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This edition was produced by
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From the Chair – Jill Tuffnell



Jill Tuffnell

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed to our stock-take of how well LARIA functions and what we need to develop. An away-day was held in York in early June, very ably facilitated by Janie Percy-Smith. We invested a considerable amount of time in a 'SWOT' analysis – to set the scene for an action plan to tackle both short-term and longer-term priorities for LARIA's development.

The strengths of LARIA are many, including a wide-ranging membership, both geographically and by skills/experience, producing a highly regarded newsletter and publications, running an extensive seminar and conference programme and maintaining a valuable web-site. And we undoubtedly face a lot of opportunities, as Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships greatly extend the boundaries of where and how local government operates. But, possibly inevitably, we spent more time on the threats and perceived weaknesses. So we explored in depth all those 'wicked issues': over-reliance on a few people; too many meetings; the increasingly heavy 'day jobs' which make it so difficult to commit additional time to what is essentially a voluntary activity.

We discussed the impact of local government's continued push for 'efficiency savings' and pressures on training budgets, the cost of travel, the ageing profile of LARIA Council and the likely loss of experienced members – not to speak of the impending retirement of Graham Smith, our tireless administrator and events organiser! Do we want – and can we afford – more paid help? Should we restrict the number of activity groups if we are stretched too thinly? What are our core, most valued services? How do we maintain and develop them to meet members' needs?

The action plan resulting from the away-day and a subsequent Council meeting is still in sketch form. It now has to be firmed up into 'bite-size' activities with linked 'mile-stones' and clearly-identified responsibilities. A small task group has been set up to work on this – involving as many new faces as we can attract in to help.

And we are getting on with some immediate priorities. A survey of members, to identify 1) areas of expertise and 2) training needs, will be run via the internet. This has been high on our 'to do' list for many months. We have also set up a task group to look in-depth at our website. The group is charged with web development in terms of not only content and links, but also the need to meet emerging standards regarding access and security. In fact 'becoming more e-enabled' is going to be a clear driver for LARIA in the future and our website will be the main platform.

Can you help us move forward? We are seeking input of all sorts, however modest. If you would like to get involved in any way – as a member of a 'virtual' group, as a friendly critic or as an Activity Group member - then please let us know. Activity Chairs will be very happy to respond!

Jill Tuffnell

Call for comments - Local Area Agreements

LariaNews is interested to hear your views on LAAs. Specifically, we'd like to hear your comments on whether research teams have been effectively engaged in the development of the Agreements. Have you any good (or bad) experiences to share? Have the priorities identified in your LAA been based on evidence you have produced? Were research teams involved in the outset of the process or as part of a last minute panic? LariaNews thought it might be interesting to write an article on this subject, compiling different views and experiences from across a range of authorities.

Please send your thoughts in to the Editor at larianews@aecmail.plus.com by 20th November

Outcome Focussed Consultation at Selby

By Tim Williams

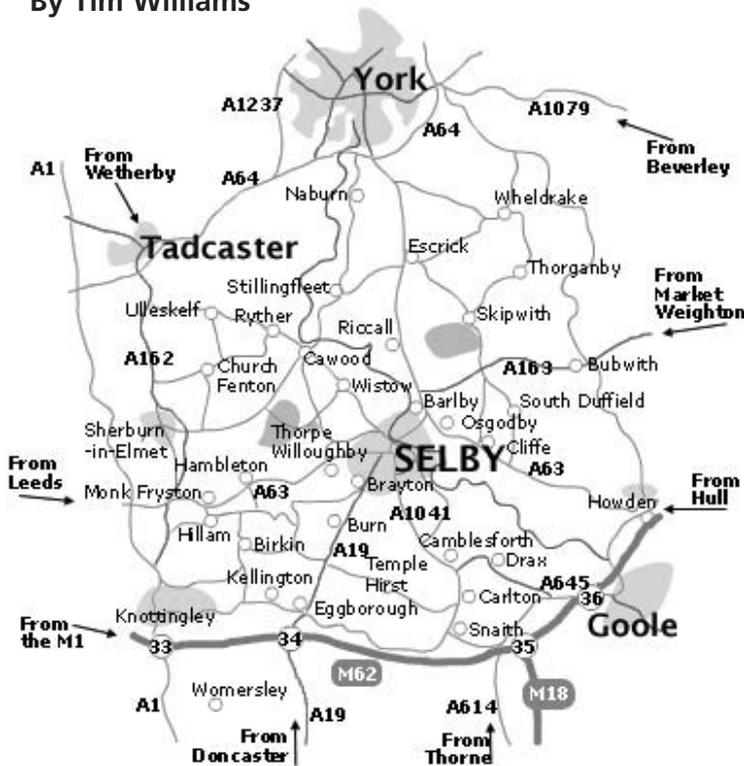


Figure 1 - Selby and surrounding area

Introduction

Selby District is situated to the south of York, to the east of Leeds, to the north of Doncaster and to the west of the rural East Riding. It is a mainly agricultural area with three small market towns. The total population is 76,468. The main settlements are Selby (20,870), Tadcaster (5,810) and Sherburn-in-Elmet (5,750). The remainder of the population is dispersed throughout the district in both villages and remote hamlets.

In general, the district is fairly wealthy, has some of the most prosperous wards in the country and has a higher than average rate of employment. However, it also has some much more deprived wards and benefits from a 'Sure Start' programme. Industry is well-developed and includes power stations, breweries, glass manufacturing power plants and food and flour mills.

Research drives improvements at Selby

Selby District Council is one of 50 or so small alternative 'fourth option' local authorities; there is no cabinet or executive. Tim Williams, the Council's Corporate Research and Consultation Officer, has over fifteen years experience in social policy, housing policy, health service and central government research. Tim and fellow officers ensure that research and consultation leads to improved corporate, service and partnership outputs and outcomes for local residents.

Ethics

The Council is committed to listening to and acting upon the views of service users and reaching out to all sections of the community. All of our consultations must relate to decisions that the Council intends to make which can be influenced by the outcomes of consultation. All of our research relates to exploring policy options, evaluating and benchmarking services and assessing local community needs. We have a Consultation Strategy, which can be found at www.selby.gov.uk/upload/Consultation_Strategy.pdf

Outcome Focussed Consultation at Selby cont...

Who we consult

We consult citizens, customers and contractors, over 450 community groups, voluntary sector and partner agencies, businesses, the media, Members and our 67 Town and Parish Councils and Meetings. We produce a quarterly newsletter and host a webpage for our Citizens' Panel members. We make special efforts to reach out to include minority groups, young people and those previously excluded from consultations.

For example, we recently hired an interpreter and hosted a focus group on crime and anti social behaviour with Polish migrant workers. We commissioned North Yorkshire County Council's 'Connecting Youth Culture' officers to video record on-street discussions with local young people. And we meet regularly with representatives from disabled, gay, lesbian and bisexual groups.

Outcome focussed consultation

Prior to our consultations, our public conveniences were dirty, dark, dank and, sometimes, dangerous places. Residents told us what they required, through exit polls(!), focus groups and a postal survey, and we are now installing state-of-the-art 'superloos', which enhance public hygiene and community safety. Our markets were in decline but, following our vox pop and postal survey consultations on 21st Century needs, we have revived the town centres by enhancing the main markets and by introducing farmers' markets, continental markets and pot fairs.

Outcome focussed research

As part of a recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee review, fact-finding visits, postal and email surveys, focus groups and desk-based research exercises were undertaken to improve the relationship between the Council and the district's 67 Town and Parish Councils.

As a result, quarterly Parish Council forums have been inaugurated, a quarterly Parish Council newsletter has been launched, a Parish Council compendium has been issued and a range of other, service-based, initiatives have been implemented.

Following extensive desk-based research into how to engage even more effectively with young people, Selby District Council is currently involved with an initiative with partner agencies to establish a Youth Council, which mirrors the structure of the Authority.

Research is currently taking place into the Council's Community Leadership role.

Conclusion

Using an appropriate mix of creative, radical, innovative and traditional techniques, we ensure that research and consultation leads to improved corporate, service and partnership outputs and outcomes for local residents. We are constantly seeking new ways to do this.

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Figure 3 - Selby Abbey and Selby's bustling Monday Market

Working in partnership on the 2011 Census: 2007 Test update

By Ian White, ONS

Background

As reported in LariaNews 79 it will be mutually beneficial for Local Authorities (LAs) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to work in partnership in the conduct of the 2011 Census. ONS wish to benefit from LA resources and the invaluable knowledge of their local areas to improve the enumeration process. In particular, LAs have experience and contacts including:

- knowledge of the profile of local areas and factors that may make them hard to enumerate, such as language problems;
- experience of similar operations such as electoral registration and postal elections; and
- contacts with a wider range of local organisations such as the police, student groups, housing associations, religious groups etc, particularly coming together through their Local Strategic Partnerships (or Community First networks in Wales) and, in some areas, with local Royal Mail managers, through postal voting.

In turn, LAs will benefit from better census results.

Options for working with Local Authorities

At one extreme, LAs could be asked to run the field operation themselves on behalf of ONS, including the recruitment and local management of the field staff, using their experience and contacts from

electoral registration for example. At the other extreme, all the field staff could be separately recruited and managed by ONS, simply liaising with staff in LAs to benefit from their local resources, relying on good will.

The model that ONS and LAs are currently working towards is somewhere in the middle ground, whereby ONS would encourage LAs to appoint Census Liaison Managers to work as agents on behalf of ONS, and where field staff recruitment would be undertaken by commercial agencies but ONS would encourage LAs to second staff to be area managers, team leaders or enumerators.

The specific areas identified for partnership working include:

- Address Register development;
- Enumeration intelligence for targeting of delivery methods and follow-up resources;
- Identifying and developing Community Liaison contacts;
- Recruitment and logistics;
- Publicity.

An ONS Action Plan to develop and test strategies as part of the 2007 Census Test has been endorsed by the Census Local Authority Liaison Steering Group and agreed by each of the five LAs involved in the 2007 Test (Bath & NE Somerset, Camden, Carmarthenshire, Liverpool, and Stoke-on-Trent) as part of their Service Level Agreement with ONS. The timetable below sets out the remaining planned process.

June 06 - June 07	Implementation of partnership strategies during 2007 Test
June 07 - Dec 07	Evaluation of effectiveness of strategies during 2007 Test
Jan 08 – June 08	Revision and agreement of strategies.
June 08 - June 09	Implementation of partnership strategies during 2009 Rehearsal.
June 09 - Dec 09	Evaluation of effectiveness of strategies during Rehearsal; revision and agreement; increased communication to all LAs; appointment of CLMs for 2011 Census.
June 2009	2011 Census Area Managers appointed.
June 09 - June 11	Implementation of partnership strategies for 2011 Census and ongoing liaison with LAs.

Working in partnership on the 2011 Census cont...

Address register development

ONS is working with LAs on ensuring that the 2011 enumeration begins with the best possible address coverage. For the 2007 Test ONS will create counts of addresses by each type (residential etc) by Census Enumeration District (ED) within the five Test areas. The counts will be taken from both the National Land and Property Gazetteer and Ordnance Survey address data. Where there is a significant difference between the counts within each enumeration district (ED) ONS will re-aggregate at postcode level to isolate differences and produce address extracts for postcodes. Local Authorities will be provided with ED and postcode level counts where there are such differences and will be asked for any that they may have about the possible reasons for the difference (for example, new buildings, multi-occupation etc).

ONS also needs to be able to associate addresses with use. At the highest level, residential and non-residential addresses will need to be distinguished, but it is also essential that household addresses are distinguished from communal establishments. LAs are being asked to supply data that would allow prior identification of establishments.

Enumeration intelligence

The 2007 Test design provides for two methods for the delivery of Census questionnaires: post-out and hand delivery through a traditional field force. If this model is adopted for the 2011 Census, the intention is that hand delivery would be at a lower volume (say 20 per cent) targeted at particular areas where the address register is considered inadequate and/or where the demographics of the population mean that response is likely to be lower and may be positively impacted by personal contact at the point of delivery. This is in line with one of the key objectives of the Census - to reduce differential under-coverage.

As a further means of addressing differential undercount, ONS is proposing to focus follow-up staff resources in accordance with an assessment of likely response rates so that the ratio of field staff to households will be higher in hard-to-count areas than in those areas that are easier to enumerate. During the follow-up, the strategy will be to move staff between areas (firstly at a local level within a Census Area Manager's area, but potentially

between Local Authority areas) in reaction to patterns of response. ONS is therefore working with LAs in identifying and developing ways in which relevant information held by LAs could be shared with ONS to assist determining the resource requirement. In particular, ONS aim to provide 2011 Census field staff with information about the characteristics of their enumeration areas, drawing from Neighbourhood Statistics and other statistical sources. The enhancement of this information with local knowledge from LAs will be invaluable, identifying for example

- areas of high population or residential property change,
- areas of high proportions of non-English speakers,
- practical, health and safety issues (for example, areas which may be dangerous to enumerate after dark).

Community liaison

ONS are meeting with key organisations representing specific population groups such as older people, disabled people, ethnic minority and faith groups, to develop a strategy for community liaison. Currently these discussions are mainly with national organisations, but then increasingly, throughout 2006, liaison will be with local organisations and networks as plans for the 2007 Test develop. Clearly there is also a role for LAs in working on community liaison as they will have extensive local contacts which could be shared with Census field managers.

Recruitment and logistics

In 2001 Census, several local authorities were flexible in providing time off for staff to act as census field officers. Recruitment for the 2007 Test is being outsourced, and thus LA staff will be required to apply for field staff posts through the appointed agency channels, but the procured suppliers are being asked to prioritise their recruitment from among LA applicants wherever possible.

Also, LAs may be able to provide either office accommodation from which local managers can train field staff and direct operations, and/or storage space for local supplies of materials and equipment.

Publicity

During the 2001 Census, many LAs established their own census advice lines. ONS seek to work with LAs on developing these channels for the 2011 Census

Working in partnership on the 2011 Census cont...

and to ensure that the messages that they give out are synchronised and harmonised with changing events within the national enumeration programme.

The simplest approach might be to ask LAs to pass on all public enquiries about the Census directly to the central Census Contact Centre, which ONS will endeavour to ensure will have a greater capacity to deal with calls than was the case in 2001. But LAs will also need to be aware of these messages so that they may offer more direct local support as and when necessary.

Higher level stakeholder engagement

ONS also aim to engage with LAs through forums such as SOLACE and the Association of London Government, in order to develop ways of championing the Census at the senior executive level and of encouraging LAs to actively engage in partnership working for the 2011 Census. Plans are in hand to give a joint presentation with one of the Test LAs at this year's CLIP Annual Conference.

The Action Plan and maps of areas being covered in the 2007 test are available on the ONS website at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/census/census2011/2007_test.asp

**For further information,
please email Ian White on Ian.White@ons.gsi.gov.uk**

Access to Healthy Foods: A GIS and Geodemographic Approach

John Marsden, Peter Brown,
University of Liverpool
Kate Hutton, South Sefton
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Abstract

GIS and geodemographic methods are used to identify areas of Sefton that are accessible to fresh food outlets and to compare and contrast the degree of affluence or deprivation of the population of 'served' and 'unserved' areas.

Introduction

Poor access to healthy and affordable foods has become an important issue in the fields of community health and social exclusion. The growth of major supermarkets, and the demise of the corner shop, is thought to have had a detrimental effect on people's diet, especially those without access to a car and/or poor access to shops by public transport. The term 'food desert' has been applied to areas where food shops are not found.

This issue has been investigated in Sefton in Merseyside using GIS techniques to determine how many people are located within and beyond a 500 metre radius of retail outlets selling fresh fruit and vegetables, thus in 'served' and 'unserved' areas, using 2001 Census output area (OA) population data (Figure 1).

Following the work of Dowler¹, 500 metres was adopted as the distance a fit person would be prepared to walk to a food outlet, carrying loaded shopping bags on the return journey.

Distinguishing features of OA populations are captured using the People and Places (P²) geodemographic typology²,

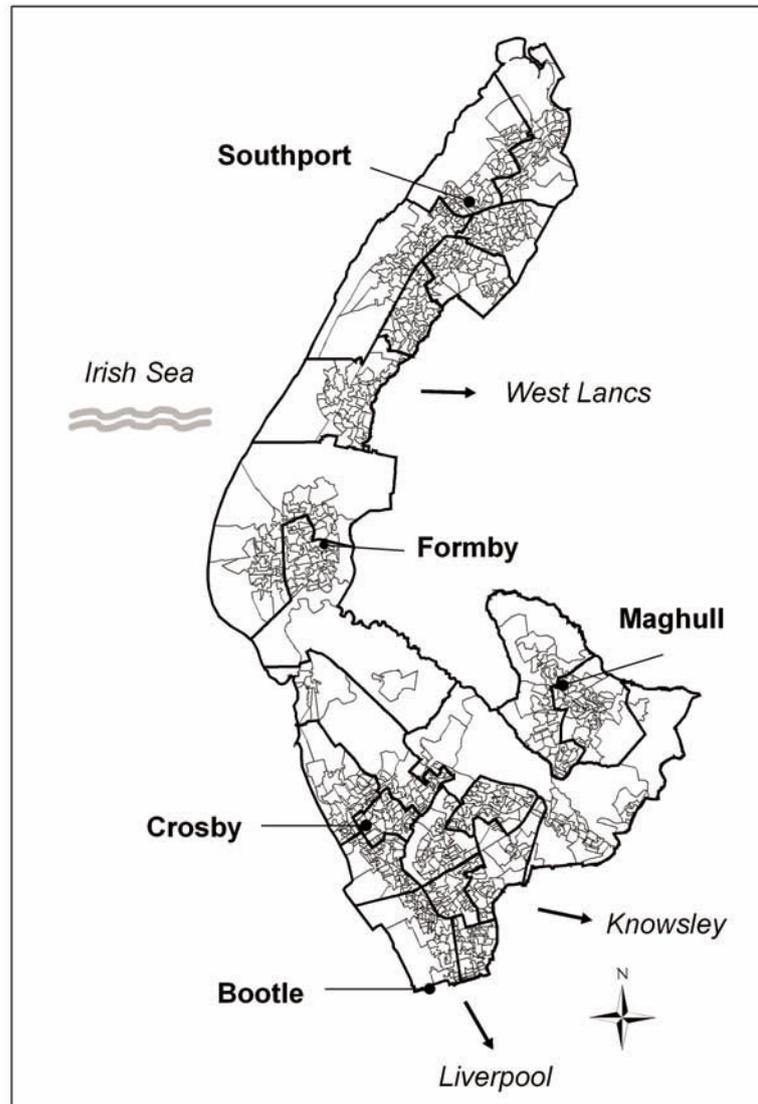


Figure 1 - Sefton 2001 Output Areas

revealing the degree to which various types of neighbourhood are over- or under-represented in the served and unserved areas.

Food outlet data

The locations of all retail food outlets in Sefton were mapped. Mott MacDonald MIS (Merseyside Information Service) supplied information from the National Land and Property Gazetteer for Sefton, including property postcodes and grid references and a land-use field identifying type of premises. In a commissioned survey of retail

properties, a total of 233 outlets were encoded as supermarket, greengrocer, general store, butcher, bakery, petrol station, local market, newsagent and other (see Figure 2a). The survey also recorded the range of foods available, the quality and standard of fresh fruit and vegetables offered, price information and cleanliness scores.

Buffer and clip

Outlets offering fresh fruit and vegetables accounted for only 65 (Figure 2b) of the 233 (Figure 2a) retail outlets. Figure 2c illustrates

Access to Healthy Foods: A GIS and Geodemographic Approach cont...



Figure 2a: All Food Outlets



Figure 2b: Fruit and Vegetable Outlets



Figure 2c: Fruit and Vegetable Buffered to 500m

the 500m buffer around the fresh fruit and vegetable outlets, noting that large areas of Sefton are 'unserved'. The buffered areas were then 'clipped' into the output area map layer to enable estimation of the population inside and outside the served areas, based on an assumption of an even distribution of population within each OA.

Table 1 (next page) contains a sample of eight records from the OA attribute table after the 500m buffer clip operation. The 'clippop' field reveals the estimated population of the buffer area, as an area-based proportion of the OA population. For the first six records the entire OA falls within the served area. However, only part of the last two OAs falls inside the buffer area, with the estimated population served shown in the 'clippop' field.

Sefton's OAs contain a total population of 283,292. The sum

of the values in the 'clippop' field reveals that 100,626 (35.5%) live in served areas, while the unserved population is 182,670 (64.5%). Thus, a significant majority of the population is located at more than 500m from a fresh fruit and vegetable outlet.

Geodemographic analysis

The analysis is extended by examining the geodemographic composition of the population located within and outside the 500m buffer zone around each fruit and vegetable outlet. Here use is made of the P² People and Places typology developed jointly by Beacon Dodsworth (a geographical information analysis company) and the University of Liverpool. The typology is based on OA data from the 2001 Census and provides three levels of description ranging from 157 clusters (or Leaves), to 40 clusters (or Branches), and 13 clusters (or Trees), the least detailed. The clusters are labelled according to an affluence ranking of area types.

The distribution of the Sefton population between the thirteen P² People and Places Trees is seen in Table 2. The first four (more affluent) Trees account for c. 35% of the population, while the least affluent four account for c. 30%. In the next columns, the table illustrates differences between served and unserved areas in terms of area type representation. The share of the population in each area type is expressed in index form, comparing the share within/beyond 500m with its share of the population as a whole. An index value greater than 100 thus represents an over-representation and, under 100 the under-representation, of a Tree population.

Access to Healthy Foods: A GIS and Geodemographic Approach cont...

Table 1 - Sample records from Output Area attribute table

Zone Code	Area	Pop01	Cliparea	Clippop
00CAGL0027	13481.8	192	13481.780278	191.999426
00CAGF0016	16075.1	252	16075.088859	251.999523
00CAGL0026	19301.4	231	19301.369877	230.998795
00CAGF0015	15007.3	295	15007.252687	294.999067
00CAGL0028	57581.9	275	57581.926513	275.000340
00CAGF0014	24466.5	337	24466.478105	336.998823
00CAGF0005	20732.3	317	15508.534961	237.128601
00CAGF0003	20220.2	308	1461.017167	22.254652

Table 2 - Geodemographic Analysis of Sefton Population within/ beyond 500m radius of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Outlets

	People and Places Tree	Total		<500m			>500m		
		Population	% Pop	Population	% Pop	Index Pop Share	Population	% Pop	Index Pop Share
A	Mature Oaks	52988	18.76	17432	17.32	92	35556	19.55	104
B	Country Orchards	1746	0.62	322	0.32	52	1424	0.78	127
C	Blossoming Families	11248	3.98	3812	3.79	95	7436	4.09	103
D	Rooted Households	48435	17.14	19474	19.35	113	28961	15.92	93
E	Metropolitan Growth	421	0.15	421	0.42	281	0	0.00	0
F	Senior Neighbourhoods	20368	7.21	10455	10.39	144	9913	5.45	76
G	Settled Suburbia	49355	17.47	19400	19.28	110	29955	16.47	94
H	New Starters	11316	4.01	7671	7.62	190	3645	2.00	50
J	Urban Producers	34260	12.13	9599	9.54	79	24661	13.56	112
K	Weathered Communities	18664	6.61	5052	5.02	76	13612	7.48	113
L	Disadvantaged Households	24815	8.78	5618	5.58	64	19197	10.55	120
M	Urban Challenge	8898	3.15	1370	1.36	43	7528	4.14	131
	Total	282514	100.00	100626	100.00	100	181888	100.00	100

Note: Tree I (Multicultural Centres) is not represented in Sefton

Access to Healthy Foods: A GIS and Geodemographic Approach cont...

In the served areas the mid-affluence range Trees (Senior Neighbourhoods, Settled Suburbia and New Starters) tend to be over-represented. The most affluent and least affluent groups are found to be significantly over-represented among those beyond 500m from a fruit and vegetable outlet, the unserved areas. The highest value of over-representation is recorded for the least affluent group (Urban Challenge). This pattern is important, as for the more affluent, and thus personally mobile, this greater distance is likely to be less of a problem than it is for the less affluent, who are less likely to have access to a car and are more dependent on public transport.

Concluding comments

The distribution of Sefton's population in relation to the location of food outlets has been examined using GIS and geodemographic methods. A greater proportion of the more deprived population is found in the areas more remote from fruit and vegetable outlets. Whether such areas can be described as food deserts may be debatable, but interesting differences have been revealed in the patterns of accessibility to retail outlets of more and less affluent groups.

References

- 1 Dowler, E. (2002) 'Food and poverty in Britain: rights and responsibilities', *Social Policy and Administration*, 36(6), 698-717.
- 2 Harris, R., Sleight, P. and Webber, R. (2005) *Geodemographics, GIS and Neighbourhood Targeting*, Wiley, Chichester.
- 3 Beacon Dodsworth (2005) *People and Places* website available at: <http://www.p2peopleandplaces.co.uk>

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Supporting benefit claimants back to work

By Nick Moon

Kent County Council (KCC) is delivering an innovative, evidence-based programme to support long-term benefit claimants back to work in targeted locations. This initiative is part of KCC's second generation Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA2) with central government, and contributes towards KCC's drive to reduce benefit dependency through its groundbreaking Supporting Independence Programme.

The Supporting Independence Programme

The Supporting Independence Programme came from the success of the first generation LPSA targets, and was strongly supported by the former leader of KCC, Lord Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, present Chair of the LGA. It takes a very strong evidence-based approach to look at the ten most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in Kent and fosters strong working relationships with KCC's partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors, enabling them to deliver their resources to the areas and people that need them the most. The ultimate aim is to help disadvantaged individuals to lift themselves out of dependency.

Helping long-term Incapacity Benefit claimants

Kent's LPSA2 target to help long-term Incapacity Benefit claimants back to work reflects one of the key objectives of the Supporting Independence Programme. There are just under 49,000 Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants in Kent, the largest group of benefit claimants in the county (as is the case across the country), and there are significant clusters of IB claimants in various parts of Kent, mainly in pockets of entrenched multiple disadvantage. The LPSA2 target is to help support 250 claimants who have been claiming for more than two years to get off the benefit and into sustained employment. Thus the programme needed to be delivered in areas which displayed a number of characteristics, including:

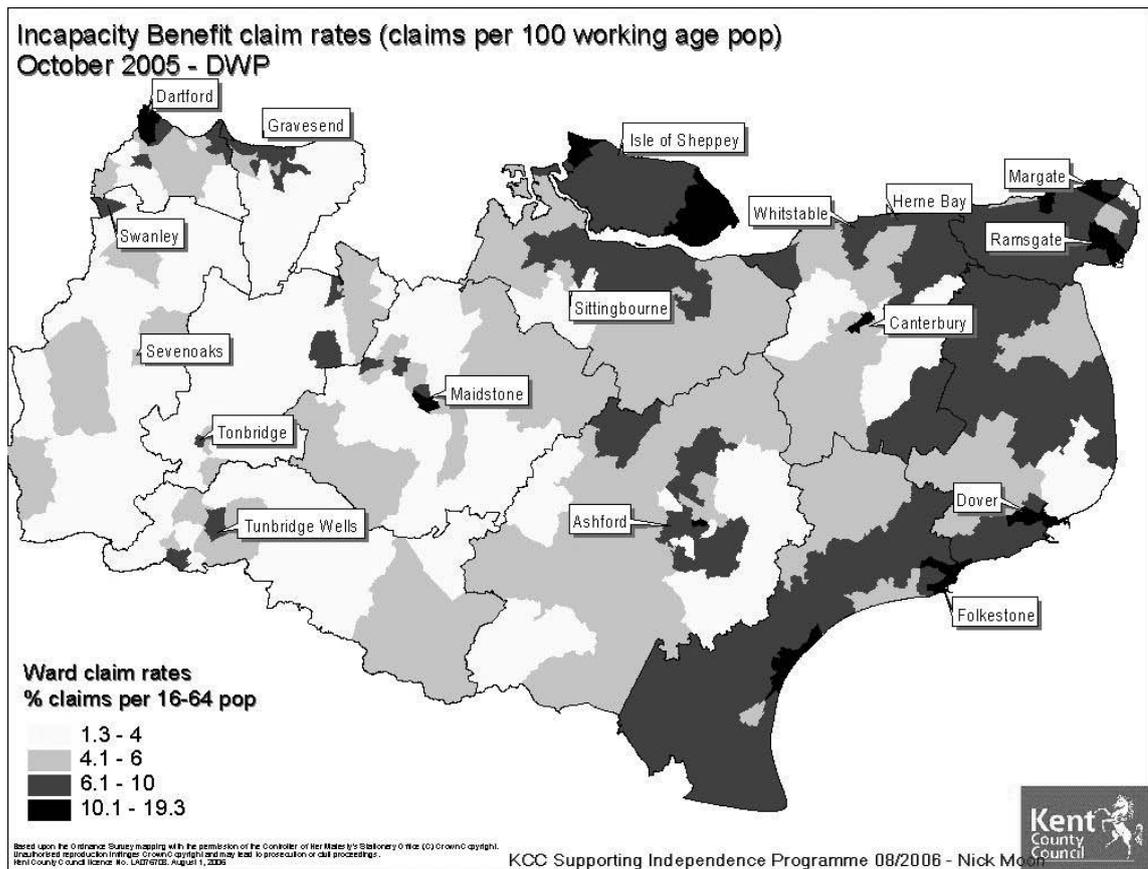
- **A substantial number of IB claimants**
- **A high enough proportion of the working age population on IB**
- **A high enough proportion of long-term claimants**
- **A well-developed network of agencies and individuals who are able to work together to help deliver a programme to support clients back into work**
- **An active enough job market – there is a need for jobs to be available for people to move into if they want to and are ready to start work**

A great deal of analysis was clearly needed before any programmes were put into place to ensure that these criteria were met. Data protection rules prevent any personalised data from being shared between Jobcentre Plus and external agencies such as county councils, so the Supporting Independence Programme team were dependent on data published by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) at ward and lower-level Super Output Area level on their website (www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/tabtool.asp).

We used ward-level data, which was geocoded and mapped using GIS mapping software to show where the hotspots were across the county for IB claimants. This allowed us to see where there were significant concentrations of claimants and where they were most clustered, which then suggested where we might best deliver interventions to achieve our targets. We mapped data which showed the rates of claimants as a percentage of the working age population by ward, but we were specifically interested in those areas where the rates and the absolute numbers were high, so as to allow a large enough "pool" of people to work with. From this mapping exercise (see Figure 1) we selected the areas of Folkestone, Maidstone, Margate/Ramsgate and the hotspots of North Kent (Dartford, Gravesham, Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey) to deliver our programme of interventions as these also satisfied the other criteria we wished to consider.

Supporting benefit claimants back to work cont...

Figure 1



Getting the message across

Whilst this gave us the evidence as to where we should deliver, it did not give sufficiently fine data for us to target marketing directly at our prospective clients (i.e. IB claimants of two years or more). The rules of the agreement reached between KCC and central government precluded us from collaborative work with Jobcentre Plus, because the stretch target was designed to demonstrate that any job outcomes were as a result of KCC's own intervention rather than those of its partners. In order for us to market efficiently, we needed to get our material straight to where the prospective clients lived, did their shopping, met their friends, went to pubs and so on – and this was not so identifiable from the DWP data.

In order to enhance the DWP information, we used data from MOSAIC software, which collates a wide variety of data sets from the Census and their own consumer sources. MOSAIC enabled us to view the demographic and lifestyle characteristics of Incapacity Benefit claimants at postcode and household level, and provided a view of what services and resources they are likely to make use of. By displaying our posters and leaflets in these places (libraries, supermarkets, pharmacies, GP surgeries, schools, adult education centres and so on) in streets identified by MOSAIC data we were better able to target our marketing which made it more cost effective.

Conclusion

Research suggests that if an individual has been on Incapacity Benefit for more than two years, he or she is more likely to die or retire than ever make a successful transition back to work. However, between 80 and 90 per cent of all new IB claimants state that they want to get back to work as soon as possible when they make their first claim. This suggests that the system is failing these people. By using a strong evidence base to identify where these individuals are, we are able to target more effectively our intervention programmes to assist these people to make the right moves to getting back to employment. This brings benefits not just to the individuals themselves but to their families, in terms of health, lifestyle, aspirations and financial reward, and also to the wider communities that they live in.

For further details please contact Nick Moon, Social Inclusion Officer, Supporting Independence Programme, Kent County Council. Tel: 01622 696932, Email: nick.moon@kent.gov.uk

Estimating household incomes

By Bob Line

Estimating incomes is a perennial problem for many social researchers, and surveys and incomes data can be expensive and take considerable resources to commission and manage. But maybe there is now a possibility that generally available free data sources could be used for the construction of a model giving both averages and profiles at a detailed spatial levels.

The components are :-

Census data at Output Area level:-

- table CAS46 – socio-economic classification (NS-SeC) of Household Reference Person (HRP) by tenure
- table CAS118, which is also about car use, and gives number of workers per household

This may be a bit small for many purposes, so aggregating them to whatever boundaries you want, like ward, parish, or your own neighbourhood structure, is often helpful.

Then link this occupation type with ASHE (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) to attribute a combined household income to the socio-economic profile for each aggregated spatial unit.

ASHE (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings)

This gives a regional breakdown of earnings by occupation type, and a local authority breakdown. So a typical earnings level can be attributed to each socio-economic group from the regional tables, and this then weighted by any substantial local authority variation.

The average number of workers per household, or if required even more accurate estimates of numbers of earners in each household in each Output Area, can thus be used to derive broad household incomes. The socio-economic classification can also allow a broad split for other factors, such as tenure or employment.

ONS produce a matrix which gives the combinations of SOC codes and Employment Status, available at :- http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/ns_sec/derivation_tables.asp

This says "NS-SEC category is allocated by using a combination of information about occupation coded to occupational unit group (OUG) level of the Standard Occupational Classification 2000, plus information about employment status and size of organisation in the form of an employment status variable."

Income from other sources such as benefits and pensions is another problem, but the most common benefits can be added in from current rates and attributed to the socio-economic groups most likely to be on benefits. This of course makes it all more complicated, and spreadsheets bigger, and many versions and refinements may be needed to get something that captures as much as you want. But by building it slowly it is possible to produce something that looks right and checks out against other estimates.

The model then needs testing and calibrating. Other sources such as CACI Paycheck could help here if you have some, or ONS have now produced new model-based estimates of income for Wards, 2001/02. Go to www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk, choose 'view or download data by topic', select 'Economic Deprivation', and look for 'Model-Based Estimates of Incomes for Wards'.

'Reality testing' against local knowledge to see if the patterns and estimated income levels make sense is also always useful.

An online map giving some early results is at

http://www.blinehousing.info/SouthEast/rural/SVG/SE_parish_hhld_modelled_incomes.htm

in the convenient SVG (Scalar Vector Graphics) format. So far it seems to check out on local perceptions. It may be crude and have many flaws, but sometimes researchers working on practical projects for local government, such as housing affordability or economic development, needs something rather than nothing, and you have to start somewhere.

For further details, please contact Bob Line (freelance housing consultant and researcher) at bline@stayfree.co.uk

Innovation and flexibility in drugs interventions

- Reflecting upon findings of the 3D Team project evaluation

By Faye Dunbavan, Ben Tomkinson and Susan Hampshaw

Background

Around 4 million people in the UK use at least one illicit drug each year, and there are thought to be around 250,000 problematic drug users in England and Wales (Department of Health, 2004). Problematic drug use is very often associated with the poorest communities, and indeed drug misuse is a concern within many New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas (Peters et al 2003). Doncaster NDC has funded several drugs initiatives to complement mainstream services in tackling the town's drugs issues. The 3D (Drugs, Dependency, Diversion) Team project, funded by Doncaster NDC since 2002, is one such example, and it has recently been evaluated by Doncaster NDC Evaluation Unit, based at Doncaster Central Primary Care Trust.

The 3D Team is based in central Doncaster and consists of two Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPNs) and two Dependency Support Workers (DSWs). They work with drug users who live in the NDC area, including people who are homeless as well as female sex workers who solicit primarily within the area. The 3D Team therefore provides additional support to the core drug service in Doncaster, The Garage, for NDC clients only.

Methodology

The project evaluation lasted from July 2005 to January 2006. We adopted a largely qualitative approach to elicit an insight into people's lived experiences. Our main evaluation questions covered the following areas:

- How does the project operate?
- Does the service provided by the 3D Team meet the clients' needs?
- What are the outcomes?
- How can it be improved?

We sought and gained ethical approval from the Doncaster Local Research Ethics Committee.

Our main source of data was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with the 3D Team staff members (including CPNs, DSWs and management) and five clients. In order to encourage clients to take part and to thank them for their time, we provided an incentive to each client, which consisted of a £10 supermarket voucher. Each interview was conducted by two members of the Evaluation Unit, although we ensured that a CPN was available on call at all times. The themes covered in our interviews are shown in Table 1.

Given the potentially sensitive nature of the content of the interviews, all interviewees were asked to sign consent forms. Interviews were taped, transcribed and subsequently analysed through the process of familiarisation and open coding. From these initial codes, we began to draw out themes upon which our findings are based.

Table 1 Themes covered in the semi-structured interviews

	Key themes covered
Staff interviews	Roles of staff, teamwork, strengths and weaknesses of the project, relationship with clients, partnership working, training, suggested improvements.
Client interviews	Treatment and support received, how treatment and support has benefited them, current situation, impacts on family life, suggested improvements.

Our evaluation also involved the documentary analysis of twenty client files, the project's business plans, monitoring reports, and promotional materials. We also sent out a quantitative questionnaire survey to eighteen partner agencies that we had found evidence for having worked with the 3D Team. The surveys investigated the multiple reasons for, and the benefits and difficulties of, working in partnership. Nine out of eighteen questionnaires were completed.

Innovation and flexibility in drugs interventions cont...

Findings

The evaluation highlights a number of innovative practices employed by the Team. First and foremost is the overarching holistic approach that governs the breadth of work undertaken by the project. This entails more than simply prescribing medication to a client to help them become and remain drug free. Instead, it also involves tackling the social aspects of clients' lives, including self-esteem, employment, family, relationships, housing, healthy living, education and training. This helps clients in their journey towards independence from drugs. The complementary roles played by the CPNs and DSWs ensure that a client receives the medical, social and emotional support that they require to keep them on track.

The role of the DSWs in particular may be viewed as innovative. They have very small caseloads of around 12 people, meaning that they are able to devote intensive support to each client. The DSWs have the creative freedom to implement and organise a number of activities for their clients. Most significantly this has included the setting up of a self-support group named RAIL (Reintegration and Independent Lifestyles) whose members filmed an educational DVD entitled 'Wasted' to demonstrate the dangers of drug taking to secondary school pupils in Doncaster. The eye-catching 'Wasted' logo is shown below.

Concluding remarks

Overall, the evaluation has indicated that there is much to be gained from trying out innovative approaches to drugs interventions. The 3D Team plays a highly valuable role within the Doncaster drugs services, offering intensive and tailored support to vulnerable clients who experience chaotic lifestyles. It is clear that NDC clients receive the very best of care available, as the 3D Team tailors its services to clients' individual needs. The innovative approach that the 3D Team operates is central to its ability to engage and relate to clients, helping them on the road towards recovery from drug addiction.



Figure 1 - Logo for the 'Wasted' DVD

For further information, please contact Faye Dunbavan, NDC Evaluation Officer, NDC Evaluation Unit, Doncaster Central Primary Care Trust, at: faye.dunbavan@doncastercentralpct.nhs.uk

All details of findings are contained in "The 3D Team project - a local evaluation". This can be found by going to www.doncasterndc.co.uk, selecting 'NDC Evaluation Unit', following the link for publications, and choosing '3D Team Project – Full evaluation report'.

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Department of Health (2004) Summary of intelligence on substance misuse [on-line] www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/09/48/73/04094873.pdf (Accessed 29/08/06).

Peters, J., Blank, L., Goyder, E. and Ellis, E. (2003) Drug prevention or reduction: Early findings (NDC National Evaluation Research Report 9) [online] <http://ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk/ndcevaluation/Documents/Research%20Reports/RR9.pdf> (Sheffield Hallam University) (Accessed 29/08/06).

Improving communications through research

By Neil Wholey

A poor communications strategy will drag your council's reputation down no matter how successful you are in delivering services. Your communications team may be a buzz of activity in promoting your council but have you provided them with the research information they need to do their job properly? Do they know which media sources have the ear of your local residents and do they prioritise those with the most impact on your council's reputation? Without this knowledge communications becomes scattergun and real opportunities to communicate your successes and improve your reputation will be missed.

At **Westminster City Council** we not only place research and consultation within the communications team but we also carry out bespoke research into the influence of the media upon our reputation. This research has helped us to win 15 national awards in the last two years for our communications – including the LGC's Communication Team of the Year in 2004. Many of our submissions have included research evidence on the impact of our communications.

Who reads what?

Westminster residents receive their information from a number of different sources, and we feel it is vital that we understand this media mix when drawing up any communication plans. Our last "Who Reads What" survey¹ showed that the most popular independent local newspaper is the Westminster Times (read by 17% of residents); slightly fewer than those who have actively read the Council's Westminster Reporter (22%). When shown a copy, half of all residents (49%)² said they had seen an issue of the Westminster Reporter in the last year, and one of the major challenges of any communications team is to convert awareness into actual readership.

Our most commonly read national newspapers are the Times (21%), the Guardian (14%) and the Daily Mail (11%). As with many London councils the Evening Standard (45%) and Metro (40%) have a high level of readership. Television has a higher penetration. Nearly half (48%) of all our residents watch ITV's London Tonight at least once or twice a week (14% watch it every day), and two-thirds (65%) watch BBC London News with the same regularity (28% every day).

We can also measure the potential reach of stories about the Council. We know that a story covered by the Evening Standard, Metro and by BBC London television news has the potential to reach four in five (80%) of our residents. We also know that a story covered nationally by the Times and BBC Radio 4 has the potential to reach two in five (41%) of our residents – as well as impacting on our reputation across the country.

Local government in the spotlight

The recent LGA/Ipsos MORI study on local government press coverage³ highlights that "*[even] in the national press, much of the coverage of local government – even general discussion – is illustrated with local examples.*"⁴ We aim to be those examples; especially if we can show the positive side of local government. The LGA/Ipsos MORI study shows this can be difficult due to national press coverage being particularly negative about local government. We hope to counter this with our proactive examples of best practice. The risks may be great but the rewards are that our communications can effectively reach many more local residents than would otherwise be possible or affordable.

As well as media reach figures we also measure trust. As two-thirds (65%) of residents watch BBC London at least once a week, and 85% of those viewers trust what they hear a great deal or a fair amount, it is important to monitor what is said. Have you ever thought about the impact of travel reports? A mention of travel chaos due to council roadworks can seriously damage your council's reputation – regardless of whether or not they have responsibility for road maintenance. We therefore work hard to ensure that the correct information about the roadworks, the reasoning behind them, and what we are doing to minimise the impact, is available to those who will be telling drivers about it.

Spreading the word

We have also carried out communication functions for Slough, Richmond upon Thames and the Isle of Wight. Often one of our first recommendations is to carry out some baseline research. We have found that each area has its own unique mix of media. Local radio and press play a larger role outside London; but there is still a high degree of penetration of national and regional media.

Improving communications through research cont...

This research has proved invaluable in discussions that have set out new communications strategies.

Our work on the role of the media fits in with the current LGA campaign on local government reputation of which we are a keen supporter (see www.lga.gov.uk for more details). Research underpins many of the twelve key actions for improving the reputation of a local authority. In particular communications research can be used to illustrate the positive impact of the changes and therefore justify any costs.

For the future we are looking to continue tracking media habits. We would be interested in discussing this further with other councils who may have already carried out such work or would be interested in doing so in the future. The new BVPI General Survey questions on media use and levels of information will help, if data is made available, but at present we are just on the verge of a richer understanding of the diverse mix of media environments across the country and the impact on local government reputation.

For further information contact Neil Wholey at Westminster City Council on 020 7641 3317, or email: nwholey@westminster.gov.uk

- 1 *Who Reads What; 811 Westminster residents aged 16+, interviewed by telephone by SMSR, 4 April to 27 April 2005.*
- 2 *City Survey 2005, 1,009 Westminster residents aged 16+, interviewed face-to-face, in-home by MORI, 8 October – 6 December 2005.*
- 3 *Ipsos MORI/Test Research on behalf of the LGA How is Local Government reported in the press? January 2006. Fieldwork Summer 2005.*
- 4 *Ben Page, Chair of Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute; What the Papers Say, Understanding Local Government, Ipsos MORI, Summer 2006*

DWP Tabulation Tool

By Martin McGill

Changes made to data published

In October 2005 the Department for Work and Pensions made significant changes to the National Statistics which it publishes, both in the data sources employed and methods of delivery. This has meant that key benefit statistics are now sourced from 100% administrative data, the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS), replacing the 5% sample data for headline figures; however the 5% figures remain available on the site. This has resulted in improvements in accuracy particularly for local areas. In addition it has enabled claims to be linked over time between working age benefits, employment schemes (eg New Deals) and employment.

With the move to WPLS data has also come a new internet Tabulation Tool (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/tabtool.asp>), which allows customers to produce and view statistical tables according to claimant characteristics at national, regional and local authority level based on 100% data. Other smaller geographical caseload information is available based on frozen 2003 boundaries - this covers figures by ward and Lower Super Output Area in England and Wales and by Data Zone in Scotland. In addition small area benefit caseloads, based on 100% WPLS data, are also now available on the Nomis website.

Differences between WPLS and 5% data

Although based on the same underlying administrative benefit computer systems, there are several crucial differences between the WPLS database and the 5% sample data. Firstly, the WPLS enables the production of statistics based on 100% of claimants compared to 5% samples where a rating factor of 20 has to be applied to the data. Secondly, with the WPLS additional processing allows the inclusion of late claim information producing more accurate statistics. Thirdly, the WPLS incorporates employment data from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) which has improved the scope and accuracy of the data, for example information on employment starts has enabled improvements to New Deal Statistics.

The different methodology for data extraction between the WPLS and 5% data has meant that the two databases represent slightly different populations. Consequently there are consistent and quantifiable differences in the statistics obtained from the two. These differences, for most benefits, are relatively small and can be attributed to factors such as the WPLS snapshot data being more regular than the 5% allowing the inclusion of short claims information; also, the 100% data, unlike the 5% data, is collected not only at the reference date but also in the following 3 months, allowing the capture of late claims information. However, although there are small differences between WPLS and 5% caseloads, trends and patterns are similar.

The 5% data is also available on the DWP tabulation tool as it is recognised that the sample data is able to provide certain detail which is not yet available on the WPLS. However, DWP recommends that where the detail is only available on the 5% sample data, the proportions derived should be applied to the overall 100% total for the benefit.

Developments

Recent months have seen the inclusion on the Tabulation Tool of data on Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions and disallowances. Other development work in progress includes adding ethnicity data for Jobseeker's Allowance claimants and the in-flows and off-flows of claimants to the benefit system. On current plans, the former will be published in November 2006 and a quarterly series of benefit flows data will be published in early 2007.

**For further information, please contact Martin McGill, email: Martin.McGill@dwp.gsi.gov.uk,
Tel: 0191 225 7661**

LARIA Annual Conference Feedback

By Christine Collingwood and Graham Smith

In the last issue, we reported on the LARIA Annual Conference, and to complete the reporting, below is a summary of what delegates thought of the Conference. Also, to address some issues of concern to the organisers, for the first time a survey of non-attenders was carried out.

What Did Delegates Think?

As is normally the case, delegates at the Annual Conference were asked to give feedback on their experience of the 2006 Conference, and 43 delegates out of 84 completed a feedback questionnaire.

70% of the delegates found out about the Conference from LariaNews or a LARIA mailshot, which is in line with previous years.

However, a larger proportion of delegates had previously attended a LARIA Conference than had been the case in previous years – 65% in 2006 compared with about 50% in previous years.

93% considered that the content of the programme was important in deciding whether to attend the conference, and 97% thought that meeting contacts from other organisations was important. The cost of attending was considered important by about three-quarters and the accessibility of the venue was thought important by only 65% of delegates.

These four factors were all rated highly by most delegates – indeed 90% thought the cost of attending was better than average.

All delegates who completed their feedback questionnaires considered the Conference either very or fairly worthwhile overall.

The rural research stream was the part that attracted more delegates than other sections of the programme, although the Census sessions, as ever, also attracted a lot of delegates. The range and quality of speakers were identified as definite plus points and the informal discussion groups also attracted praise. Other areas that were seen as very positive were the accommodation, the exhibition stands, and the friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

The only area that did not seem to meet with approval was the signing to the car-park, but overall the University of Exeter was considered a good venue – 60% thought it very good and 35% fairly good.

However, LARIA has had some concern as to why the numbers attending the Conference this year had been lower than in the past. The Events Group that designs the Conference first looked at the issue of the location of the Conference (Exeter in 2006) to see whether this had any influence on the attendance. An analysis of the origin of delegates to the last few conferences was undertaken and there were no clear messages coming from the analysis. The only suspicion was that the programme content itself is far more significant than first thought, and bearing in mind the concentration of part of the programme on rural issues this year, and the fact that Exeter is not near any large conurbations, the “urban” attendance was much lower.

To supplement the feedback from delegates and the location analysis, the LARIA Events Group decided to undertake a study of the reasons why LARIA members did not attend the Conference this year. This was undertaken on LARIA's behalf by Pendle Borough Council.

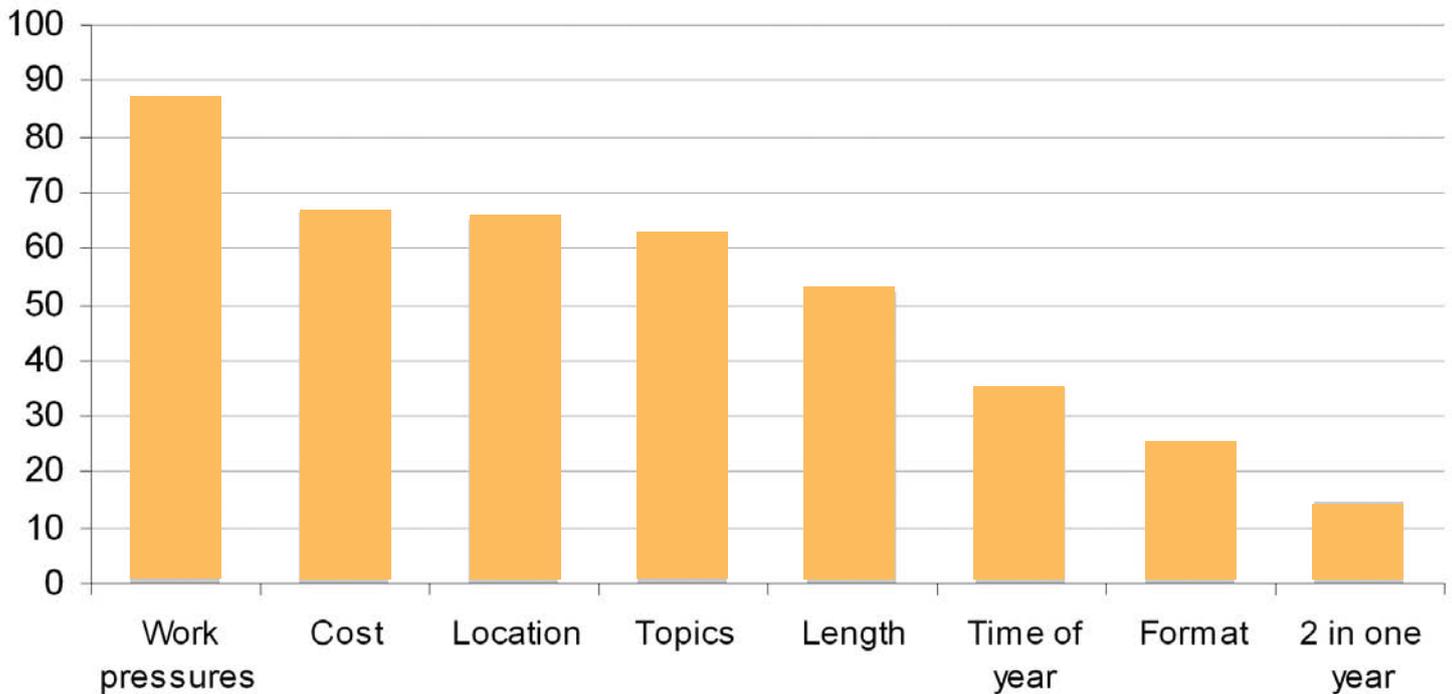
Why Didn't Members Attend?

An online survey was sent to all LARIA members who did not attend the 2006 conference and a total of 170 questionnaires were returned completed. The aim of the survey was to help the LARIA Events Group to understand:

- The reasons behind non-attendance.
- The specific barriers to attending the conference.
- Ways in which LARIA could encourage attendance.
- Topics of interest for the 2007 Conference.

The survey asked why respondents did not attend the LARIA conference. As can be seen from the figure on the next page, work pressures / time was by far the most important factor for non-attendance with 60% of respondents citing this as being a ‘strong influence’. The format of the event and the fact that there were two events in one financial year were not seen as such important barriers to attending.

LARIA Annual Conference Feedback cont...



Percentage of respondents who identified barriers to attending the LARIA conference as being some / strong influence

67 respondents (39%) said that they had previously attended a LARIA Annual Conference in the last five years; however, the majority of respondents (just under 70%) had not been to any of the LARIA one-day events in the last year. A fifth had been to one event and only 10% to two or three day events.

The respondents were asked what topics might encourage them to attend the 2007 LARIA Annual Conference. When the comments from the non-attendees were analysed one topic / theme was clearly dominant - this was consultation and citizen engagement. In particular there was a strong interest in e-democracy and eConsultation. Other topics mentioned by several respondents were:-

- 2011 Census
- Population/ forecasting/ migration
- Research for regeneration
- Housing/ housing needs/ Housing Market Assessments
- Linking with other bodies (ie PCT, RDA)
- Small Area Statistics
- The use of GIS in research

There also appears to be support for a series of practical workshop-based sessions to be developed for those new to research in the public sector. The findings from this research as well as the survey completed by those which attended this year's conference will help shape the 2007 programme.

For further details please contact:

Christine Collingwood (Pendle BC) at christine.collingwood@pendle.gov.uk or Graham Smith (LARIA Events Organiser) at lariaoffice@aol.com.

ALGIS in LARIA Update

By the time this edition of LariaNews is published, **ALGIS** will have held an awayday in September to look at its purpose and potential for the future. The group has been in existence for some 15 years now and information work in local government has changed dramatically in that time. Do we still meet the needs of our members and are we offering the right services? What could we do better? What should we stop doing? What new things should we take on? We hope to come away with a clear vision for the future.

The Committee have booked the AGM for next year for the 20th March 2007 so please make a note in your diary now. We plan to hold it in Birmingham for a change and we would be interested to hear what topics members would find useful to cover on that day.

ALGIS aims to support staff working in information in local government and we are keen to reach anyone working in this area. If you know of people working in this field please tell them about us and suggest they visit our web site: www.algis.org.uk

Jane Inman
Chair of ALGIS in LARIA
janeinman@warwickshire.gov.uk

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R & I News

East Riding of Yorkshire

Data Observatory

East Riding of Yorkshire Council launched a web-based resource for a wide range of demographic and socio-economic information through its Data Observatory at www.gofer-info.co.uk in November 2005. GOFER stands for Geography Online For East Riding and the Data Observatory is the latest development in online provision of data from the Council's in-house team drawn from the Research Group and IT Services.

The site currently provides information from a range of data sources, around six key themes:

- Demographics and households
- Deprivation
- Education and skills
- Economy and employment
- Housing
- People and society

Since its launch nine months ago, the Data Observatory has received over 25,000 hits. The site has grown in that time and there are now almost half a million records in the site, covering over 800 indicators, and data is available at a range of up to five geographies, giving a total of around 3,000 data combinations. The information is presented either as thematic maps that show the distribution of the data across the council area, or as tables of data. Mapping tools allow the data to be shown at varying scales, and with different geographic/administrative boundaries. Maps and data can be printed or downloaded to be incorporated into reports or presentations.

The site also houses reports, useful resources and local area profiles, and provides links to other relevant sites, including the Yorkshire Futures Regional Intelligence Network. New data releases are publicised in the 'Latest News' section and users can ask questions or participate in discussions on the site's Bulletin Board. As well as providing information for the planning of council services, the facility is also informative for residents, businesses, community and voluntary groups, students and researchers.

The development of the Data Observatory was partly funded by the Learning and Skills Council (Humberside) and the Humber Economic Partnership (previously known as Humber Forum), and is supported by other key agencies in the local public sector and Yorkshire Futures.

For more information, please contact Rachel Julian (Senior Research Officer) on 01482 391430
Rachel.julian@eastriding.gov.uk

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Dos and Don'ts of Consulting with Young People

Information Sharing with Local Partners

In September 2005, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council held its first 'Youth Leisure Day'. The philosophy behind the day was to offer a programme of exciting activities supervised by young people and organised by young people in order to encourage as wide a participation as possible. One of the activities on the day was an innovative Big-Brother-style Diary Room, through which young people could offer their opinions of services in the Borough on camera.

The Diary Room event generated much interest from our local partners following the sharing of the research findings with them – so much so that some of our partners (e.g. the Primary Care Trust, Surrey County Council and Connexions) shared an interest in learning more about the dos and don'ts of consulting with young people.

In order to respond to this, we decided to hold an information-sharing session with partners in April 2006 that focused upon all of the legal and ethical considerations that need to be applied when conducting consultation with young people.

The event was well received, and a number of partners commented upon how useful it was to meet people with different levels of experience and to learn from some of the examples of work that has been or is being done.

R & I News cont...

As a result of this session, partners are now requesting that certain question areas be covered in the Diary Room planned as part of our next Youth Leisure Day in September 2006, and the Council is also looking at other types of information-sharing sessions to hold with local partners.

For further information, please contact Sarah Hogg at shogg@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Worcestershire County Council

State of the Environment

The Research and Intelligence Unit is supporting the Worcestershire Partnership Environment Group by helping to produce the State of the Environment Report/Website. This website will be redesigned with the help of the Unit, and will provide a utility for Worcestershire residents and professional users to monitor the state of the environment in the County, and compare it with district, regional and national figures. The Unit will also maintain a set of indicators relating to the environment and climate change in the County, categorized under a set of thematic headings. Over time this will provide a chronological record of a range of environmental data in the County, and provide users of the website with a simple way of identifying trends in local environmental data.

Contact Rob Morris on 01905 768355 or rmorris2@worcestershire.gov.uk for details

Children's Fund

The Research and Intelligence Unit is continuing to help the Children's Fund to monitor and evaluate the impact of its projects on children and young people in a number of target areas across the County. As part of this work, the Research and Intelligence Unit will collate previous consultation, and use newly commissioned "Listening to Children's Voices" studies to establish background information about the lives of children and young people across Worcestershire, against the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.

The Unit will also participate in studies to establish the degree to which the Children's Fund has encouraged additional funding for its projects from other sources, thereby securing the future of the projects beyond the life of the Children's Fund. In

addition, the Unit will provide assistance to the Children's Fund as it introduces more sophisticated techniques to monitor key data relating to participants in each of its projects. Currently, work is being undertaken to establish more effective methods to monitor attendance at the projects.

Contact Rob Morris on 01905 768355 or rmorris2@worcestershire.gov.uk for details

Mystery Shopping at Worcestershire County Council

The Research and Intelligence Unit at Worcestershire County Council recently undertook a mystery shopping project in the County. The aim of the project was to explore issues around access to services, and in particular for people with disabilities and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

The project used local citizens from different ethnic backgrounds and citizens with disabilities to assess access to services in Worcestershire. We recruited Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents, as well as people with hearing, visual and physical impairments.

In total, 80 mystery shops took place across the County, assessing services such as libraries, countryside centres, the registration service and the Worcestershire Hub (a one-stop shop for accessing both County and District Council services). A control group of professional mystery shoppers undertook 40 of the shops and the other 40 were carried out by local citizens. A mixture of communication channels were shopped, including face-to-face, telephone, letter and email/web based enquiries.

Shoppers assessed the speed their enquiry was dealt with, efficiency and accuracy of the response, politeness and courtesy towards the customer and signage and accessibility on Council premises.

The project has helped us to gain valuable insight into the way customers are dealt with by the Council. Worcestershire County Council are currently working on putting the recommendations in the report into action in order to improve access to services for all residents in Worcestershire.

For more information please contact Helen Clive, Principal Research Analyst, Worcestershire County Council on 01905 766715 or email hclive@worcestershire.gov.uk

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.

LARIA People



Tony Todd

The LARIA People spotlight falls on Tony Todd, Chair of the LARIA Marketing and Promotion Activity Group

Tony is a Research Manager for a Wakefield housing organisation, one of the largest social housing providers in the United Kingdom. Heading up a small team of researchers, Tony is responsible for a wide range of research tasks ranging from satisfaction surveys to geographic mapping.

Tony's first job after leaving university was as a fieldworker interviewing residents in Hull for a study looking at the governments Right-to-Buy initiative. This involved working on some of Hull's rougher estates. Tony's sprinting skills proved to be a useful asset for

avoiding irate respondents and packs of feral dogs. Tony then took up the post of Research Officer at the School of Business at Humberside Polytechnic looking at small business development. From there he moved to School of Behavioural Science at Huddersfield Polytechnic, where he taught sociology to degree students and undertook a major research project on local corporatism. Tony's first seminar with students involved a discussion on Michel's "iron law of oligarchy". To this day he says, he still has no idea what he what the topic was all about!

Feeling the need for a more secure career, Tony joined local government in the mid-eighties. His first local government job was as housing campaign co-ordinator for Leicester City Council. The job involved writing campaign materials opposing the selling off of Council estates, organising conferences, lobbying government and mobilising tenants groups. Tony's most infamous moment came when a Tory MP held up one of his leaflets in Parliament as an example of "scurrilous left wing propaganda". More controversy followed as Edwina Curry MP refused (on the day) to attend a conference she had agreed to attend as a key note speaker.

After all that excitement Tony felt it was time for a change of scenery and moved to Yorkshire to become Housing Research Officer for Wakefield MDC. Something of a homecoming as his mother was born in Wakefield. His first major task was to write the Council's Local Housing Plan. This was another document that was discussed in Parliament in the context of the national housing crisis – this time in a positive rather than negative manner. Tony then concentrated his efforts on customer research and introduced automated questionnaire scanning to Wakefield.

For a short period Tony was then seconded to Wakefield Health Action Zone to co-ordinate a major project on deprivation being undertaken by Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University and the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR), Sheffield Hallam University. During this period Tony was also involved with writing parts of the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Plan. At this time he also became the chair of the Council's Multi-Agency Information Group, a role he held for two years.

In 2004 Tony became Wakefield's Housing Research Manager and the research team was expanded to include Geographic Information functions. In 2005 Wakefield's housing stock was transferred to a new housing association and Tony became the Research Manager for the new organisation.

Tony has been a member of LARIA for about six years and is currently the Chair of the LARIA Marketing and Promotion Activity Group.

In his spare time Tony is a DJ, spinning a mixture of world music and Jazz. He also collects classic guitars and spends time working in his home recording studio on creating jazz-dance tracks. At weekends Tony likes to hike over the hills of the Yorkshire Dales contemplating the beauty of God's own country.

News from Elsewhere

Audit Commission

National studies programme

The Audit Commission national studies programme aims to improve local public services through its independent authoritative analysis of national evidence and local practice. Our national reports address strategic issues affecting specific sectors as well as the public sector as a whole. The research identifies practice that works, highlights emerging findings and examines national trends to influence local practice and national policy.

The national studies programme for 2006/7, published in June, outlines the Audit Commission's current national studies, as well as new studies we plan to start in the months ahead. It also includes an analysis of the responses to the consultation on possible new studies which happened earlier in the year. The document is available on our website at

www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/downloads/NSprogrammeresponsetoconsultation.pdf

We now have an area on our website dedicated to the national studies programme, reached by going to www.audit-commission.gov.uk and following the link in the 'National studies programme' box at the bottom right. Among the options on the 'National studies' site is *National studies update*, which enables users to register for our free quarterly newsletter. We are starting to scope three new national studies, which are described below:-

1. Making better use of information to drive improvement in public services

The first of the new studies for 2006/07 will look at how local authorities can improve the way they use a range of data and information to manage performance and improve their services. We are keen to get views and good practice examples from local authorities on using information well to improve their services. If your authority has any good practice examples, or you are interested in this study, then please get in touch with **David Bird, Senior Manager, Studies Directorate, Audit Commission 020 7166 2504 or d-bird@audit-commission.gov.uk**

2. Public Sector Workforce: Challenges for the Future

Recruitment, Retention and Motivation national report

The second new study for 2006/07 will examine issues concerning the current and future composition, skills base and remuneration of the public sector workforce. It is planned the study will consist of three separate national reports in the following areas:

- Recruitment, Retention and Motivation;
- Pay and Productivity (to include reference to pensions and total rewards); and
- Absence Management

The first issue to be studied will be Recruitment, Retention and Motivation. We are keen to get views and examples from local authorities that have either undertaken research on – or introduced innovative approaches to - recruitment, retention and what motivates staff to work for local public bodies. If your authority has any good practice examples, or you are interested in this study, then please get in touch with **Nigel Terrington, Research Analyst, Studies Directorate, Audit Commission on 020 7166 2439 or n-terrington@audit-commission.gov.uk**

3. Charging for Local Services

In 1999 the Audit Commission published *The Price is Right*, an influential national study looking at fees and charges levied by councils. The report findings fed into the legislative changes introduced by the Local Government Act 2003 which widened authorities' powers to trade.

News from Elsewhere cont...

The Price is Right found that fees and charges levied by councils are important, raising a substantial proportion of revenue and potentially supporting council priorities and objectives. However charges were often not well managed and not used to their full potential. And since then, despite the additional powers bestowed by the 2003 Act, there is evidence that councils are not making full use of these powers to charge and trade, or are unclear about how to use them. There are also different concerns around the impact of existing charges on lower-income households, and the possible effect of reducing access to services for those who need them most. If your authority has any good practice examples, or you are interested in this study, then please get in touch with **Louise Gitter, Research Manager Studies Directorate on 020 7166 2462 or l-gitter@audit-commission.gov.uk**

For further information on the national studies programme in general, please contact Roger Sykes, Head of Studies, Studies Directorate, Audit Commission on 020 7166 2202 or r-sykes@audit-commission.gov.uk

Commission for Rural Communities

The **State of the Countryside** report is a unique examination of rural England and of the many ways that it is changing - socially, economically and environmentally. This year's report presents some key trends - for example urban to rural migration, housing affordability, employment, business growth, farming and on the quality of the natural environment – and highlights key challenges for government and for all of those who live in and care about the countryside. The report also presents the results of recent survey work which has developed our understanding about issues such as urban to rural migration, and which has added further insight into day-to-day life in rural England. The report contains expanded assessments of the changes affecting both rural housing and farming.

In bringing together a broad range of social, economic and environmental information, the report seeks to initiate and inform a wider debate about sustainability in rural England. State of the Countryside 2006 provides comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the overall rural picture, presented in an accessible, fully illustrated format.

For further information, contact Nicola Lloyd on 01242 533468. You can view or download the full report at the Commission for Rural Communities website: www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk.

To order a hard copy (CRC 22), priced £10, call 0870 1206466 or write to: Countryside Agency Publications, PO Box 125, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7EP.

Market Research Society (MRS)

MRS Regulations for the Conduct of Consultation Projects

In February 2005 MRS and LARIA issued guidelines entitled "Using Surveys for Consultations". These guidelines were designed as a source of advice for local authority staff intending to use survey techniques to seek the views of the public on an issue of local concern, such as the provision of new services or amenities, or a planning proposal.

The MRS Market Research Standards Board (MRSB) has now decided to issue regulations for MRS Members and MRS Company Partners who work on consultation projects. The regulations are designed as a companion to the earlier guidelines. Together they provide assistance to both clients and researchers on the ethical and professional responsibilities relevant to the conduct of consultation exercises.

The draft regulations are now available for consultation on the MRS website at:

www.mrs.org.uk/standards/consultation_regs.htm and MRS welcomes comments on their content from all interested parties. The consultation period will remain open until 3rd November 2006. Once approved by MRSB the regulations will be binding on all MRS members and MRS Company Partners.

For further information, please email guidelines@mrs.org.uk, or contact:

Barry Ryan, Standards & Policy Manager, MRS,

15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0JR

Tel: 020 7566 1882, Fax: 020 7490 0608, E-mail: barry.ryan@mrs.org.uk

News from Elsewhere cont...

National Association for Voluntary and Community Action

Getting to know the local voluntary and community sector

Knowledge and understanding of local voluntary and community organisations could increase dramatically through a new project - Voluntary and Community Sector Profiles.

The Profiles will be developed to provide a picture of VCS activities and outcomes in a particular locality. Responsibility for undertaking the work will lie with local VCS groups, but the statutory sector is being asked to support the profiling – both practically and financially.

The project could provide important benefits for the statutory sector. It is intended that VCS Profiles will help local authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships and Safer and Stronger Communities partnerships to improve their understanding of the local VCS, inform Local Area Agreements and assist public bodies with service planning.

VCS Profiles should also assist some public bodies and partnerships – particularly Safer and Stronger Communities partnerships – to assess outcomes against agreed performance indicators, the achievement of which depend upon the activities of VCS groups.

Local VCS groups hope to benefit substantially from the profiling, which aims to improve service planning, demonstrate the value of the sector, help with local VCS leadership and promote volunteering. Results may feed into the Audit Commission's Area Profiles project, which was featured in Issue 80 of LariaNews.

The project is led by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA, formerly the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service), with backing from the Audit Commission, Capacity Builders, the Charities Aid Foundation, GuideStar UK, the Home Office, the Improvement and Development Agency, the Local Government Association, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

Details can be obtained from www.navca.org.uk and www.audit-commission.gov.uk/areaprofiles.

For further information please contact Neil Cleeveley, Director of Information and Policy at the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, at neil.cleeveley@navca.org.uk

Scottish Consumer Council

Consumer satisfaction with public services

The Scottish Consumer Council has published a report on consumer satisfaction with public services. The report, Building on Success: Consumer satisfaction with public services, coincides with the publication of the Scottish Executive's consultation on transforming public services.

The report includes findings of a poll carried out among a representative sample of just under 1000 Scots. While some services, such as primary education, GPs, library services and sport and leisure facilities, had user satisfaction rates of over 80%, satisfaction rates for users of the police and social services were significantly lower.

The poll also found that people who had used public services were much more positive than those who did not. The largest differences between users and non-users satisfaction rates were found in primary schools and libraries, where user satisfaction was 52 percentage points higher than non-user satisfaction.

Based on these new findings on consumer satisfaction with the public sector, and existing research carried out by SCC, the report identifies six keys to unlocking consumer satisfaction in public services. They are:

- Improving information about services
- Improving information about standards
- Improving access to services
- Putting things right when they go wrong
- Ensuring professionalism and positive staff attitudes
- Listening and responding to the views of consumers

The full report is available on the SCC website (www.scotconsumer.org.uk) at <http://www.scotconsumer.org.uk/publications/reports/documents/bos.pdf>

For further information please contact Jennifer Wallace at jwallace@scotconsumer.org.uk or on 0141 227 6450.

Noticeboard

Market Research Society An MRS Census and Geodemographics Group Seminar

Geography and People - How academic theory has evolved into business benefit

27th November 2006

The Society of Chemical Industry, London SW1

Overview synopsis

Government is constantly trying to build better bridges between the academic and commercial sectors, so that new research may better impact on the country's success. But this has proven difficult.

Geography is an academic discipline of increasing importance and is already widely applied by the commercial sector. However, the commercial world can be ignorant of the latest academic thinking. Similarly, many interesting developments occurring in the commercial sector remain largely unknown to the academic community.

This one-day seminar will bring together experts from both the academic and commercial sectors to talk from their alternative perspectives on a series of common topics relating to 'Geography and People'. This will be a unique opportunity to share our different views, to build closer understanding and to gain interesting and fruitful new insights.

The day will be chaired by Chris Denham, former head of ONS Census output and geography.

For details of the programme, see <http://www.mrs.org.uk/networking/cgg/nov06.htm>.

Corporate members of LARIA are eligible for the members/company partner rate of £170+VAT (£199.75). You will need to quote 'LA CGG' as the reference code to claim the discount, either by writing it on the flyer booking form, or entering it in the free text 'further info' field in the on-line booking form.

Statistics User Forum Annual Conference

New statistics from administrative and customer files

16th November 2006

The Royal Society, London SW1

Overview

The use of administrative and customer files for statistical purposes continues to grow apace, enabled by increasing computing power and the widespread use of postcoded addresses. This year's SUF conference brings together speakers who are leading the field in both public services and commercial companies.

The event provides an ideal opportunity for suppliers to share their experiences, and for statistics users to express their own needs and priorities.

Jointly chaired by Ian Diamond of the ESRC and Derek Wanless of the Statistics Commission, the day culminates in a panel session and open discussion on the issue of overcoming barriers to data sharing in the UK.

For full details of the programme and a booking form, please see the inserted leaflet or go to www.rss.org.uk/sufconference

Corporate members of LARIA are entitled to the concessionary rate of £125.

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.

Articles written specifically for LariaNews stand a much better chance of being selected than press releases. 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 30th November 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 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.