public health and population health improvement in Scotland
- in-depth interpretation and analysis of existing data sources to support health improvement in Scotland
- a focus for the development of routine information sources where gaps exist

Even though it's early days - the site was only launched in December - there is already a substantial content available (see Box 1). Possibly the most familiar content to many users will be the Community Health and Wellbeing Profiles previously published by Health Scotland. Although their data content has been left unchanged, they have been developed into an interactive form, giving greater scope for users to compare areas and graph or map the results.

ScotPHO is much more than a collection of statistics. A much richer interpretative content is seen as being absolutely key to ensuring the site is useful, used, and has an impact on policy, planning and delivery. Along with summary data and statistics, we aim to

### Box 1

#### Behaviour

- Tobacco use
- Physical activity
- Diet and nutrition
- Alcohol
- Sexual health
- Drugs

#### Population Dynamics

- Population estimates and forecasts
- Births and maternity
- Deaths
- Migration

#### Comparative Health

- Inequalities
- Health profiles

#### Life Circumstances

- Deprivation
- Community wellbeing
- Environmental justice
- Crime
- Education
- Income and economy
- Social environment
- Physical environment

#### Clinical Risk Factors

- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol

#### Population Groups

- Child health
- Ethnic minorities

#### Health, Wellbeing and Disease

- Diabetes
- Cancers
- Mental health
- Multiple sclerosis
- Epilepsy
- Hepatitis C
- Arthritis
- Oral health
- Suicide
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Allergies
- Disability
- Immunisations
- Infections

provide background, interpretation, policy notes, commentaries on data sources, references and links to further information for each topic. Users can also register to receive email updates.

ScotPHO brings together key national organisations involved in public health intelligence in Scotland (see Box 2). Particularly major contributions to the initial website have been made by the Observatory Teams at ISD (the statistical arm of the NHS in Scotland) and Health Scotland.

With the launch of ScotPHO, Scotland joins the rest of the UK and Ireland in having a public health observatory. There are nine regional observatories in

## ScotPHO – Public Health Information for Scotland cont...

### Box 2

#### ScotPHO collaborators

ISD Scotland  
 Health Scotland  
 Health Protection Scotland  
 General Register Office for Scotland  
 Glasgow Centre for Population Health  
 NHS24

#### Also represented on the Steering Group

Deputy Chief Medical Officer (Chair)  
 Scottish Executive  
 Local authorities  
 Health boards  
 Academic public health

ScotPHO's collaborative underpinning and virtual existence reflects the strong tradition of different organisations working together to advance population health in Scotland without submerging their own identities.

ScotPHO has made an impressive start but has a lot yet to do to achieve its ambitions. More content is in preparation and an evaluation is planned to see how well the site is meeting users' needs and expectations. Feedback is also invited through the website: [www.scotpho.org.uk](http://www.scotpho.org.uk).

**Further information may be obtained from David Gordon, Head of Observatory Division, Health Scotland on behalf of the ScotPHO collaboration, by emailing [David.Gordon@health.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:David.Gordon@health.scot.nhs.uk)**

England, one in Wales, and one covering both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (see [www.apho.org.uk/apho](http://www.apho.org.uk/apho)). Each has its own character, reflecting the local circumstances.

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## Joseph Rowntree Foundation – summary of recent publications

Reviewed by Joy Thompson, Tameside MBC

Since the last LARIA newsletter was published there have been a large number of research papers released by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)). The social policy remit of the work commissioned by the foundation means that it is always a source of interesting research studies for local authority researchers. Here we look at four recent socio-economic reports with implications for neighbourhood regeneration.

### Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2005

In December 2005 the seventh Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion report was published. This report covers the UK where possible, though some of the data is restricted to Great Britain, England and Wales, or England. There have been three separate reports for Scotland and two for Wales. These reports monitor around fifty social exclusion indicators over time, by region and through different stages in life and for different demographic groups. The two major themes for this year's report are child poverty and poverty in relation to disability. There is a related interactive website at [www.poverty.org.uk](http://www.poverty.org.uk).

### Economic Segregation in England: Causes, consequences and policies

The starting point for this paper is the apparently stable pattern of segregation that has been observed across the country over the last twenty years. The ODPM vision for mixed income and tenure communities aims to integrate deprived communities, thus increasing the quality of life for poorer residents. This study investigates the causes of these long-term patterns and the ways in which the trends can be reversed. The data sources are the Census 2001, the British Household Panel Survey and three case studies.

A 'take-off' point was identified which deprived neighbourhoods must reach before they can rely on housing and labour market forces to produce the virtuous circle of prosperity. Young professional individuals were noted as the group that are most mobile and likely to provide the impetus for neighbourhood change. Important factors in location decisions made by this group were identified as sporting and cultural facilities, the level of Council Tax and rate of unemployment in an area. Good schools are also cited as an important factor, but the impact was inconclusive as this factor only applies to the subset of the group who have, or are intending to have, children.

### The Geography of Poor Skills and Access to Work

The previous study noted that one of the greatest segregating factors is the unemployment rate in an area. This paper looks takes a detailed look at the spatial variations in labour market conditions. The relative importance of proximity to suitable jobs for those with lower skill levels is highlighted as "geography matters most for those with poor skills".

The changing profile of work available and the decline of traditional manufacturing areas have caused an increase in geographical variations in occupational structure. Changes between the 1991 and 2001 Censuses indicate 'decentralisation' of employment, but the regional disparities in accessibility to work have persisted. Holistic demand and supply side policies are highlighted as appropriate methods to combat the increasing polarisation and spatial and skills mismatch in the labour market. The extent of the impact on unemployment of policies to increase basic skill levels and the number and quality of jobs will be dependent on the location specific job market situation.

### Experiences of new immigration at the neighbourhood level

This report investigates issues surrounding the problem of clarifying the effects of immigration on neighbourhoods. Large gaps in evidence regarding immigration at neighbourhood level were identified. Basic socio-economic data about immigrants is not known. We do not have the first-hand accounts to know what issues are faced, how the existing residents of the neighbourhood are affected, or patterns of settlement of ethnic and cultural groups. The lack of smaller geographic level data on this topic leaves us ignorant of many issues that may arise. Neighbourhood immigration has a huge impact on local policies, but there is much ground for us to cover in preparatory research before we can establish the evidence base upon which to act.

## Joseph Rowntree Foundation – summary of recent publications cont...

A broad conclusion drawn from this research is that immigration tends to be concentrated in already deprived neighbourhoods, a pattern which may reinforce existing social exclusion.

These are just four examples from a range of recent research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on housing and other issues. They provide context to the research we carry out in our own authorities and therefore can help further our understanding of current cross-cutting deprivation related issues.

## LARIA Annual General Meeting 2006

### Knud Moller, Hon Secretary

The LARIA AGM for 2006 was held at the Annual Conference at the University of Exeter, and was attended by twenty-three people. After the Minutes of last year's AGM were approved, the main part of the meeting focused on the report from David Karfoot as Chair of LARIA, the Treasurer's report, and elections.

### Annual Report by the Chair

David Karfoot drew attention to the programme of work undertaken to examine local authorities' research capacity and capability. This has resulted in four documents which can all be downloaded free of charge from the LGA's website. Copies of the 'business case' leaflet were mailed to all local authority chief executives, and the toolkit received a most successful launch at a workshop held at the LGA offices in November.

David also said that although 2005 had been another good year for LARIA, we may now enter a more difficult period, as many of the stalwarts will be retiring during the next few years and replacements have been difficult to find. This and other issues concerning the future of LARIA will be discussed at a special meeting in early June.

### Hon Treasurer's Report

2005 had been an especially hectic year as far as the finances were concerned and the Treasurer's report showed a downturn in turnover from over £90k to £78.5 and a slightly lower surplus of £2.2k.

### Elections

As a result of David's resignation we now have a new Chair in Jill Tuffnell of Cambridgeshire County Council. Clive Lloyd of Worcestershire County Council is the new Vice-chair. Knud Moller and Emma Burnett were re-elected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Debbie Lee Chan of Camden LBC was elected to Council in 2004 and was this time re-elected for a further two years. Dawn Price of Rotherham MBC had been co-opted in the past and has now been elected, together with Mike Soper of Cambridgeshire County Council.

## ALGIS in LARIA Update

By Jane Inman

### ALGIS in LARIA AGM

ALGIS held its AGM at the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) on 28th March 2006. We are grateful to Judy Nokes and Jo Ellis from OPSI who hosted the event and gave presentations on copyright and the re-use of public sector information. Their talks led on to an interesting debate, although I think many of us are still a little confused about the re-use of public sector information.

If you haven't come across any of this, basically it stems from the thinking that public bodies hold vast quantities of information which could be released for wider use and would serve to fuel the information economy. The re-use of public sector information regulations (Statutory Instrument no.1515), published last year, encourages the re-use of information collected as part of the work of central and local government and other public bodies. The main task for public bodies is to find a way of licensing the re-use of information they hold, and the Office of Public Sector Information has announced since our meeting that the system used for Crown Copyright material, the Click-Use Licence, is being extended to all public bodies to make things easier. If this is something which concerns you there is plenty of guidance and information on the web site of OPSI at [www.opsi.gov.uk/](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/)

After lunch we walked along to HM Treasury where we were given a tour of the library, which also serves the Cabinet Office. The building has been refurbished and we were all struck by the space and light, much of it created by putting a glass roof over what would have been courtyards. Not until it poured with rain did we hear the downside of this approach!

Our AGM was held during the morning, and the existing committee all agreed to stand for another year for which I am grateful. We had hoped for new members but as no one put themselves forward we are still looking for help so that we can arrange more for the membership.

### Website

Our website suffered a major set back earlier this year when the company which hosts it, Tagish, had their offices destroyed in a fire and back-up tapes were found to be faulty. They have worked hard to rebuild it and we are now able to add content again.

### Events

Initial plans have been made for a visit to the City Business Library in London and to the House of Commons Library. Dates and further information will be available on our web site ([www.algis.org.uk](http://www.algis.org.uk)) as soon as details are confirmed.

**Jane Inman**

**Chair of ALGIS in LARIA**

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

## Measuring Well-Being, the Quality of Life & Social Capital

### LARIA One-day Seminar held at LGA, 30th January 2006

This Seminar, jointly organised by LARIA and the Local Government Association (LGA), focused primarily on the meaning and measurement of social capital. With speakers from local and central government, the Audit Commission and the academic sector, the event was well attended with close to 50 delegates at the LGA Headquarters in Smith Square, London. It was chaired by Gerallt Evans-Hughes (BMG Research) who is Chair of the LARIA Events Group.

### Background

Both central and local government are increasingly looking at the concept of social capital as a measure of community wellbeing. Though not a totally new approach, social capital, or society's capacity to help others, brings together in a single over-arching concept issues around social networking, civic engagement, participation in local communities, trust and reciprocity.



**Anne Gray**

### Presentations

The seminar began with a presentation on '*Time & Helping Others: Is Work Undermining Social Capital?*' by **Anne Gray** from London South Bank University, who first looked at and differentiated between the three main models of social capital - Bourdieu, Putnam and World Values Survey. Principally using

evidence from the Time Use Survey, Anne examined the extent to which increasing labour force participation and longer working lives, as well as the long hours culture, undermined social capital by influencing the scale of informal help available in communities. Survey results about child care, care of elderly parents, informal help to others and volunteering were presented, showing the effects upon social capital of one indicator - 'gifts of time'- brought about by the changing work culture. For further information see [www.lsbu.ac.uk/families](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/families).

**Davy Jones** from the Audit Commission gave a presentation on the *Area Profiles project*, looking at their purpose, history and usefulness as a tool for



**Davy Jones**

improving local services. Area Profiles provide a methodology and approach to bring together the data and assessments on services for a locality based around ten quality of life themes. The Project seeks to rationalise and bring together the various datasets looking at quality of life for every area, keep them regularly updated, and make them available on the

Audit Commission web site - see [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/areaprofiles](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/areaprofiles).



**Figen Deviren**

The afternoon session started with a presentation given by **Figen Deviren** of the Office for National Statistics which looked at the social capital harmonised question set. Based on five main aspects of social capital - civic participation, social networks and support, social participation, reciprocity and trust, and area satisfaction - a full harmonised question set of

around fifty questions and a core set of fifteen questions have been developed for use in national household surveys and for local use. Some results were presented from a project undertaken using the core set of questions converted for postal survey use, which showed differing findings according to whether the questions were asked face-to-face or by postal self-completion. Reference was made to an Economic & Social Data Survey guide which lists twenty-nine major surveys that include questions relevant to social capital. For further information see [www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital) or contact [social.capital@ons.gov.uk](mailto:social.capital@ons.gov.uk).

'Poor But Happy: the Good Life in Cornwall' was the title of a detailed presentation given by **Malcolm Brown** from Cornwall County Council. Having demonstrated through a variety of indicators that Cornwall contains some of the most deprived communities measured by economic and health indicators, the presentation went on to describe a range of surveys. These included the County's LSP survey into quality of life conducted in 2004. Based

## Measuring Well-Being, the Quality of Life & Social Capital cont...



**Malcolm Brown**

on thirty-one main QoL questions, the survey showed that the three top determinants of QoL in the County were good health, good neighbourhood and a good quality home. A Cornwall People's Panel Migration Survey was carried out in 2005 involving people who had either moved into Cornwall or moved within the County. The

environment and slower pace of life appeared to be the driving reasons for migration to Cornwall. A further survey carried out in 2005 on Life in Cornwall looked at people's feelings of belonging, hope, unity and the like, by asking original questions on QoL issues.

The seminar concluded with a presentation given jointly by **Philip Colligan** from Camden LB and **Jude Cummins** from the Office for Public Management. With Camden having profound expressions of inequality, with a life expectancy gap of ten years between rich and poor, the Council was one of the few to have undertaken social capital surveys at the neighbourhood level over the past few years. A questionnaire has been developed on social capital components to satisfy all LSP partners, and a face-to-face survey of 1,000 residents conducted backed up by qualitative workshops. Results show that residents enjoy living in a culturally diverse place, there is a growing sense of community, some key problems are reducing in impact, and LSP

priorities are starting to make a difference to people's lives. On the negative side they show that there is still a disconnect between some groups and the rest of society, and that residents in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas can feel less community sense, are less trusting, and experience greater problems on a

range of social issues. Overall the survey results are helping the Borough and LSP in developing specific policies to increase social capital across the area.

**Bob Cuthill, LARIA Promotions Co-ordinator**



**Philip Colligan**



**Jude Cummins**

### themarketresearchgroup

The Market Research Group (MRG) is a full service research agency based at Bournemouth University. We are in a unique position to provide cost effective research and consultancy services to the public sector and have a proven track record in Local Government, including:

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## R & I News

### Cheshire County Council

#### Quality of Life Survey 2005

Cheshire County Council Research and Intelligence Unit has published its third Quality of Life in Cheshire Survey. There have been two previous surveys conducted in 1995 and again in 2000.

The Quality of Life Survey 2005 demonstrates how public perceptions of quality of life priorities have changed over the last decade. The results of the survey are also helping to shape the Council's new corporate plan 2005-09 and provide direction for the review of Cheshire's Community Strategy.

Interviews were completed with over 1,500 residents, mainly members of the County Council's Citizens' Panel. The sample was enhanced to include a representative number of young people aged between 14 and 17. To incorporate a sufficient sample of black and minority ethnic residents, further research was carried out to enhance the sample in partnership with the Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race Equality Council (CHAWREC).

Respondents were shown a list of twelve quality of life issues, and asked to rank them on importance and priority for improvement. A comparison between degree of importance and priority for improvement provided some powerful indications of the impact that action by public agencies could have on public perception of quality of life.

Views were also obtained on actions required to improve a range of ten issues including community safety, transport, education, health and environment.

Key points from the analysis showed that crime, young people, housing and local governance are the main issues for Cheshire's residents.

A series of six reports is available, four based on the themes of the corporate plan, complemented by a further two reports looking at the overall priorities of Cheshire residents and an Overview of the Survey. There have also been six district summary reports published.

Details of all the reports are available on the County Council's website:

[www.cheshire.gov.uk/RandI/Qualityoflife.htm](http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/RandI/Qualityoflife.htm)

**For further information on the survey or results contact either Andrew Pomfret (Tel: 01244 602864 email: [andrew.pomfret@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.pomfret@cheshire.gov.uk)) or Jean Stelfox (Tel: 01244 602064 email [jean.stelfox@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:jean.stelfox@cheshire.gov.uk))**

### Kirklees Partnership

#### Kirklees Shared Evaluation Resource

The Shared Evaluation Resource (SER) was set up with an initial remit to look at the evaluation of regeneration programmes relating to health, children and young people. Within Kirklees there is a strong culture of partnership working across agencies, and Neighbourhood Renewal funding has been used to encourage partners to explore how mainstream services can be reshaped to better deliver on reducing inequalities. Having a specialist resource based within the Local Strategic Partnership that encourages proper evaluation of new ways of working means that experiences learnt across programmes can be joined up to give a bigger picture of what works. The importance of such a facility will increase as local authorities seek to deliver on their Local Area Agreement commitments and maximise the effectiveness of their budgets in achieving this.

The SER has identified three areas of work for supporting partner organisations to improve the quality of their evaluation information:-

- Promoting a culture of evidence-based practice through the use of good research evidence in developing new initiatives to meet defined needs
- Supporting the development of evaluation capacity amongst partner agencies through recruitment, training and ongoing advice
- Identifying and supporting the development of shared customer information systems to provide better intelligence around client reach and cost-effectiveness

## R & I News cont...

The SER approach detailed above has been developed through supporting Sure Start programmes as they make the transition to Children's Centres, but it can be equally applied to other multi and single agency settings.

Examples of work that have been undertaken to support the Every Child Matters agenda include:-

- Evaluation of an initiative relating to children's oral health
- Using existing evidence to inform the speech and language offer for Children's Centres
- Commissioning employee research to inform staffing of family support services in Children's Centres
- Supporting the planning aspect of Extended Schools

**For more information, please contact Helen Carlin, Project Development Manager, SER, Kirklees Partnership. Tel: 01484 416 704 or email [helen.carlin@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:helen.carlin@kirklees.gov.uk)**

### Tower Hamlets

#### The Ward Data Report

Tower Hamlets is a borough of stark contrasts and rapid change, which creates all the more need for fine-grained local information to help the Tower Hamlets Partnership understand its local neighbourhoods and their differing needs. That is where the annual Ward Data Report comes in, comprising a wide range of Neighbourhood Renewal 'floor targets' and other key quality of life indicators, and painting a comprehensive picture of life for local people in different parts of the borough.

The Ward Data Report has developed into a key tool for performance management, partnership work and the neighbourhoods agenda in Tower Hamlets, and an essential input to its Local Area Agreement. You can read a full account of it on [www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk) (click on 'LariaNews'), or access the 2006 Ward Data Report itself at [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/data/discover/data/borough-profile/data/ward-data.cfm](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/data/discover/data/borough-profile/data/ward-data.cfm).

**For further details please contact Lavinia Irving on [lavinia.irving@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:lavinia.irving@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**

### Worcestershire County Council

#### Worcestershire Local Housing Markets

In response to the request by the Regional Planning Body for Strategic Planning Authorities to identify local housing market areas, and the importance given to these areas in draft Planning Policy Statement 3, the R&I Unit has identified eight local housing markets which originate within Worcestershire and five housing markets which originate elsewhere but have part of their boundary falling within the county.

Using statistical data from the 2001 Census on travel to work and migration patterns in conjunction with information provided by numerous estate agents across the county we were able to construct a series of well-defined self-contained housing markets. A key pattern to emerge was the close correlation between the patterns that emerged from our analysis of travel-to-work data and those areas identified by local estate agents. In addition to defining the boundaries of local housing markets we also provided an indication of the intensity of the relationship to the main centre within each housing area.

Other local authorities in the region are likely to be employing the same methodology used by Worcestershire for their own areas, and the work is being viewed as good practice by ODPM who intend to use it in guidance they will be publishing later in the year.

**For more information, please contact Stephen Russell, Tel: (01905) 766715, e-mail: [srussell@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:srussell@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. It 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)**

### Community Safety Partnership Tasking

Working with partners in Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest, the R&I Unit is supporting the tasking process for Community Safety Partnerships. This is based around the National Intelligence Model, and uses a structured approach to data analysis and presentation to help partnerships in identifying areas and issues they need to address. The tasking employs a monthly multi-agency meeting, chaired

either by the fire service, Primary Care Trust or district council, depending upon the district. Each meeting considers a particular issue and/or geographical area. Recently, the focus has been on criminal damage. Short-term actions are identified, to be undertaken, largely, before the next meeting. Examples include the "tasking" of Neighbourhood Wardens to patrol specific areas and particular environmental improvements. This is linked to the Local Policing "Partners And Communities Together" approach, for which North Worcestershire is the Pathfinder division for West Mercia Constabulary.

Redditch Community Safety Partnership and the R&I Unit have been asked to present this work at the National Crime Mapping Conference organised by the Jill Dando Institute in May, as it is being viewed as national best practice.

**For more information, please contact Kim Stockman, Tel: (01905) 728538, e-mail: [kstockman@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:kstockman@worcestershire.gov.uk) or Fiona Dougan, Tel: (01905) 728760, e-mail: [fdougan@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:fdougan@worcestershire.gov.uk)**

## LARIA People

Continuing our series of LARIA People profiles, we bring you **Graham Reid, Chair, LARIA in Scotland Steering Group**



**Graham Reid**

### Graham Reid

Graham has worked for North Lanarkshire Council for the past ten years in the post of Information and Research Manager in the Chief Executive's Department. Working closely with policy colleagues, he manages a small team with responsibility to carry out or co-ordinate all aspects of corporate research with the main focus on informing the strategic planning processes. He and his team are also responsible for analysing and reporting performance information, and ensuring statutory performance requirements are met. Graham also manages the department's Central Administration Team and has key responsibilities in Efficient Government, Sustainable Development and Freedom of Information.

Graham started his career in Local Government back in the early '70s following his time at Strathclyde University where he studied for an honours BSc in Mathematics and Statistics which he followed up with a Masters in

## LARIA People cont...

Operational Research from the same institution. His first job was in the Planning Department at Renfrewshire County Council where his main task was to collect and analyse pollution data required as a key input to the council's proposal to develop an oil refinery on the Clyde.

His next move involved two closely contested opportunities at each end of the country - one in Glasgow and one in Inverness. In the end the Glasgow option won and Graham started in the first of a number of posts at Strathclyde Region. In these roles, his experience covered the full range of local authority research from Census and survey analysis to serving on the team advising the then Scottish Office on finance distribution.

In 1991 Graham was recruited to the post of Senior Analyst in the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive. This gave him the opportunity to carry out much more in-depth research, focussed on a specific service – and it also gave him opportunities to gain and develop management skills and experience. This coupled with a developing interest in the world of performance indicators helped him to secure his current post.

Graham has seen a substantial change in the local government research world over his career – from an environment of large research teams in the bigger Scottish Regions working with 'scarce' data to much smaller teams with hugely more information readily available at the touch of a button – giving very different challenges now compared with the past.

Graham has been a LARIA member for many years, becoming involved with the LARIA in Scotland Steering Group shortly after taking up his current post, and was elected to the Chair two years ago.

Away from the office, Graham likes nothing better than to exercise the privileges of his private pilot's licence, wafting about the Scottish skies; and if he is not doing that he is likely to be found sailing the high seas in a small sailboat – either way, the perfect antidote to tackling hard research questions!



***Katharine Watters***

### **Borough of Poole**

The Strategic Planning Unit at Borough of Poole have recently welcomed Katharine Watters to their Corporate Research Team. Katharine took up her post as Research and Intelligence Officer at the start of January, having moved the short distance from The Market Research Group at Bournemouth University, where she had worked for the previous four years.

Katharine will initially be working to provide research guidance to support and monitor Poole's Local Area Agreement for 2006-2009. Specific projects will include qualitative research to develop understanding of health inequalities in the Borough, a quantitative survey of community involvement and an investigation into the social consequences of alcohol misuse.

## News From Elsewhere

### Commission for Rural Communities

#### Rural Proofing Monitoring 2006: Challenging Government to meet Rural Needs

The Commission for Rural Communities has now received statutory backing for its rural proofing monitoring work with the passing of the Natural England and Rural Communities Act at the end of March. Rural proofing is a commitment by government to ensure that all its domestic policies take account of rural circumstances and needs. The new Commission will be formally vested on October 1st 2006 but work has already begun on finding more effective ways of gathering evidence from national and regional government bodies on how they have rural proofed their policies during 2005-6.

We will be taking evidence directly from central government departments, government regional offices and regional development agencies on how they have rural proofed specific policies. We will then be inviting organisations that represent rural communities (including local government bodies) to challenge this evidence, allowing us to make an assessment of the impact of this rural proofing work. This will then be published in the annual Rural Proofing report, presented to Parliament later this year.

**For more information on this project, please contact Nicola Lloyd (01242 533468) or James Hatcher (0208 932 5827) at the Commission or visit our website on [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)**

### The Information Centre for health and social care

#### Mapping the full range of social care information currently collected

The Information Centre for health and social care is planning to be the leaders in collecting, analysing and distributing facts and figures for the various health and social care communities. It was created in April 2005 out of the former NHS Information Authority and the Department of Health Statistics Unit. Previously known as the Health and Social Care Information Centre, the new simplified name, The Information Centre, was launched in April this year.

The Information Centre is carrying out a major piece of work to look at the future collection and use of information relating to Adult Social Care, through the Adult Social Care Information Development (ASCID) Programme.

The ASCID Programme aims to develop information that will support delivery of the new vision for adult social care, as outlined in the Department of Health White Paper, 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: A New Direction for Community Services'.

In order to inform what collections should look like in future, The ASCID Team have mapped current collections of information relating to adult social care - not just that collected by the Information Centre, but also by other government departments and agencies, ad-hoc surveys and research. This will now be used to identify overlaps between collections, and any redundant collections. The ASCID Team plan to map their findings against future policy requirements, to identify any gaps in the information that is currently collected.

This work is now being taken to a lower level, to map the content of each information source. Looking at fields and data items will help identify duplication and inconsistencies across the different collections. To see the mapping work in full, please go to <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/ascid/reviewcollections/mapcollections>

**Your comments on the list are welcomed. If you can help to fill the gaps in the current list or have any comments and general feedback, please send them to [ascid@ic.nhs.uk](mailto:ascid@ic.nhs.uk)**

## News From Elsewhere cont...

### Manchester University

#### Disability Projections

The Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research (CCSR) at Manchester University has secured funding to undertake a three year collaborative project to develop projections of disabled populations. Local authorities and other interested organisations are invited to join the collaboration.

The first year of the project, beginning in September 2006, will provide forecasts of disability prevalence at district level. The initial forecasts shall then be further refined and developed over the following two years. The project also aims to extend the POPGROUP software to allow users to implement their own projections, not only of disability, but of other characteristics that strongly relate to the age-sex structure of the population.

Collaborating local authorities will receive disability projections for their district as well as support and technical documentation to produce their own forecasts in-house. Further information on the project and how to get involved can be found at: <http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/popgroup/disability.htm>

For more information please contact Alan Marshall at CCSR at [alan.marshall@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:alan.marshall@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)

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## Guide for 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 July 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.

## Notes