



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

## LARIA Newsletter February 2021

### Professor James Downe, LARIA Council & Events Group Member

#### Improving the relationship between Universities and practice

I have never had a 'proper job', as my friends and family often tell me! After finishing my degree, many moons ago, I had an interview for a job in a local council, but this clashed with a booked holiday, so the opportunity passed. On my return from holiday, I was awarded a studentship to carry out a PhD (on local government elections with Prof's Rallings and Thrasher) and have stayed in academia ever since. My interest and engagement with local government has continued throughout my career and led to my interest in LARIA.

After my PhD, I moved to Warwick Business School and spent part of my time working with the Local Authorities Research Consortium. This was a partnership between academics and approximately 20-30 local authorities across the UK. The programme of research was determined by its members and Business School staff carried out projects which analysed these 'hot topics' facing local government. A series of working groups were set up to share good practice and discuss practical ways in which councils could respond to these issues. I look back on this time with fond memories of working directly with local government officers (and the excellent food in the Warwick conference venues)!

I've spent the last twenty years or so working on various evaluations affecting local government – from Best Value, Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the Beacon Council Scheme, Local Service Boards, the ethical framework for local government, to more recently Corporate Peer Challenge. All these research projects were conducted closely with councils and aimed to improve policies through the provision of good-quality evidence.

I'm currently the Director of Research at the [Wales Centre for Public Policy](#). The Centre is funded by the Welsh Government, the ESRC and Cardiff University to work with leading policy experts to provide ministers, the civil service and public services with evidence that can improve policy-making and public service outcomes. Our work with the Welsh Government is wide and varied, including research on how it can respond to significant issues such as [Brexit](#) and [Covid-19](#), to more specific projects examining how to increase [diversity in public appointments](#) and ideas for [alternative models for domiciliary care](#).

Our focus on public services is currently on two main programmes of work - children looked-after and loneliness. For [children looked-after](#), our analysis examined the potential factors driving higher rates of children in care in Wales than the rest of the UK, and we have conducted evidence reviews looking at [international experience and best practice in managing placement provision](#), and examined the views of [children and families in the care system](#).

Our work on [loneliness](#) is looking at the role of community activity, capacity and infrastructure to tackle loneliness, and [the role of technology](#) in connecting people to each other and to public services. These projects are co-produced with those who work in public services and respond to a clear need for further evidence on 'what works'.

A particularly interesting project we have just completed examined how Cardiff Council could become more [research active](#) and what relationships and networks between Cardiff University and the council are needed to deliver long-term change. Funded by the [NIHR](#) (National Institute for Health Research), it examined the current level of research activity and evidence-informed practice in the council's Children's Services department. The report concluded that there was considerable enthusiasm to improve the use of research and evidence-informed practice among all levels of staff as they recognised the value of evidence in:

- Informing direct work with children and families (including assessments and reports);
- Supporting strategic reporting and service planning; and

- Incorporating 'good practice' within staff training.

Current practice in the council was not always consistent or coordinated and the University could do much more to improve their links with practice. We have started to facilitate bringing researchers together with practitioners and service users to share expertise, research evidence and care experiences. For the longer-term, we've outlined trialling new approaches to support knowledge co-production such as embedded researchers, research champions, secondments, fellowships, and co-producing small research projects. Implementing these will help to build a network to support sustainable research activity and ultimately lead to improved outcomes.

Universities are under increasing pressure to have a greater impact on society (both [in local areas](#) and globally), and the corporate centres of councils have often been 'hollowed out' from austerity. There is significant potential for the 'two communities' to work together for the greater good. LARIA members heard from the Wales Centre for Public Policy and the Essex Centre for Data Analytics at the 2020 annual conference, and it would be interesting to hear whether there were productive links made with universities in responding to Covid-19. The call for papers to our 2021 seminar series is currently open and we would love to hear examples of where the partnership between academia and practice is working well.

## LARIA Spring Webinar Series Call for Papers - Deadline Extended

### Spring Webinar Series: Call for Papers Battling Covid-19 using research, analysis and insight

We have extended the call for papers deadline until **5pm, Wednesday 24 February 2021**.

LARIA's webinar series will provide delegates with the ideas, tools and techniques for influencing decision-makers and delivering improved outcomes based on robust data, evidence and research. We are calling for a broad range of papers from the general to the specific on our theme: Battling Covid-19 using research, analysis and insight.

For full details and to submit a paper to present please download the [submission form](#) and return to [admin@laria.org.uk](mailto:admin@laria.org.uk)

If your organisation is interested in sponsoring a webinar, please email [admin@laria.org.uk](mailto:admin@laria.org.uk) for more information.

## Office for National Statistics - Census Day

Census Day – Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021 – is less than five weeks away and all of us at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are very much in our final planning stages. Our national advertising campaign started on the 12<sup>th</sup> February with television adverts and radio adverts.



This is the first digital census. Therefore, we expect a significant majority of respondents will complete the form online. To enable them to do this all households in England and Wales will receive a letter which is due to be sent out in early March asking them to take part and giving them a unique code to enter to enable them to complete the census form online. We are aware that some people will not be able to complete the form online. We will be sending paper forms out to people in areas where broadband coverage is poor and where we know that digital take up is poor. We will also send out a form to people on request. However, there is nowhere a person can pick up a form because the reference number on the form has to be linked to an address. If a person has digital access but has difficulty in completing a form they can make a free telephone call where our call centre will help them to complete the form.

With the support of local authorities, we hope to have a very successful Census 2021.

## Qa Research Blog

**Qa Research's Georgina Culliford** carried out in-depth research for the NHS in Leeds into a scheme aiming to direct healthcare resources to the people most in need. She shares her insights into how to get people onside with a potentially controversial project

[Click here](#) for full blog.



## The LGA suggests that there are 'easy wins' for local authorities with UPRNs

In her role as the Research and Information Manager at the LGA, Juliet Whitworth has a unique, informed perspective on the 'easy wins' with location data, from which many local authorities could quickly benefit.

Juliet says: "There are many local authorities who might think this is a push for digital transformation in some way. Department heads might think we're suggesting something that's disruptive or prohibitive in terms of cost and skills. But, in reality, the immediate gains from and the ease with which the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) can be added to individual case records in even just one or two systems, means there are lots of quick, easy wins."

Read more about Juliet's thoughts and watch a short video at <https://www.geoplace.co.uk/case-studies/easy-wins-for-local-authorities-with-uprns>.



Local authorities have been using UPRNs for years to join up services and gain otherwise difficult to understand insights.

Here are some case studies on innovative uses of the UPRN to drive policy decisions, predict transport needs and engage with partners

- [UPRNs – essential in shaping policy for on-street Electric Vehicle chargers](#)
- [Using granular data to predict travel patterns](#)
- [Using UPRNs to engage with landlords and improve the quality of Houses in Multiple Occupation \(HMOs\)](#)

### Where is all the greenspace?

GeoPlace's spatial data analyst team have recently undertaken a data visualisation project to show the availability of greenspace in Britain, to see how near (or far) away those greenspaces are from locations in five major cities. We also wanted our visualisations to be detailed and useful, and for the insights to be as accurate as possible. For that reason, we used Basic Land and Property Units (BLPUs), which give us data at an individual property level. This is much more accurate than using postcodes.

See the results of our visualisations of the availability of greenspace in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff and Edinburgh at <https://www.geoplace.co.uk/blog/2020/where-is-all-the-greenspace>.

If you would like more information from GeoPlace, or would like to receive our monthly newsletter, please complete the form at the bottom of this page - <https://www.geoplace.co.uk/power-of-place>

Following on from Children's Mental Health Week in early February, we are sharing a couple of important research projects which focus on children and young people.



### **Ethnographic Research with Children and Young People - Growing Up in Walsall**

Walsall Council wanted to explore the qualitative experiences of children and young people growing up in the Borough to complement existing quantitative evidence. We conducted a series of in-depth ethnographic case studies to capture their experiences of growing up in Walsall, their challenges, hopes, dreams and fears, what support they access in comparison to what they need, and their ideas to help make Walsall a better place to grow up.

Information obtained through the case studies will be used in Walsall Council's Director of Public Health's 2020 Annual Report and our recommendations will help to develop the Best Start 4 Life Strategy in Walsall moving forward.

To find out more, please click here: [Being a Child of Walsall - Walsall Ethnographic Research](#)

### **Improving Uptake of the Flu Vaccination amongst Children in the Muslim Community**

The uptake of the flu vaccine in children is lower in Lancashire & South Cumbria than other parts of the country. To help understand the barriers and potential solutions, NHS England and the NHS Improvement North West Public Health Commissioning Team (PHCT) commissioned us to conduct qualitative research with parents from the Muslim community.

Our insight report will be shared with local organisations (such as Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities) and the insight will inform changes to service delivery to reduce health inequalities.

To find out more, please click here: [Improving the uptake of the flu vaccination in Children in the Muslim Community](#)

**For more information on these projects, please contact Clare Rapkins, Associate Director at M-E-L Research.**

## **Webinars**

### **Statistical Methods for Covid-19: Test, Trace and Protect – Report of Webinar on 28th January 2021 now available.**

The third webinar in the series on Statistical Methods for Covid-19, organised by RSS Official Statistics Section in collaboration with the Health Statistics User Group, was held on 28 January 2021 and focused on Test, Trace and Protect. The presentations, a report of the webinar and replies from the presenters to questions posed during the webinar, are now available on the Health Statistics User Group website within StatsUserNet. If you want to know how to access this web site, please go to [www.hsug.org.uk](http://www.hsug.org.uk) where there are instructions.

There is also a recording of the webinar that is available on the RSS YouTube until 24 February 2021. [Click here](#) to view the recording of the webinar.

The next webinar in the series will be held in mid-April 2021 and will be in two parts. Speakers at the webinar on 28 January emphasised that because of the speed with which everything is moving, the information they presented will date quite quickly and they offered to do a follow-up a couple of months after the webinar. The first part of the webinar being held in April will provide an opportunity for them to do this.

The second part of the April webinar will give an overview of statistics published so far on vaccinations, and discuss plans for further development of these statistics

If you have any comments or queries on this webinar series, please contact [webinar@hsug.org.uk](mailto:webinar@hsug.org.uk)

## Esri UK Healthcare Webinar Series

Knowing the location and the status of your assets and population, is vital in making effective decisions about how to address the healthcare needs of a region or community.



In this webinar you will discover how location intelligence has a strategic role in the capture and maintenance of asset information, including the location and therefore context for each asset, and provides advanced analytics to predict future demand.

Oxfordshire County Council will be sharing how they transformed their delivery of adult care services, and improved planning of future service provision

Forestry and Land Scotland will explain how location intelligence has assisted them in estates planning and management

You will also learn about:

- Mobile tools for timely and accurate capture of health data about your region or community
- Identifying population health patterns to guide ongoing monitoring and optimisation and determine the need and location of essential services.
- Accurately capturing estate assets with easily configurable workflows to suit your organisation

[Register now](#) to secure your place – if you can't make the date, then please register anyway as the recording will then be set to you after the webinar.

## Children & Young People Now Online Conference Evidence, Evaluation and Impact: Improving Outcomes for Children

30th & 31st March 2021  
Registration fee: £99 + VAT

Organisations serving children, young people and families have made great progress in recent years in evidencing the impact of their work. However, the increased constraints on resources and capacity that have been created by the pandemic highlight the importance of ensuring that services are actually making a real difference.

Faced with these additional challenges, practitioners must continue to overcome barriers in adopting practical, evidence-based approaches to achieving outcomes.

CYP Now is bringing together a range of experts and leading practitioners who will provide practical tips, case studies and actionable insights to support your endeavours in improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Taking place on 30th and 31st March 2021 from 2.00-5.30pm, this online conference will provide essential learning for the entire children's workforce.

[Click here](#) for the full details.

## Love our Newsletter? Love your Colleagues?

You may receive this wonderful newsletter because your organisation has wisely taken up our Corporate Membership package. If you are one of these lucky people, then don't forget that you can spread the love further by getting your colleagues signed up as Additional Corporate Members.

Corporate Membership entitles everyone in an organisation to benefit from the membership, so all of your colleagues can sign up for free, by following [this link](#), entering their details in the right-hand side and purchasing (for free) Additional Corporate Membership. THEN, they too will receive this marvellous, monthly newsletter and praise you for bringing it into their lives.

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