



LOCAL AUTHORITIES &
RESEARCH COUNCILS' INITIATIVE

LARCI Newsletter Summer 2010



Bringing Local Government and
the Research Councils into closer
partnership, leading to better informed
research, policy and practice

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Strategic Board

Chaired by Professor John Benington, the strategic agenda for LARCI is set by our Board which includes Chief Executives from a number of Local Authorities as well as senior staff from devolved administrations and LARCI member organisations.

For information on LARCI Strategic Board members, please view our website: www.larci.org.uk

Welcome

Welcome to the LARCI Summer 2010 Newsletter.

In this edition, LARCI is launching a new Access to Evidence initiative to make Research Council funded research more easily accessible to local authorities. We are asking for your input to ensure that the research we highlight is most relevant to current local government research priorities and needs. More details about the scheme and how to get involved are highlighted on page 4.

We are also giving our website a 'makeover', with a view to making information from across the LARCI partnership easier to find. Look out for a revised LARCI website which will be launched in the Autumn.

Don't miss the short film showing how partnership between researchers, delivery agents and local government can help to manage and mitigate the impact of flooding in the UK, available for viewing on page 7.

This newsletter also provides concise summaries of the latest research, funded by the LARCI member organisations, of interest and practical use to those working with and within local government.

We signpost opportunities for collaboration with Research Council programmes, share best practice through publicising research conducted by local authorities and publicise reports and events supported by related organisations.

For more LARCI information please visit our website which is updated regularly with events and information.

www.larci.org.uk

Cover Photograph

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If you would like to provide a photograph for the newsletter front page please email: LARCI@rcuk.ac.uk

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LARCI Launches New Access to Evidence Initiative

Are you involved in developing or implementing policy within local government?

Would you benefit from better online access to world-class research?

If you answer yes to these questions, LARCI would like to hear from you.

LARCI is launching a new Access to Evidence initiative, to make Research Council funded research more easily accessible to local authorities. We are asking for your input to ensure that the research we highlight is most relevant to current local government research priorities and needs.

What is the LARCI Access to Evidence initiative?

The aim of the LARCI Access to Evidence initiative is to help officers and councillors access the most up-to-date, policy-relevant research available from the Research Councils. The Research Councils invest £2.8 billion each year in research, much of which is relevant to local authorities.

This initiative gives you the opportunity to tell us what research topics you need to know about within your local government organisation – what are your unmet knowledge needs, where are the gaps, what information would really make a difference?

We will use your input to determine the content of the research section on our new website www.larci.org.uk, and refine the additional information we signpost. We will also use your responses to encourage researchers to focus on and promote their work more widely to the local government sector.

New LARCI website (replacing the current site at www.larci.org.uk in the Autumn)

The LARCI website is being re-designed to include easy, online access to Research Council funded research of relevance to local authorities. The Research pages will include both non-technical summaries and more detailed outputs from the most relevant Programmes, Centres, Institutes and other investments. Research outputs and summaries will be grouped under subject headings identified by our partner organisations, provisionally Community Wellbeing, Children and Young people, Culture, Tourism and Recreation, Regeneration and Transport, Improvement, Environment, Safer Communities, and Workforce.

The Impact pages will give brief examples of a wide range of useful collaborations between local government and academia, including people-exchange schemes. LARCI commissioned reviews, think pieces, publications, newsletters and summaries of recent seminar outputs will be highlighted on dedicated pages.

Our new website is being developed with input from the Local Government Group, and will work synergistically with their new web portal.

What is LARCI inviting me to do?

Local authority colleagues are being invited to identify those topics where better access to research evidence would be most useful.

Suggestions are encouraged for any topic of relevance to local government, although we particularly welcome input relating to the headings previously stated.

How do I participate in this initiative?

Let us know what research would be of benefit to you in your policy and practice decision making, by completing the very brief Suggestion Form on our website at: www.larci.org.uk, and emailing to LARCI@rcuk.ac.uk, by **Friday 1st October 2010**.

The more responses we have to this initiative, the more effective we will be in identifying and producing useful outputs, so please promote this to your colleagues and networks.

Opportunities for Local Authorities

How to become involved with the Research Councils

Local Authorities can become involved in the research process in a number of ways all of which LARCI can facilitate. You can:

Use results from Research Council UK projects to inform policy and practice:

- access results from each Research Council UK through searchable on-line databases and websites
- check on dissemination events and knowledge exchange mechanisms through Research Council websites, the LARCI newsletter and bulletins.

Input directly to research projects:

- apply with a joint or lead partner for specific Research Council funding
- respond to calls for participation through individual research programmes
- respond to LARCI funding calls being piloted.

Inform future research direction:

- become involved in Research Council consultations (promoted on individual websites and flagged in LARCI newsletters).

Making Contact

The websites and databases highlighted on page 12 of this newsletter are a good starting point to develop working relationships with an academic in a particular subject area.

Alternatively, LARCI can help broker local authority and academic research partnerships.

For more information please contact Dr. Andrea Turner andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk or Tel.: 01793 413121

Community Wellbeing



Making the Most of an Older Population

This cross sector Local Government Group (LGG) research programme looks at the long term challenges and opportunities arising from an aging population, for older people themselves, for their communities and for public services. The **Centre for Population Change (CPC)** is preparing a proposal for an in-depth analysis of the circumstances of older people in 2020 and beyond, using national statistics for robust analysis to enlighten debate and dispel some of the myths. They will look at the assumptions behind anticipated trends. They will also do analyses of contrasting localities, including data from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and others.

LGA and the Medical Research Council (MRC) are holding a workshop on October 5th on **Older People's Health and Well Being and the Built Environment** bringing together leading councils and academics to identify priorities for councils. This will serve as a preliminary for subsequent desk research on the knowledge already available. Councillor David Rogers, chair of the LGA Community Well Being Board, is co-chairing this with David Armstrong, Chair of the UK research councils Life Long Health and Wellbeing (LLHW) research programme.

Research on **Assistive Technology**, funded by LARCI with input from the Assistive Living Innovation Platform will be commissioned to promote local government's role in introducing the technology to users and their carers, and identifying the barriers to development and take up. BT is consulting with two councils on the ways they are considering issues around **older people's access to technology in their service planning**.

Finally, LGG is hosting a workshop in September on **Barriers to the design and development of age friendly housing and neighbourhoods**. To keep informed about the programme and to let us know what your interests are, join our community of practice at: www.communities.idea.gov.uk.

For further information contact Jill Mortimer at: jill.mortimer@lga.gov.uk or Liz Spratt at: elizabeth.spratt@lga.gov.uk

A Leap Forward in Helping Alcohol Addiction

A study by a team of researchers at Bangor University has designed and tested two programmes that help problem drinkers curb their alcohol abuse. The study shows positive results after drinkers have followed either the Alcohol Attention-Control Training (AACTP)

or the Life Enhancement and Advancement (LEAP) programmes. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the projects addressed the challenges faced by excessive drinkers, including a preoccupation with drinking made worse by alcohol-related stimuli around them and drinkers' motivational difficulties preventing them achieving goals which provide alternative healthy activities to drinking alcohol.

The main findings from the programmes were:

- drinkers' weekly alcohol consumption decreased significantly
- reduction in alcohol-related problems greatly reduced
- drinkers' motivation to reduce their consumption increased.

The impact of this research on how practitioners treat alcohol problems could be wide-ranging with tried-and-tested programme training used to treat alcohol-related problems much more effectively.

For further information contact Miles Cox at: m.cox@bangor.ac.uk

Parents in Prison Cause Long-Term Problems

Around 125,000 (about one per cent) of children under 18 have a parent in prison in England or Wales. "Our systematic review of evidence suggests that children of prisoners have about twice the risk of antisocial behaviour and poor mental health outcomes compared to children without imprisoned parents," says Dr Joseph Murray who is leading the project team at Cambridge University .

Research suggests that parental imprisonment can cause many problems for the family left behind – including difficulty in organising childcare, loss of family income, stigma, trouble maintaining contact with the imprisoned parent, and home, school and neighbourhood moves. Children and parents can become distressed by the separation and children may respond by acting out or becoming withdrawn, anxious or depressed.

A study in Sweden revealed that parental imprisonment predicted children's own criminal behaviour, but, unlike in England, the effects of parental imprisonment disappeared after accounting for the criminality of the parent. Evidence from Switzerland indicates that childhood aggressive behaviours were influenced by other types of family stress in infancy, such as illnesses and accidents of primary caregivers, parental conflict, household instability, and economic strain. "This cross-national difference may have been the result of shorter prison sentences in Sweden, more family-friendly prison policies, a welfare-orientated juvenile justice system, an extended social welfare system, and more sympathetic public attitudes toward crime and punishment," Dr. Murray explains. Based on a national British study, the researchers also found that very early life events are quite strong predictors of crime in adulthood.



For further information contact Dr. Joseph Murray at: jm335@cam.ac.uk

Children and Young People

Help for Polish Families

During 2006-07 Dr. Louise Ryan and a team of researchers at Middlesex University undertook research on 'Recent Polish migrants in London: social networks, transience and settlement (funded by the ESRC) which highlighted the ways in which family strategies impact on migration decision making. As a result of that work, the team was commissioned by Multiverse (a professional resource network funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools) to undertake a study of Polish pupils in London primary schools. The findings highlighted that many Polish parents as EU citizens make little preparation for migration and often underestimate the process of adjustment involved in moving to a new country, especially when they do not speak the language. Children's adjustment to schools usually took longer than parents expected and the process of learning English also took longer than anticipated. The research also found a mismatch in expectations between parents and teachers especially around language acquisition, the role of parents in their children's learning and communication between schools and parents.



With further ESRC funding, a **Guidebook for Polish Parents on the English Educational system** has been produced. This booklet not only explains key aspects of the schools system but also presents a detailed comparison of the Polish and English educational systems. By making the guidebook available in English as well as Polish the aim is to make it useful to both teachers and others working with Polish families and will enable them to highlight the key differences between both educational systems. The research also found that teachers and those working at the front line of delivery are often over stretched with limited time to investigate the full range of resources that exist. Staff within schools often have little awareness of the full range of materials that already exist to assist new arrivals and English as an additional language (EAL) children. Thus, a good deal of unnecessary 're-inventing the wheel' is going on not only in London but across the country. Most of the information included in the guide would be relevant to other migrant parents and to those working with them.

For more information and/or a copy of the guide book visit: www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/news-events/news/polishbookletlaunch.aspx

'League Table Teaching' Limits Independent Learning

Teaching practices adopted to ensure that schools perform in league tables may not be conducive to helping maths students make a successful transition to A/AS level maths and beyond. Research carried out in two sixth-form colleges and four schools explored whether the transition from GCSE to post-compulsory education posed a particular barrier to pupils' progression in maths. Findings show that where teachers 'take control' of the learning little room is left for some pupils to develop 'self-directing' learning skills. Once at college, these students often face demands for independence of learning and conceptual understanding. "College teachers often misunderstand what these students

know and are able to do in mathematics," explains Dr. Paul Hernandez-Martinez. "Teachers report that what helps students are practices where students take control of their own learning, such as projects, students' explanations of mathematical concepts and class discussion. We conclude that some practices on both sides of the transition are not designed to develop the skills that many students need."

For further information contact Dr. Paul Hernandez-Martinez at: Paul.Hernandez-Martinez@manchester.ac.uk

Schools Fail to Promote Disability Equality

Progress towards teaching children to have positive attitudes towards disabled people has been 'patchy', according to a new study funded by the ESRC. Many primary school teachers admit they 'could do better'. Lack of resources or insufficient training has led to teaching that is often inadequate and lacking in confidence, claim researchers. According to the study, some of the reasons for the lack of positive promotion of disability in primary schools are; uncertainty about how to fit disability equality into the curriculum or a reluctance to talk about disability for fear of highlighting 'difference'.

The Disability Equality in English Primary Schools Project, led by Dr. Angharad Beckett of Leeds University, focused on the extent and nature of teaching for disability equality, whilst also examining children's understanding of what it means to be disabled.

In December 2006, a legal duty was placed upon public sector organisations to promote equality for disabled people. Primary schools were supposed to have a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) in place by December 2007, which included their plans for promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people.

The study found that only 30 per cent of respondent schools had a DES in place that included this dimension and teaching about disability equality was often the 'poor relation' compared to other equality issues such as 'race'.

Encouragingly, schools said they would value more visits by disabled people's organisations and where schools knew how to embed disability into the curriculum, this teaching was not considered 'burdensome'. This is important because the findings of the study suggest the need for a proactive approach. Children in the study (aged 6/7 and 10/11) admired famous disabled people, such as Stephen Hawking, but misunderstandings about disability were commonplace. Younger children tended to believe that disabled people would not be able to have partners or marry, while many did not think disabled people could be employed.

The research concluded that local authorities and head teachers need to be more aware of children's misconceptions and of their responsibilities to challenge these; teachers need more training. In addition, Ofsted inspections could be extended to include assessment of schools' progress with regard to the Disability Equality Duty.

For further information, contact Dr. Angharad Beckett at: a.e.beckett@leeds.ac.uk or Tel.: 0113 3434409



Environment

The UK's First Flooding Strategy

The economic and social costs of flooding are expected to continue to rise in the UK in the light of the increasing risk posed by climate change.



Many institutions are currently engaged in flooding research, with 500 relevant flood research projects active last year. However, a number of the largest consortia

are close to ending or due to be reviewed. It is now recognised that there is an urgent need to consider the research, observations, policy evidence and skills needed to mitigate the risks from flooding and coastal erosion in the light of targeting future UK investment.

To this end, Professor John Rees, leader of the Natural Environment Research Council's theme in Natural Hazards, is heading a project over the coming year, 2010-2011, which culminates in the development of a flooding strategy for the UK. This project will bring together partners from the newly merged Environment Research Funders' Forum and Living with Environmental Change Partnerships (LWEC) to:

- review the current landscape for flooding research, observations, infrastructure and skills.
- identify and prioritise gaps in our understanding in light of various drivers and pressures over the short, medium and long term.
- develop principles to facilitate collaboration between researchers, funders and users to produce the flooding evidence base.
- develop a review methodology which may be adopted to analyse research strategies for other environmental issues.
- identify a means to evaluate the benefits arising from investment in flooding evidence and a mechanism for updating the strategy over time.

The Environment Agency, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Government, NERC, Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), and ESRC are all contributing to this initiative.

The project aims to hold a workshop in September 2010. If you wish to register your interest in attending this event and/or contribute in any way to this initiative, please use this link:

www.lwec.org.uk/uk-flood-research-strategy.

For further information please contact either Dr Louisa Watts lw@nerc.ac.uk, or Dr Faith Culshaw facu@nerc.ac.uk, at the NERC Knowledge Exchange team.

A Partnership to Flooding Video

NERC have, through the LWEC programme, funded a short film to show how partnership between researchers, delivery

agents and local government can help to manage and mitigate the impact of flooding in the UK.

The film entitled "A Partnership Approach to Flood Management", can be viewed on the NERC website at: www.nerc.ac.uk/research/issues/naturalhazards/flooding.asp

Breaking the Cycle of NIMBYism

In response to the threat of climate change, the UK government has set policy goals to rapidly and extensively increase the use of low carbon energy sources, for example, aiming to increase the proportion of electricity generated from renewable energy from 5.5% currently to about 30% by 2020. Such policy goals are ambitious, given that large-scale energy projects, from onshore wind farms and high-voltage transmission pylons to nuclear power stations have often proved controversial, involving bitter disputes between private developers and local protestors dubbed 'NIMBYs' (Not in my backyard).

There is research evidence to suggest that NIMBYism plays an implicit role in shaping the ways that decision-makers in the UK think about and undertake public engagement. For example, analysis conducted as part of the 'Beyond Nimbyism' research project, an intuitive which is part of a major national programme funded by the ESRC, revealed that private developers consider members of the public to be an 'ever-present danger' that could at any moment act to obstruct their proposals.

In essence, there appears to be a destructive, self-fulfilling cycle at play in the UK in relation to large-scale projects in which local opposition is interpreted by developers and policy makers as evidence of NIMBYism, which leads to engagement practices whose main goal is to allay NIMBY responses, but which in turn lead to more local opposition, which is then interpreted by developers as evidence of NIMBYism, and so on.

This cycle of action and reaction in public engagement does not provide a very suitable social context for the rapid transformation in energy infrastructure required in the UK. Instead, what is required is a different kind of policy making and planning that better connects the localities directly impacted upon by large scale projects with national policy making. This needs to facilitate dialogue between local actors (including municipalities and citizens), energy companies and national level institutions.

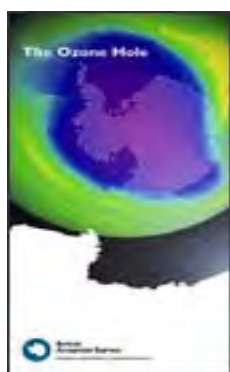
There is widespread social consent for increasing the use of renewable energy, but it is fragile. Breaking the cycle of NIMBYism requires avoiding NIMBY presumptions and better connecting national policy making with local places.



For more information visit the Beyond Nimbyism' website at: http://geography.exeter.ac.uk/beyond_nimbyism/index.shtml or contact Patrick Devine-Wright at: p.g.devine-wright@exeter.ac.uk

The Ozone Hole 25th Anniversary

In May, the [British Antarctic Survey](#) (BAS) commemorated the 25th anniversary of one of its most dramatic scientific discoveries – the ozone hole. In 1985, reporting in *Nature*, Joe Farman, Brian Gardiner and Jonathan Shanklin described their observations of large losses of ozone over Antarctica. In the May 6 2010 edition of *Nature* Jonathan Shanklin reflects on how the discovery was made and what lessons were learnt. The discovery of the ozone hole alerted the world to the dramatic and major environmental threat. The accumulation of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used in refrigeration and air conditioning systems, and industrial solvents were found to deplete the protective layer



of ozone that surrounds the Earth. Action by governments around the world led to the 1987 Montreal Protocol and its amendments, which ensured that production and consumption of CFCs, halons and carbon tetrachloride were phased out by 2000, and methyl chloroform by 2005. All members of the United Nations have now signed the Montreal Protocol. Today, scientists predict that Antarctic ozone levels will return to their 1950s levels by about 2080.

The BAS has published a new public information leaflet, 'The Ozone Hole' available from: www.antarctica.ac.uk/about_bas/publications/bas_the_ozone_hole.pdf

Waste Management - A Cooperative Study

In Europe, the last decade has seen a substantial number of environmental and waste directives, with an emphasis on increased producer responsibility, waste minimization, recycling, high technology incineration and landfill management. As a consequence, there is a greater requirement on the waste sector to operate to higher standards of professionalism and to incorporate best practice and new technologies in all activities, including greater use of academic research to influence decision-making. Because local authorities (LAs) are central to the delivery of effective waste management in the UK, it is important that their views, knowledge, experiences and skills are captured, utilized and incorporated into research programmes. The paper "Experiences of Co-operative Research Studies between Universities and Local Authorities" showcases a number of case studies where LAs and universities have co-operated successfully to mutual benefit on research projects. The case studies include projects that focus on the development of infrastructure, service provision and improving public participation, including: civic amenity sites; waste management in medium-and high-density housing; carbon foot printing of recyclable materials; evaluating new recycling services; and collection of biodegradable waste. The practical implications, impacts, advantages and disadvantages of collaborative research activities are discussed together with lessons learned from an academic and LA perspective. Recommendations for devising and developing cooperative research studies are provided.

The research paper can be requested from: <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/73763/> or contact Prof. Ian Williams at: idw@soton.ac.uk, Tel.: 023 8067 7519.

Urban Futures



Still only half way through, the EPSRC funded Urban Futures project can already boast some success in producing impact on the world around us. In accordance with the EPSRC's Impact Campaign, the Urban Futures team has been monitoring how their research could impact beyond academia and has found that the team's close involvement with external steering group partners has led to the uptake and adaptation of the project's outputs in the real world.

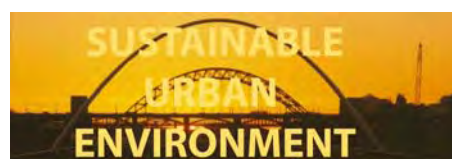
Urban Futures, part of the EPSRC's Sustainable Urban Environment (SUE) programme of research, selected four future scenarios (Policy Reform, Market Forces, Fortress World and New Sustainability Paradigm) from the wide variety of scenarios that are currently available that will enable them to future proof today's sustainability solutions (things done today in the name of sustainability, for example greywater recycling or passive solar design). The project team's decision to work closely with the Environment Agency and environmental consultants CH2M HILL has ensured that both organisations are already introducing aspects of Urban Futures' devised methodology into their work.

The team has just finished the challenging task of refining the scenarios to the UK Urban context. Work now focuses upon identifying, testing and optimising sustainability solutions to ensure they deliver their intended purpose no matter what the future holds.

For more information and for the latest research outputs from Urban Futures visit: www.urban-futures.org.

As part of the Implementation Strategies for Sustainable Urban Environment Systems (ISSUES) project, the knowledge transfer arm of the SUE programme, a report has been produced that examines Urban Futures' pathway to successful impact to date. The report investigates the dissemination and engagement efforts that have yielded significant benefits, both for the researchers and for sustainability practitioners, as well as promoting environmental sustainability throughout the UK and beyond.

You can read the report now by visiting the ISSUES website at: www.urbansustainabilityexchange.org.uk/ISSUESPublications.htm.



To find out more about SUE and the knowledge transfer work undertaken by the ISSUES project visit the project website at: www.urbansustainabilityexchange.org.uk/ISSUESueProgramme.htm

Improvement

Urban Knowledge Exchange

2010 heralds the 10th Anniversary of the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) at the University of Salford. To mark this occasion and their continued commitment to knowledge exchange, a series of pamphlets around knowledge, innovation, cities and climate change is being produced. The first of these pamphlets entitled 'Active Intermediaries for Effective Knowledge Exchange: Populating the 'Missing Middle' draws on extensive research and consultancy at city, regional, national and international levels to explore how the 'missing middle' in knowledge exchange can be addressed through the development of what has been termed 'active intermediaries'. Active intermediaries seek to have a transformative effect on knowledge, providing intelligence in context, rather than simply channelling more and more information into organizations.



The Effective Knowledge Exchange pamphlet is available from: www.surf.salford.ac.uk/cms/resources/uploads/File/surf_brochure042010.pdf or for more information visit: www.surf.salford.ac.uk/urban_knowledge_exchange

Making Voting More Efficient

Time-consuming manual vote-counts and ballot boxes could soon be consigned to the history books, thanks to innovative new secure voting technology.

The system is being developed in collaboration with computer scientists at the Universities of Surrey, Birmingham and Luxembourg with funding from the EPSRC.

Combining speed with total vote-counting accuracy, the system is unique because it will integrate state-of-the-art optical scanning, data processing and encryption with the tried-and-tested process of manually writing on a ballot paper. As well as eliminating the need for laborious manual counts and recounts, it will remove the possibility of ballot papers being miscounted, mislaid or marked accidentally or deliberately during a manual vote-count.

"Our system will combine the best of both worlds – providing secure electronic vote-counting that cuts the cost and complexity of running elections but doesn't require big changes to the actual voting process," says Dr. James Heather of Surrey University.

Not only could the new system prove enormously valuable in elections in the UK but also play a key role in developing countries, helping to prevent election fraud and ballot-rigging. The objective is to trial the new system within four years.



For further information contact either Prof. Mark Ryan at: M.D.Ryan@cs.bham.ac.uk or Dr. James Heather at: j.heather@surrey.ac.uk

Safer Communities

Social Marketing Tackles Grass Fires in Wales



Wales suffers over 7,000 deliberate grass fires annually. This costs fire services millions of pounds, endangers lives and property, impacts local businesses, and destroys wildlife and forestry resources. The problem peaks during the Spring "grass fire season", particularly during the school Easter holidays.

Years of educational initiatives to deter fire-setting have had little impact. This prompted South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) to develop an innovative social marketing project with Dr. Sue Peattie of the Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS) at Cardiff University. Social marketing builds relationships with target groups and influential stakeholders to encourage behaviour change for social good. It uses in-depth research into peoples' motivations, attitudes and behaviour to develop an intervention campaign.

A pilot project was established in Tonypany, a community where the problem was severe. In-depth interviews with local youngsters and adults revealed that the fire-setters were predominantly young males motivated by boredom, thrill-seeking, attention seeking, peer pressure, natural curiosity and experimentation. They were not necessarily the obviously disaffected youths, but included a wide range of young people.

The researchers and SWFRS worked with teenagers from Tonypany Community College to develop the campaign, with the youngsters devising its mascot (Bernie the Sheep) and strapline ('Grass is Green, Fire is Mean'). The teenagers worked with SWFRS to plan a range of attractive activities to keep them engaged over Easter including bush-craft skills, abseiling, film-making and graffiti workshops. Participation was rewarded with a desirable Bernie Hoodie and a signed 'pledge' certificate.

The net result was that fires around Tonypany decreased by 46% during the six week Easter campaign period. As well as saving money, the project has helped SWFRS get closer to the local community, and improved their links with the Police and Forestry Commission in tackling fire-prevention. This approach is now being extended to other communities.

For further information contact Dr. Sue Peattie at: PeattieS@cf.ac.uk or Tel.: 0 29 2087 5723.

'Twitter-like' Technology Making Cities Safer



Instant feedback technology that allows the public to voice spontaneous opinions about their surroundings is being tested to help make cities safer. The 'Voice Your View' (vYv) technology has been developed by scientists from the Research Councils UK Digital Economy Programme and allows people to provide feedback about their environment, including how safe they feel. Opinions can be expressed either through public terminals or easy-access software on mobile phones. The system then processes responses to create an instant 'wiki-display' of local issues that will help councils concentrate resources where they are needed most. For example, people might report that they feel unsafe in an area with poor lighting. Or they could express their fears about the visibility of the police in their area. vYv allows users to track their comments, see who agrees with them and view other issues reported elsewhere in their neighbourhood.

Professor Jon Whittle of Lancaster University, who is leading the research, says: "Think of it like a socially conscious twitter, or an anytime anywhere reporting mechanism. It's a form of social activism that could be really powerful for communities." By making it both quick and easy to provide an opinion vYv will encourage a broader range of people to express their views on local amenities. Trials of the prototype suggest that the technology could capture the views of a much younger public, whose opinions town planners rarely access. A large-scale trial is planned on Coventry University campus in October, with a second trial in a redevelopment area near the university in early 2011.

For more information visit: www.voiceyourview.com/

Workforce

Helping Rural Community Employment

Rural communities have not been immune from the recent recession, as some of the steepest rises in unemployment levels have been experienced in rural areas. Read the new guidance document 'Tackling Worklessness: How to help people into employment in rural areas' produced by the Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) which explains the challenges facing local government and its partners when tackling unemployment in rural areas, captures examples of good practice and suggests how local government can support employment in rural areas within the national policy and delivery framework.

For a copy of the document visit: www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/19225448



Focus on Local Government

Ageing Well Programme Launched

The Ageing Well programme has been launched by the LGID. With an ageing population in the UK, this programme will support local authorities to help older people age well, in communities that value their experience. Against a backdrop of efficiency and reducing costs, it will encourage councils to play a central role in developing imaginative approaches to community issues by working in partnership with other local organisations.

For more information visit the LGID website at: www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=20344655

Councils Need to Manage Public Expectations

Better management of people's expectations regarding public services such as rubbish collection and road gritting could lead to improved levels of satisfaction, says new research. Indeed, public dissatisfaction may stem from people's high expectations, rather than reflect any objective measure of the performance of local services. "Our study found that people's satisfaction with public services is affected by a variety of factors, and that levels of satisfaction could be improved by managing users' expectations" says Professor Oliver James at the University of Exeter.

Drawing from a model of attitudes towards local government services in England based on a national survey, the study found that the probability of people reporting satisfaction with local council services rises from less than 20 percent to over 60 percent when their expectations are met or exceeded. Another strand of the research demonstrates that provision of public information about the cost and performance of local public services such as that provided in Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAAs) can make local citizens revise their attitudes towards services, making them more in line with the 'objective' data.



"These research findings have high salience at a time of fiscal restraint, when spending on services is unlikely to increase at a similar rate to that in recent years, making service improvements more difficult to achieve," Professor James points out. If citizens and service users are not to be disappointed, they may have to contribute more to public services and lower their expectations.

For further information contact Prof. Oliver James at: o.james@exeter.ac.uk

A Revolution in Paying for Public Services

The new government faces the enormous challenge of slashing the cost of public services without slashing the services themselves. The good news is that it is possible. In fact, a revolution in how we pay for government is on the way, according to a new report by Dr. Michael Moynagh, Co-Director of the [Tomorrow Project](#) which studies the future of people's lives.

The Investing for Public Good report, which is part of a project funded by the ESRC, describes a new approach to tackling social problems known as Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). SIBs work by identifying savings government can make from addressing social problems at their roots. Once these savings are identified, capital is raised from private investors to pay for action that will prevent social problems before they arise. Investors receive a portion of the savings in government spending that result, while the government keeps the rest.

To help demonstrate how SIBs might work in reducing reconviction rates, the Ministry of Justice, in partnership with Social Finance and Kalyx, who manage the prison, has recently announced a pilot based at HMP Peterborough. The project will provide support to help short-term prisoners go straight when they are released. £5 million is being raised from investors to pay for mentoring and assistance in finding a job, getting off drugs and finding somewhere to live. These forms of help can cut re-offending rates dramatically. The expectation is that investing to prevent criminal behaviour will avoid the costs of bringing someone to trial and locking them up again.

Dr. Moynagh explains: "Currently, vast sums of taxpayer money are poured into the 'broken' parts of our society. This report looks at a radical approach of targeting money at the cause of future problems rather than throwing ever increasing amounts at the problems themselves. Long term, this can yield big savings in government budgets."

"SIBs can be used to employ more counsellors to treat children with mental health problems at an estimated cost of £30 million a year. However, it will produce savings of up to ten times that amount by reducing the children's behavioural problems later on. Getting financiers to cover the upfront costs and rewarding them from the savings that follow is a no brainer," says Dr. Moynagh.

This new approach according to the report will draw together voluntary and private sector agencies in tighter cooperation, encourage more innovation on the front line, speed up the demise of the old target culture and tailor services more closely to the needs of people who receive them. The result will be smarter government, doing more to better people's lives and at lower cost.

For a copy of the 'Investing for Public Good' report, contact Kelly Barnett on Tel.: 07789 768187.

For further information about the tomorrow project contact Richard Worsley at: richard.worsley2@btinternet.com.

Growing the Big Society

Building on from David Cameron's launch of the government's 'Big Society' with the announcement of vanguard communities and more power to the citizen, the Rt. Hon Greg Clark has set out the underpinning rationale for a decentralised approach with the emphasis on "turning government upside down" and a rights based agenda as the standout actions.

To view a transcript of 'Growing the Big Society' go to: www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/newsroom/growingbig society

Focus on Research Councils

New Funding to Beat Food Poisoning Bug

Up to £2M is being made available to tackle the most common cause of food poisoning in the UK - *Campylobacter*. Three of the UK's main public funders of food safety research, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Defra and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), have joined together to publish a coordinated strategy to investigate the food bug *Campylobacter* and invite research proposals to find out more about the organism and how best to control it.



Professor Douglas Kell, BBSRC Chief Executive, said: "Understanding *Campylobacter* is vital as it causes major health problems as well as having huge financial impact, costing the UK economy over £500M a year. This call is an exciting opportunity for researchers across the board to study different aspects of the organism and move us a step closer to being able to intervene at multiple points in the food chain to reduce the chances of food-poisoning and improve animal welfare."

For more information on the research call, please visit: www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/opportunities/2010/1007-campylobacter-research-call.aspx. For a downloadable copy of the recently launched *Campylobacter* strategy, please view: www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Publications/100717_campylobacter_strategy.pdf

The Pioneer Podcast

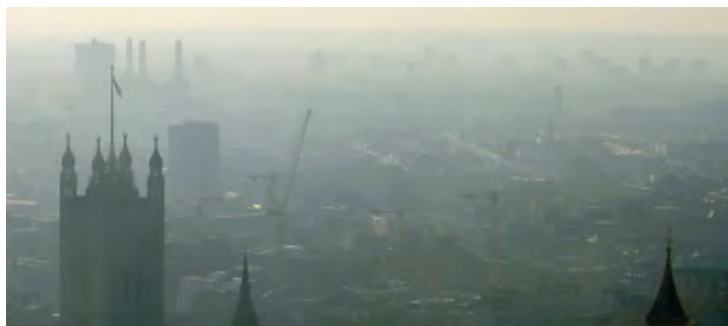
The EPSRC quarterly pioneer podcast showcases cutting -edge science and engineering research tackling 21st century challenges. Hear leading researchers talk about the latest breakthroughs which are improving lives for the better.



The latest edition of the Pioneer Podcast, featuring EPSRC supported research is out now on iTunes.

For more information on the stories featured in this issue view: <http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=305971613&subMediaType=Audio>

The NERC Urban Atmospheric Science Programme



Poor air quality, particularly in urban areas, has a demonstrable effect on human health, but the processes responsible for producing the main pollutants, namely particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and heat are not well understood and are poorly predicted.

To address this, the NERC Urban Atmospheric Science Programme is investing £2.9M in a three-year collaborative research project called Clean Air for London (ClearFlo). The aim of this project is to better understand the sources, nature and transport of pollutants in a city environment and their relationship to human exposure to inform policy measures for reducing pollutant and heat wave exposure.

More specifically, through its long-term monitoring programme, ClearFlo aims to:

1. Provide integrated measurements of the meteorology, composition and particulate loading of London's urban atmosphere, made at street level and at elevated sites;
2. Use these data to develop existing air quality models and so improve air quality predictions for urban areas;
3. Develop visualisation tools and statistical packages in collaboration with end-users e.g., Greater London Authority (GLA) to better understand the effect of urban climate on air quality.

Beneficiaries of this research include "end-users" such as the GLA (who are supporting this project) and other Local Authorities, particularly those with Air Quality Management Areas and who are developing air quality action plans. This study is particularly timely given the lead-up to the London Olympics in 2012. Workshops will be run annually to identify user-needs and disseminate information and findings relevant to the user. ClearFlo is anticipated to run to December 2012 or beyond.

Results will also be used to update existing material in the Department of Health (DoH), enabling dissemination of guidelines to the public about health during air quality episodes and heat waves to be improved.

Lead scientist and contact for this programme is Prof. Stephen Belcher: s.e.belcher@reading.ac.uk.

For further information visit the NERC website at: www.nerc.ac.uk/ or contact either Dr. Louisa Watts lw@nerc.ac.uk, or Dr. Faith Culshaw facu@nerc.ac.uk at the NERC Knowledge Exchange team.

Investing in Scientists and Engineers

Forty six outstanding UK researchers have been awarded EPSRC Fellowships totalling £38 million to help develop their potential as the next generation of world-leading scientists and engineers.

The Fellowships are a direct investment in Britain's most talented individuals to help them tackle some of the biggest challenges of the UK such as climate change and sustainable energy.

The research areas of the new Fellows represent many promising developments in new technologies for industry and business development in areas such as physics, chemistry, computer science and bioengineering.

There are two types of EPSRC Fellowships: **Career Acceleration Fellowships** and **Leadership Fellowships**, which are designed to help develop future leaders with the skills necessary for the UK to compete on a global stage, generating the knowledge, new ideas and technologies essential to support business, government, and national priorities.

Full details on the new EPSRC Fellowships can be found at: www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/fellows/Pages/default.aspx

Lifelong Health and Wellbeing



The focus of phase 3 of the LLHW programme, a major cross-council initiative in partnership with UK health departments, is to continue supporting multi-disciplinary research which addresses factors across the life course that influence healthy ageing and wellbeing in later life

A total of up to £12.5 million will be made available to support high-quality, innovative research projects that tackle major ageing-related challenges faced by the UK in the 21st Century including life course influences, markers for ageing and processes of ageing and age-related conditions, as well as frailty and interventions to promote independence in later life.

To find out more about the LLHW funding call visit: www.mrc.ac.uk/LLHW

Assisted Living Competition

The Technology Strategy Board (TSB), ESRC and Department of Health have launched a new competition into Assisted Living: Social and Behavioural Studies and Economic and Business Models. The aim of this call is to provide improved evidence to underpin industry and social enterprise, to encourage investment in and implementation of assisted living services and technology and to better understand the interactions between these, individuals, families and communities.

For more information about the competition visit: www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/current_funding_opportunities/ALEB.aspx#0

Events

Lean Government: Implementing change to create more value

23rd September 2010, London

With the £163bn budget deficit high on the new government's agenda, and the Conservatives' pledge to cut £6bn spending by next April, it is clear that public sector budget holders will be faced with the task of 'achieving more with less' and engaging the change management needed in order to get Britain back on track. This seminar is aimed at all public sector personnel who may be affected by, or involved in, management, procurement and operational efficiency. The event will explore ways to streamline procedures so that important tasks can be executed well, in less time and with less hassle.

Register to attend at: <https://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Register/IdentityConfirmation.aspx?e=b1e12813-5c2f-4078-94f0-1cd5f319adb9>

4th Annual UK Research Conference

26th September 2010, London

The next 12 months will be a critical period for higher education funding; how will research funding fare? Sound planning will be essential for institutions to get through this period of uncertainty in the best possible shape. Now in its fourth year this high profile conference will engender a forward looking debate about the current state and future strategic development of UK research.

For event information and to register, visit the conference website at: www.neilstewartassociates.com/jb286/

Psychology and Climate Change: Collective Solutions to a Global Problem

29th September 2010, London

The limited success of Copenhagen, the rise in public scepticism about climate change and the role of humans in causing it has the potential to undo all the advances made over the last decade. This Joint British Academy/British Psychological Society Annual Lecture examines some of the exciting and influential work being undertaken by psychologists in the context of a collective societal change of attitudes and behaviours toward climate change management. Questions for discussion will include: How can community initiatives be made more effective? What can we learn from the international trade union movement which is working across the North-South divide to link environmental measures with social justice?

To register for a place, please visit the event website at: www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010/babps-climate.cfm

Promoting the Collaboration of Age Research

29th September 2010, London

This event is the second of UK Age Research Forum (UKARF) biennial conferences. The aim is to highlight the best of UK research funded by collaborative working of the UKARF member organisations, demonstrate the benefits of collaborative working in age research and to inform about developments in age research in the UK.

To register for this event, please visit: web.me.com/magic_bean/UKARF/registration.html

Infection Control: working together to fight infection

6th October 2010, London

The focus of work in infection prevention and control has traditionally been on acute hospitals, but many infectious diseases can spread in other care settings within the wider community. The latest in Public Service Events' series of Infection Control conferences, this event will broaden the perspective to look at the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections (HCAI), not just in hospitals, but across care homes, ambulances, and primary medical care.

Register to attend at: <https://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Register/IdentityConfirmation.aspx?e=7c8814f6-5ba1-4127-bb93-f993be7fc4de>

AURIL Conference 2010

7th and 8th October 2010, Newcastle

With the public sector experiencing difficult times and the autumn budget bringing more savage cuts, the Association for University Research & Industry Links (AURIL) recognises that the products, type of services and how we do business will undoubtedly change. Heavy investment in recent years has seen research institutions and universities forge lasting business partnerships. This conference hears views of major stakeholders, funders and opinion on the future landscape and presents good practice case studies for dealing with the future initiatives.

For further details visit: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/auril/pages/events.php>

Delivering the New Skills Strategy

11th October 2010, London

This centre for public policy seminar (CPPS) brings together key figures from across sectors in the important debate on how best to deliver skills provision in line with policies of a new Government. The day encourages brief, focused presentations followed by engaged discussion by all attending in a relaxed setting. It is hoped that it will make a valuable contribution to taking forward the issues.

To view the full programme, further information and booking details visit: www.cppseminars.org.uk/site/dpb.cfm?do=ref&fldCPPSref=GSS/316&varDetProgBiog=det

Renewable Energy in the Public Sector: leading the way to zero carbon

26th October 2010, London

The new coalition government intends to implement a full programme of measures to fulfil ambitions for a low carbon and eco-friendly economy. Renewables are key to tackling climate change and communities must be encouraged to generate their own energy locally, through resources such as solar panels and wind turbines.

This event presents an opportunity for the public and private sectors to learn how to achieve targets, save, and make money with renewables.

To register please visit: <http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=da6efe09-8b8a-42ef-b323-fff0fca416cc>

Useful links

Research Councils' Bulletins

Each of the Research Councils' produces e-bulletins summarising research outputs, consultations and other information of interest to stakeholders. To register visit:

- AHRC:** www.ahrc.ac.uk/News/Pages
- BBSRC:** www.bbsrc.ac.uk/media/news_email.html
- EPSRC:** <http://fd.epsrc.ac.uk/EmailAlert/>
- ESRC:** www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/index_press.aspx
- MRC:** www.mrc.ac.uk/Newspublications/subscribe
- NERC:** www.nerc.ac.uk/news/rss/
- RCUK:** www.rcuk.ac.uk/news/bulletin/default.htm
- STFC:** www.so.stfc.ac.uk/media/distlist.aspx

Research Councils' Searchable Databases

- AHRC:** www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundedResearch/Pages/default.aspx
- BBSRC:** www.bbsrc.ac.uk/science/grants/
- EPSRC:** www.epsrc.ac.uk/
- ESRC:** www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/research/
- MRC:** www.mrc.ac.uk/ResearchPortfolio/index.htm
- NERC:** <http://gotw.nerc.ac.uk/>
- STFC:** www.scitech.ac.uk/SciProg/home.aspx

Research Councils' Future Programmes and Opportunities

- AHRC:** www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/default.aspx
- BBSRC:** www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/opportunities/index.html
- EPSRC:** www.epsrc.ac.uk/ResearchFunding/Opportunities/FutureCalls.htm
- ESRC:** www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfocentre/opportunities/forthcoming_opportunities/index.aspx
- NERC:** www.nerc.ac.uk/funding
- STFC:** www.scitech.ac.uk/Grants/ResGr/FundOpp/FundOpp.aspx

Collaboration Opportunities

LARCI Brokering Service

LARCI provides a brokering service for local authorities interested in collaborating with academics on research projects, and vice versa. If you have a query then please contact Dr. Andrea Turner at: andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk

Your Ideas

LARCI Newsletter

If you have any other thoughts, comments or suggestions for our newsletter we would like to hear from you.

- Which sections do you read?
- Which do you find useful?
- Which have you used?
- Have you made contacts through the newsletter or followed up on any of the items?

We need your input so that we can deliver information you use. If you have a great photo you would like to see on the front cover then please contact: Karin Honeyball, LARCI Support Officer at: karin.honeyball@esrc.ac.uk

Next Issue

The next issue of the LARCI newsletter will be published in December 2010.

We welcome any articles and items of interest for inclusion to be sent to:

Larci@rcuk.ac.uk

Copy Deadline
15th November 2010

JOIN LARCI

To receive the LARCI Newsletter and regular e-bulletin updates, please register at:

www.larci.org.uk



LOCAL AUTHORITIES &
RESEARCH COUNCILS' INITIATIVE

Bringing **WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH**
to **LOCAL ISSUES**

The Local Authorities & Research Councils' Initiative (LARCI) was established in 1997 to bring local authorities and the Research Councils into closer partnership. LARCI aims to facilitate communication between the Research Councils and local authorities at a strategic and operational level, leading to better informed research, policy and practice.

LARCI operates through an Operational Group comprising representatives of the following Research Councils, local and central government: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC); Audit Commission; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC); Communities and Local Government (CLG); Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC); Local Authorities Research + Intelligence Association (LARIA); Local Government Group (LGG); Medical Research Council (MRC); Natural Environment Research Council (NERC); Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) and Research Councils UK (RCUK).

www.larci.org.uk



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