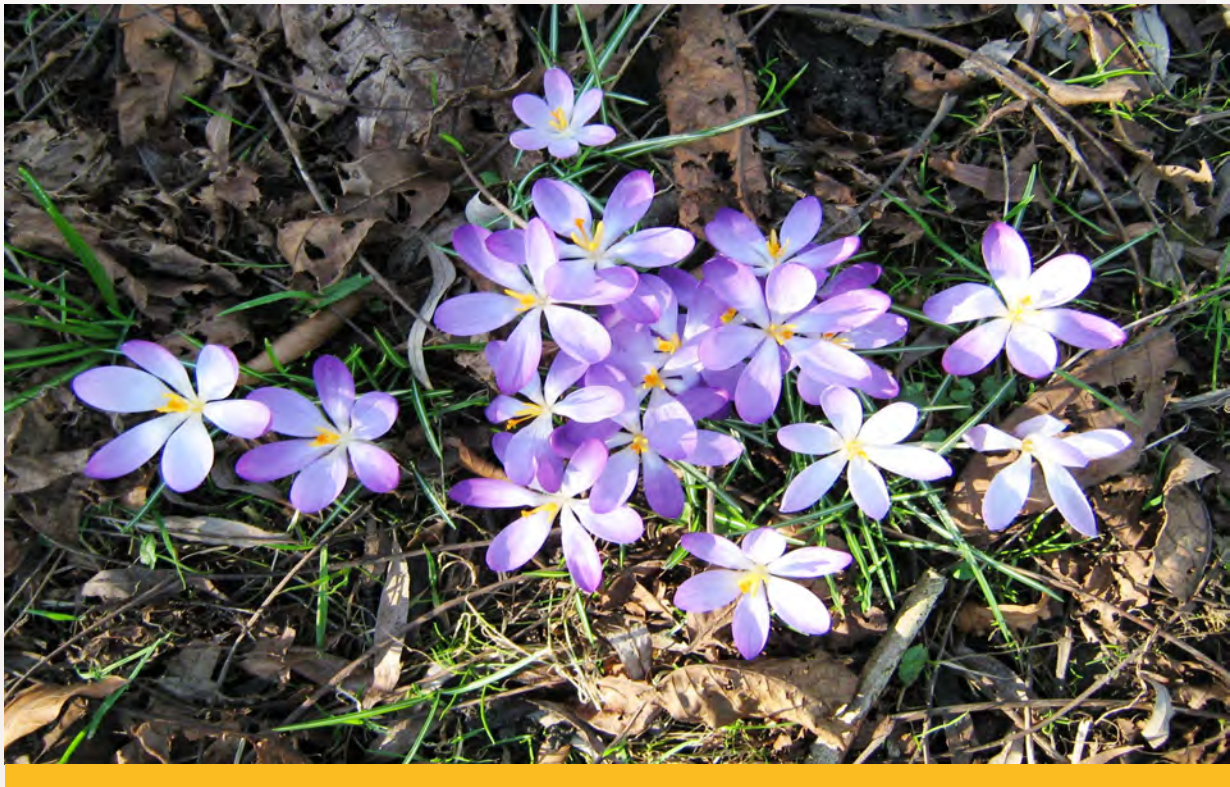




LOCAL AUTHORITIES &
RESEARCH COUNCILS' INITIATIVE

LARCI Newsletter Spring 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 see our website: www.larci.org.uk

Welcome

Welcome to the New Look LARCI Spring 2010 Newsletter.

In this edition we highlight how local authorities can benefit from what the Research Councils have to offer. Find out more about how research aims to develop practical policy responses to help older people enjoy a better quality of life and how sustainability experts are helping local authorities to meet policy guidelines and build sustainable communities.

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

We also 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 announces new Placement Fellowships for 2010

New Awards bring Academic Researchers and Local Government together

UK universities and research institutions deliver much research that is relevant to local authorities, but is often under-used. The Local Authorities & Research Councils' Initiative (LARCI) is bridging this gap by bringing together academic researchers and local government policy makers and managers to make research more accessible to their councils and other local public services.

Chair of LARCI, John Benington, Emeritus Professor at Warwick Business School said: "LARCI has designed a scheme that gives local authorities an opportunity to work with researchers and address some of the complex problems that have an impact on local communities. Academics will benefit from access to local authorities, opportunities to test and develop theory against real world issues and to do research with a real impact on people's lives."

Local authorities will get opportunities to shape the direction of UK academic research programmes and access to research expertise, data and knowledge. They will also get the opportunity to develop their own research base and capability.

On behalf of LARCI funding partner, Department for Communities and Local Government, Rosie Winterton MP, Minister for Local Government said: "The Placement Fellowships established by LARCI offer a real and important opportunity for practitioners and researchers to share understanding and skills to tackle some of the most challenging issues facing our communities. I am pleased at the spread of issues and areas that are leading the way in this work. I look forward to watching progress and learning from these placements."

Each of these new placements is for up to one month and jointly funded by LARCI and the partnering local authority. Some of the projects to receive a placement scheme award are:

- Meeting the needs of children and young people – Northumbria University and Newcastle City Council.
- Early intervention in parental substance misuse: working with expectant mothers - University of Stirling and Stirling Council.
- Designing low carbon initiatives – University of Bath and Swindon Borough Council.
- Improving the local economy through small businesses – University of Bedfordshire, Luton Borough Council and Bedfordshire Council.

The Placement Fellowships involve either an academic researcher working in a local council to help address a problem, or a local council worker placed in a higher education institution to help them gain research skills.

In welcoming this first round of placements, Councillor Richard Kemp, Deputy Chair, Local Government placements which brings universities and councils together to help tackle some challenges that are of real concern to the local communities and local public services. This LARCI placement scheme points the way to a future where local government can better benefit from top quality research and researchers coming from our universities."

Through the scheme academic researchers can gain intelligence about the real research challenges facing local authorities as well as access to local government policy makers who can help to inform research.

For more information contact Karin Honeyball at: karin.honeyball@esrc.ac.uk

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



Raising standards across our schools

Pupils Involved in Building Schools for the Future

Pupils from 16 secondary schools in Leicester are helping build schools for the future, thanks to a project being run by experts at De Montfort University (DMU).

The three year project is being run by DMU's Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development (IESD) in partnership with Leicester City Council and Leicester Miller Education Partnership and is being funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

The schools involved are all scheduled to be refurbished under the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative. The project aims to engage pupils, teachers and governors in the science, technology and engineering of low energy school design by involving them in sustainable development workshops, energy audits of their own school and visits to completed BSF schools.

Pupils are then able to communicate their ideas and wishes for a more environmentally sustainable school to peers, teachers, designers, architects and policy makers through the use of multi media equipment.

Professor Paul Fleming from IESD, said: "The project provides schools with the unique opportunity to think about the design of their new school from an environmental perspective".

Results so far have show that the level of understanding amongst pupils around issues such as site orientation, solar gain, passive ventilation and air tightness has significantly increased and interestingly, following the engagement activities, the number of pupils who said they are interested in science and engineering and would consider it as a future career has risen from 57% to 71%.

In addition to this the IESD are also involved another partnership with Leicester City Council and are undertaking research around the post occupancy evaluation of completed schools.

English Martyrs School in Leicester is one of the schools involved in the project. Teacher Rob Manger said "All of the kids got a lot out of the activities and the

people involved have provided a valuable basis for them to create informed decisions. Thank you for all of your expertise; I wouldn't have known where to start!"

For more information on the project please contact Professor Paul Fleming pflaming@dmu.ac.uk or Dr. Fiona Charnley at: fcharnley@dmu.ac.uk

Improving the quality of life of children, young people, families at risk and older people

Young People Paint a Picture of Health

Youth homelessness and eating disorders are two areas of health highlighted by young people in Cardiff in a project that uses digital technology to create short films which detail public health issues. The 'Picture of Health' project brings together young people aged 15-18 from Cardiff youth service, along with undergraduates, postgraduates and support staff from Cardiff University to produce honest accounts of some of the health issues effecting young people today. The project involved young people being trained in digital technologies to create short films detailing the health issues that affect them. This is all part of the work of a new research unit The Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer) which is committed to improving the quality of research in areas such as diet and obesity, exercise, sexual health and substance misuse.

DECIPHer, one of five ESRC centres of excellence for public health research, is in the process of developing an advisory group of young people to develop new approaches to engage young people, including digital approaches.

For further information visit the DECIPHer website: www.decipher.uk.net

The New Dynamics of Ageing

The New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Programme is a seven year cross council, multidisciplinary research initiative with the ultimate aim of improving the quality of life of older people. The programme is a unique collaboration between five UK Research Councils: [ESRC](http://www.esrc.ac.uk), [EPSRC](http://www.epsrc.ac.uk), [BBSRC](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk), [MRC](http://www.mrc.ac.uk) and [AHRC](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk) and is the largest and most ambitious research programme on ageing ever mounted in the UK.

The programme aims to develop practical policy and implementation guidance and novel scientific, technological and design responses to help older people enjoy better quality lives as they age. This requires integrating understandings of the changing meanings, representations and experiences of ageing and the key factors shaping them through direct engagement with older people and user organisations. The programme will harness inputs from a wide range of disciplines to reveal the dynamic interplay between ageing individuals and their

changing technological, cultural, social and physical environments - local, national and global - and to develop methods and means for overcoming the consequent constraints on the quality of life of older people.

For further information visit the NDA website: www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk



Error, Blame and Responsibility in Child Welfare

The social care of children involves inherently difficult issues of risk management, which are thrown up by every tragedy in which non-intervention or failure of monitoring by child care professionals leads to avoidable deaths of children. Accordingly, fears of media witch-hunts and professional infamy can lead to a heavy stress on blame avoidance, with every step taken with a glance over the shoulder and a finger firmly lodged in the rule book. At the same time, resources tend to be stretched – some inner London boroughs have 40 percent vacancy rates for child care professionals – managers are under pressure to deliver according to importunate targets and indicators.

By examining practice in five local authorities, the researchers found that the imposition of standardised processes and limited timescales through information and communication technology and performance management systems created unintended negative consequences for child protection. The findings demonstrate that, by increasing standardisation of processes and timescales for assessing children at risk creates the conditions for error, and encourages social workers to try to limit the chances of being blamed when things go wrong. To be effective, policies governing social work practice need to be based on sound professional judgements made by staff who feel they have a stake in the system.

For further information visit the project website at: www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/apsocsci/activities/460/ and the ESRC Plain English Summary for full research details at: www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Plain_English_Summaries/environment/human_activities/RES-166-25-0048-A.aspx.

Bringing Blackpool's Theatrical Past to Life

The Admission all Classes project funded in collaboration with AHRC and Blackpool City Council aimed to change people's impressions of Blackpool through culture and history by looking back to the late 19th / early 20th century, when the resort was in its heyday.

Lead academic, Prof Vanessa Toulmin from the University of Sheffield has hosted entertainment-themed historical tours of the town, and staged a 'neo-variety evening' in the Grand Theatre, combining Blackpool variety veterans with a new

generation of young entertainers. An exhibition of fairground advertising posters dating back to the 1850s was also held.

The council were keen to collaborate with Prof Toulmin, in a bid to rubbish the perception that Blackpool is merely a tacky playground for stag and hen parties. On the back of the success of Admission all Classes, Vanessa Toulmin has now been commissioned by other local authorities including Sheffield and South Yorkshire to replicate the project.

A podcast of Vanessa Toulmin speaking about her research is available to view on the AHRC website:

www.ahrc.ac.uk/News/Podcasts/Pages/blackpool

Creating safer and stronger local communities

Birmingham Stories

The living stories found in local archives hold an important key to understanding urgent social issues surrounding identity, citizenship and belonging. By using archives and library resources, we can make discoveries about ourselves that allow us to become better informed and empowered in our understanding of history. In this context, Birmingham Stories is intended to extend an awareness of the diverse histories of the city, in its many voices and cultures, by making archived research collections available to the public.

[Birmingham Stories](#) was a partnership project led by the School of Education at Birmingham University working with Birmingham Libraries and Archives and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Dr Andy Green and Professor Ian Grosvenor from the University of Sheffield arranged a series of talks and workshops in community libraries aimed at those who like to know more about the history of Birmingham and its many communities. The workshops have produced a number of useful resource guides that provide information as well as practical advice.

These guides appear on-line on the Connecting Histories website: www.connectinghistories.org.uk

Privacy and Consent - Everyone's Issue

Researchers from the Information Security Group (ISG) at Royal Holloway, University of London, Salford and Cranfield Universities are participating in a three year collaborative research project with consent and privacy specialists at Consult Hyperion and Sunderland City Council, to explore how people engage with concepts of information privacy and consent in on-line interactions.



The VOME (Visualisation and Other Methods of Expression) project aims to develop an interactive model that enables people from all walks of life to interact with on-line privacy and consent issues, in the same way the concept of carbon footprinting has enabled a large part of society to engage in the subject of the environment. Apart from the general public, this project also offers benefits to service providers, as well as manufacturers of technology used to deploy on-line services.

To date there has been considerable interest in this project from each of these communities. VOME is funded by EPSRC, ESRC and the Technology Strategy Board (TSB).

For more information contact Dr. Lizzie Cole-Kemp at: Lizzie.Coles-Kemp@rhul.ac.uk or visit: www.vome.org.uk to download a project brochure.

Design Against Crime

Arts London, undertakes practice-led design research aimed at reducing opportunities for crime. The Bike Off – Reducing Bike Theft project, a research initiative funded by the AHRC, has designed and prototyped six secure cycle parking stands, which have been used in Camden, York, Shoreditch, Brighton & Hove, and Ashford in Kent. These developments came out of collaborations with commercial partners, and through links with local councils. There has also been interest in purchasing or licensing the designs in Spain and Poland.

For further information visit the AHRC website: www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundedResearch/impact/Pages/Fightingcrimethroughdesign.aspx

Transforming our local environment

Building Sustainable Cities

Birmingham Eastside is an exciting re-development that will create a new learning and technology quarter in the city. EPSRC-supported researchers at the University of Birmingham are helping make this project - and others like it - more sustainable.

A biodiversity audit revealed Eastside was home to a wealth of wildlife. Guidance on how to maintain this biodiversity has meant that the development has incorporated a number of wildlife havens, such as green roofs on certain buildings.

The Eastside land-use database revealed how the loss of small firms and services can fracture important social and economic networks. As a result public participation initiatives have been used to help sustain Eastside's heritage. The team are now working with other projects in Islington, Gravesham and Dartford.

To read more, download the impact case study at: impactworld.org.uk/pdfs/Sustainable_cities.pdf or for further information about EPSRC and the impact it is making visit: www.epsrc.ac.uk



Sustainable Urban Environment (SUE) Experts – Tell SUE what you need to know

The Sustainable Urban Environment research programme is a £38m portfolio of research looking at ways of improving sustainability in the urban environment.

Spanning 30 different UK Universities, this programme has funded 18 consortia in different areas including waste, water management, transport planning and strategy, spatial planning, regeneration and stakeholder engagement.

SUE is the place to go for the latest knowledge in this field and the SUE experts are keen to know how their research can help local authorities work effectively to meet policy guidelines and to build sustainable communities.

SUE is currently building a team of Local Authority representatives to link up with the SUE Gallery of Experts, a who's who of the brightest minds in Sustainable Urban Environment research (www.suegallery.org) and SUE Gateway, the one-stop search tool for Sustainable Urban Environment research (www.suegateway.org).

If you are the sustainability officer for your local authority or have a specific role relating to an area of sustainability policy get in touch with Annabel Cooper at: a.cooper@hw.ac.uk to become part of the network.

Science to Policy

The Development UK 2010 Conference – “Transition to a Low Carbon Economy” - opened by Professor John Beddington, the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor, and included speakers such as the Rt. Hon Hilary Benn MP, attracted over 300 delegates from national and local government, business and Non-Governmental Organisations.

As an invited sponsor, NERC held an exhibit and ran two seminar/debating sessions entitled: “Cities in a Changing Climate: Factoring Science into Decision Making”. During these popular sessions a team of NERC and EPSRC scientists, along with the Head of Climate Change Adaptation at the Greater London Authority, demonstrated and debated with stakeholders how a mixture of environmental and physical sciences can inform the needs of decision-makers, and the key challenges faced. Questions tackled included how can outputs from research be taken up by local authorities, how can we take economic account of ecosystem services, and how are we going to provide enough water for the South East in the coming years.

Issues such as the urban heat island effect were discussed, an effect that is important for human health during hot summers, which are likely to become more frequent as climate changes. In retrofitting existing housing stock, it will be important to account for overheating in the summer as well as energy efficiency measures such as insulation. Striking a balance between these conflicting needs will require innovative thinking from architects and engineers. Results from recent research are being discussed with Communities and Local Government. This is being achieved via the Living With Environmental Change project.

For more information, please contact Louisa Watts at: lw@nerc.ac.uk or visit: www.govnet.co.uk/sduk/index.html

Taking Back the High Ground



The UK uplands play a huge part in our daily lives, but their future is under threat. A team of experts led by the Universities of Leeds and Aberdeen is calling on the government to pay farmers to manage our hills in a way that will protect them for future generations.

The uplands, which include parts of the Pennines, the Cumbrian fells and much of Scotland, are the source of 70% of the nation's drinking water and are the single largest carbon reserve in the UK. They also play a key role in food production, flood management and tourism.

Mounting pressures such as climate change and a growing population are likely to have a huge impact on the uplands in the coming years and the way they are managed needs to change to adapt to these pressures.

New recommendations from the Sustainable Uplands project would see farmers rewarded financially for producing things like clean water and carbon storage, in addition to food.

A copy of the policy proposal, entitled, 'Sustainable uplands: re-shaping land use policy for our hills,' can be downloaded from the project website: homepages.see.leeds.ac.uk/~lecmsr/sustainableuplands/documents.htm

Research Aircraft Samples Volcanic Plume

Following the eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano in March 2010, a plume of volcanic ash was blown south and eastwards over Britain and most of northern Europe. The subsequent closure of European airspace, on the 14th April, brought airlines to a standstill. The ash cloud caused havoc for thousands of stranded travellers, but the key to making decisions to permit flights lay in understanding its specific chemical and physical properties, and its distribution within the air column.

At very short notice, NERC was able to make ready and equip its Airborne Research & Survey Facility Dornier 228 aircraft and take to the air to record unique data from the ash cloud. Flying from Cranfield airfield over a number of days, the plane repeatedly took detailed readings to map and analyse the ash cloud. The analysed data were shared with the Met Office and used to inform Government and Civil Aviation Authority decisions on restriction of UK airspace.

Whilst the NERC plane was principally flying to meet UK Government's immediate civil contingencies needs, the data collected will enable an improved response to similar situations in the future. For example, models to predict the dispersion of ash plumes can be refined to become more accurate, and estimates of impacts on jet engines will be improved. After six days, airports were once again open for business, following the decision by politicians to relax the stringent restrictions on flights.



But this is not the end of the story. The no-fly period gave climate scientists an undreamt-of opportunity to ask 'What impact does air traffic have on climate factors?' A decade ago, scientists concluded that the shorter flying ban following the 9/11 attacks had a discernible impact, so this opportunistic larger 'experiment' should provide much greater insight. NERC is also considering some proposals for urgency funding, to make more measurements of the volcano and affected environment. Long after the chaos caused by air traffic restrictions has faded from our communal memory, this may emerge as the real scientific value of Volcano Week.

For further information contact: pressoffice@nerc.ac.uk

Promoting economic vitality of communities

Economic Impact of Universities

Universities are a vital part of the economic and social infrastructure of the UK and have a significant impact on their cities and regions. There is an increasing government policy focus on encouraging Universities to maximise their impact on the economy and society. Economic impact has an important regional and local dimension. Universities are vital to the regional economy as businesses employing large numbers of people and generating export earnings. They are also key to the longer term sustainable development of a region through their contribution to the growth of human capital and as a source of innovation.

In a bid to investigate how Universities create impact, the Economic and Social Research Council joined forces with the Scottish, Welsh and English Higher Education Funding Councils and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland to support the largest ever UK-wide programme of research into the social and economic role of higher education institutions.

Researchers from 17 different universities are looking at many aspects of university impact, from how universities work with businesses and influence regional competitiveness, to examining how students and graduates make a difference to the life of a city. This includes investigation of how students contribute to regional regeneration as well as the impact on housing and local communities of the increase in student numbers over the last decade. The current phase of the research runs until December 2010.

One of the biggest challenges facing universities in the UK today is how to develop better understanding and communications with government and policy makers. The *Impact of HEIs* research programme is investigating how universities have an impact but it is also seeking to encourage active knowledge exchange between researchers and policy-makers, so that research findings can help to support the development of evidence-based policy.

The Coordinators would warmly welcome discussion with local government bodies regarding the most important issues for local government policy relating to higher education's impact.

For further information visit: www.impact-hei.ac.uk or contact Ursula Kelly: u.kelly@strath.ac.uk or 0141 5484206

Meeting Local Transport Needs More Effectively

Strung Along – Easing Holiday Traffic Pain

This summer motorists will experience the familiar frustration of being stuck on a motorway in a stop-start traffic jam that eventually disperses with no apparent cause. Researchers have found that although most changes in vehicle speed and road position get absorbed by traffic flow, they sometimes combine in a 'perfect storm' to create 'phantom' traffic jams. Understanding why this happens is being studied in a project supported by the EPSRC that will lead to better traffic flow forecasting to help prevent congestion.

The project, led by Dr. Eddie Wilson from the University of Bristol, has made progress in creating mathematical models for describing phantom traffic jams, or stop-and-go waves in motorway traffic.

The traffic models have been looked at in a new way using 'string instability' theory to test how good existing computer-based methods are at predicting how traffic flows and queues build up and dissipate. The next stage of the project will see the best of these traffic models being combined in a way that allows them to learn from experience and observation. The data used is taken from a busy 10-mile stretch of the M42 near Birmingham that has one of the highest concentrations of traffic monitoring equipment in the world. The work is being carried out in collaboration with the Highways Agency, Knowledge Transfer Network for Industrial Mathematics, and the TRL.



For more information contact: Dr. Eddie Wilson at: re.wilson@bristol.ac.uk or tel.: 0117 331 5627

Visualising Safe & Inclusive Transport Environments

The entry points to public transport should be welcoming gateways, accessible to everyone but in reality, many are not. AUNT-SUE research group VISIT addressed this challenge through live schemes in London where improvements to access and inclusion were explicit objectives, drawing on international comparisons and best practice, e.g., in Stuttgart, South West Germany.

VISIT combined AUNT-SUE tools and resources to model alternative scenarios, and assess the impact of proposed designs on people of different ages and levels of confidence. The research focused on spaces in and around the nodes of public transport from bus/tram stops to areas in and around large multi-modal interchanges.

The team identified key stakeholders, conditions and drivers of change and then developed a 'Map-walk' technique to enable residents to articulate their experiences of everyday journeys that they made on foot, and to discuss improvements. VISIT enabled researchers to help people evaluate how things are, and visualise how they might be, and thus inform more inclusive design outcomes within 'real world' constraints.

For further details visit: www.aunt-sue.info or contact: g.evans@londonmet.ac.uk.

Focus on LARCI

Early Intervention in Parental Substance Misuse

LARCI has funded one month's work over six months to promote an exchange of knowledge between the Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling and Stirling Council.

The project will focus on early intervention in parental substance misuse by exploring work undertaken with expectant mothers who use drugs and alcohol.

In partnership with inter-disciplinary groups of practitioners and managers, the project will identify perspectives and experiences of pre-birth planning protocols and processes.

Alongside this, research evidence which is relevant to the issues identified will be sourced. Over the course of the project, a series of interactive seminars will be held for these practitioners and managers to explore evidence informed practice in relation to pre-birth assessment and planning; potentially improving outcomes and life chances for some of Stirling's children.

The production of a written report which captures the learning from the project will provide information which could be transferable to other local authority areas. The project will start on May 6th 2010 and will last for six months.

For more information contact Chris McIlquham christine.mcilquham@stir.ac.uk or Anne Salter at: saltera@stirling.gov.uk

Co-production in Public Services

Co-production is about the delivery of public services being shared between the service provider and the recipient. Therefore, co-production is nothing new – essentially all services involve some involvement of service users. What makes this issue topical in the current financial crisis is the expectation that effective user and community involvement may help to improve outputs, service quality and outcomes and reduce costs for local government. As a consequence, LARCI has commissioned a series of papers to develop and promote thinking on the theme of Co-production of services, with users, citizens, communities and other stakeholders. The reports summarising the research in this area are available for download from the LARCI website: www.larci.or.uk

Engaging with Local Authorities



The Scottish Funding Council has launched the ENGAGE website as part of the Engaging with Scottish Local Authorities pilot project. This scheme aims to respond to the knowledge needs of local governments, enhance knowledge exchange between Scottish-based universities and local authorities, expand networks between and among these agencies, and together develop research informed evidence on practices and the delivery of services. The five projects profiled on the site are co-funded by a partnership of LARCI, the Scottish Funding Council and the ESRC.

For further information visit: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/engage/

Focus on Local Government

Total Place

Total Place sets a new direction for local public services, based on extensive work over the last year by central government, local authorities and their partners.

In taking this work forward, 13 Pilot areas across England have considered how a 'whole area' approach can lead to better services for the customer at less cost. They have explored how to introduce new ways of working, through collaboration and local leadership and have considered a range of issues that have a direct effect on people's lives, including children's services, drugs and alcohol misuse, housing, services for older people and offender management.

The Government's response to Pilot findings has now been published. The reforms set out in the Total Place report present huge opportunities to deliver true transformation in all areas of the country. It is an initiative which all places can benefit from and they should consider how they too can develop their own whole area approach to services.

To download a copy of the Total Place report please visit: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_total_place.htm or contact: total.place@communities.gsi.gov.uk for further information.

Public Services in the 2010s: Prosperity, Austerity and Recovery

The ESRC Public Services Programme Conference drew on the lessons learned from the Programme's 47 research projects, its conferences and workshops, and explored how this collective knowledge can best be applied to the challenges of managing public service performance in the 2010s.



Ian Diamond, Chief Executive of the ESRC, said the Public Services Programme (PSP) had done everything (and more than) the ESRC had hoped for, managing to combine and attain the dual goals of academic excellence and practical impact. A report of the conference with photo gallery, posters, interviews and the full agenda can be found on the Public Services Programme website at: www.publicservices.ac.uk

If you would like to receive a paper copy of the PSP newsletter which contains an update on the programme as a whole, together with an overview of recent and forthcoming events, awards and publications, email Gail Savage at: gail.savage@politics.ox.ac

Focus on Research Councils

Award helps Blue Flashing Lights go Green

The winner of the 2010 ESRC Knowledge Transfer Partnership prize for the Best Application of Social or Management Science has saved the Bradford and Airedale Teaching Primary Care Trust an estimated £350,000. The project, undertaken in collaboration with Manchester University, aimed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Trust's transport systems.

As well as saving money, it has also led to substantial improvements in public health care service provision, local population wellbeing, and significant reductions in their carbon footprint.

The project was also awarded the regional Knowledge Transfer Partnership prize for Yorkshire and Humber, further highlighting how a combination of expert knowledge, technology, and skills from various disciplines can be invaluable to our society.

Thanks to the achievement of Knowledge Transfer Partnership schemes, businesses working in association with universities are gaining professional advice to help improve their services, save money, and create more effective partnerships between institutions, organisations, and the public.

For further information about the Knowledge Transfer Partnership Programme visit the KTP website: www.ktponline.org.uk or call 0870 190 2829.

Breakthrough Heart Scanner Allows for Early Diagnosis

An innovative cardiac scanner will dramatically improve the process of diagnosing heart conditions.

The portable magnetometer is being developed at the University of Leeds, with funding from the EPSRC.

Due to its unprecedented sensitivity to magnetic fluctuations, the device will be able to detect a number of conditions earlier than currently available diagnostic techniques such as ultrasound, electrocardiogram and existing cardiac magnetometers. It will also be smaller, simpler to operate, able to gather more information and significantly cheaper than other devices currently available.

Another key benefit is that skilled nurses as well as doctors will be able to carry out heart scans, helping to relieve pressure on hospital waiting lists. The device will also function through clothes, cutting the time needed to perform scans and removing the need for patients to undress for an examination. It could also be taken out to a patient's home, leading to a reduction in the use of hospital facilities. The research team is now working on miniaturising the device for widespread medical use which could be ready for use in routine diagnosis in around three years.

For more information contact Professor Ben Varcoe at: b.varcoe@leeds.ac.uk or tel.: 0113 343 8290.

MediaCityUK

The AHRC is a key funding partner in a major new research facility at Salford's MediaCityUK, which aims to generate £25m of investment into research over the next 8 years.

Led by the University of Salford, the Framework for Innovation and Research in MediaCityUK (FIRM) will provide the mechanism that connects the BBC and the Digital & Creative Industries sector in the Northwest to international academic and industry research specialists and funding mechanisms.



The AHRC and the EPSRC are providing £2.72m to fund FIRM through the cross-council Digital Economy Programme. The core partners in FIRM are the BBC, the University of Cambridge, Goldsmiths University of London, Lancaster University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Northwest Vision and Media and the University of Salford.

FIRM will be located within the Media Enterprise Centre (MEC) at MediaCityUK. The MEC's lease and initial operations will be supported by £4.2m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), £3.8m from the NWDA, plus additional funding from Salford City Council and income from tenant companies. Salford City Council signed the lease with Peel Media in November.

For further information visit: www.research.salford.ac.uk/firm

ESRC Public Policy Seminar Publications

Following the ESRC Public Policy Seminars, a series of publications have been produced to consolidate the research findings. Several themes relevant to local government are featured below.

How climate change affects people in the UK?’

This booklet highlights issues and key points raised on how to approach, at both a national and local level, the significant short and long term challenges and impacts of climate change that the UK will need to address in the 21st century.



Will it work in Scotland?

This brochure draws opinion together from leading social scientists to stimulate a discussion on how evidence from systematic reviews can better inform policy more effectively in Scotland.



Well-being and working life.....

This booklet summarises the presentations given by leading academics at the ESRC and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) *Well-being and Working Life* seminar held in 2009.



For a free copy of the ESRC Public Policy Seminar Publications email: knowledgetransfer@esrc.ac.uk or download a copy from: www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk

Events

Information Governance, Risk & Compliance 20th May 2010, The Barbican, London

A recent decision by the Information Tribunal promises to open up comparative information about university estates to close public scrutiny. HEFCE maintains a useful database of information about the state of buildings around UK HEIs and about how they're maintained. Information Governance, Risk and Compliance: Moving Forward presents an ideal opportunity to hear about this and similar issues, discussed by speakers from the public, private and academic sectors.

For further information visit public services events at: www.publicserviceevents.co.uk

Ethnicity and Use of the Mental Health Act Conference 24th May 2010, London

This one day event focuses on issues highlighted by published data on the use of the Mental Health Act and the 2009 "Count Me In" Census and explores how these findings should be interpreted; whether racism lies behind the fact that some BME groups are over represented in admission and detention rates, if changes to the Mental Health Act have been detrimental or helpful, and what available alternatives are useful to people from communities at risk of being detained? The conference is relevant to mental health and social care professional and practitioners, local authorities and NHS trusts officers, charities, third sector, legal profession, academics and policy makers.

For further information visit: bme-mentalhealth.org.uk/userfiles/BME%20Conf%20Brochure%20May%202010.pdf

Total Place: Local Empowerment and Incentives 7th June 2010, London

The Total Place: Local Empowerment & Incentives Conference will illustrate the progress of the Total Place pilots and Parallel Places programmes via a range of case-study based presentations and will also feature top-level strategic and policy presentations from high profile thought leaders. Designed to provide a route map from methodology to practice, the event will cover a broad range of challenges which will be faced by all those charged with policy and strategy development, through to practical implementation across all areas of process re-design and service delivery.

For further information visit www.efficientgov.co.uk/

Greening the Public Sector 9th June, The Barbican, London

Drastic measures are required to reduce the public sector spending deficit and demands on the sector can be difficult to reconcile. This conference explores the link between savings, sustainability and security of public services. This event is relevant for all for those charged with delivering leaner, greener and more robust public services.

For further information visit: public services events at: www.publicserviceevents.co.uk

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/
- STFC:** www.so.stfc.ac.uk/rss/rss.xml
- 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.asp
- 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 July 2010.

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

Larci@rcuk.ac.uk

Copy Deadline
14th June 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); Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA); Local Authorities Research + Intelligence Association (LARIA); Local Government Association (LGA); 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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