



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

LARIA Newsletter March 2024

LARIA Updates

Sue Robinson, Business Intelligence Service Manager, Warwickshire County Council

Welcome to the latest edition of the LARIA newsletter. My name is Sue Robinson and I'm a recent recruit to the LARIA council. As a welcome gift I have been asked to write the introduction article to the newsletter with an open brief. I have therefore chosen to share with you a few topics that I thought would be of interest to LARIA members and feature in the world of business intelligence in Warwickshire.

Microsoft PowerBI – this data analytics reporting tool won't be new to most readers. The Business Intelligence (BI) team at Warwickshire County Council have had this available to them since Autumn 2019. It came into its own to visualise data during the COVID pandemic and gained an enthusiastic following from senior leaders and services leading to an ever-increasing demand for Power BI dashboards. Whilst Power BI isn't always the most appropriate tool for reporting, it has become integral to our work and is used daily to deliver a range of (typically automated) reports to our customers.

Examples of more recent uses include two large organisational wide projects where the BI team have collaborated with customer services and ICT. These are the implementation of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system delivered using Microsoft Dynamics, and the other a telephony system. For both of these new systems, we are utilising Power BI to connect, transform, and visualise the data back to our customers, to help aid data driven decision making.

The BI team are also looking to transform lengthy evidence reports produced to support the programme of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments into interactive dashboards. The benefit being that the data is current and can be filtered for populations/places of interest. A

dashboard is being created for a JSNA on children's physical health and will be relied on by the working groups who look at making data-based decisions to improve the lives of young people through our services. The data to support a Serious Violence Needs Assessment is also being provided in a risk profiling tool built in Power BI allowing decision makers to visualise individual measures that are causal factors for serious violence and provides a combined risk score at lower super output area level. In breaking news, we have just been shortlisted for an award at the British Data Awards for this work, which we are very proud about.

Splink - The BI Team is continually striving to make better use of its data and strengthen its evidence base. We reached a key milestone on our data roadmap this year with the adoption of Splink. Splink is a free open-source Python package that was developed by the Ministry of Justice to enable probabilistic record linkage across multiple systems and data sources. Our initial use case for this was to compare data from our social care and youth justice systems to identify individuals known to both systems in preparation for our statutory returns and we found it really helped to speed up the matching process and improve accuracy freeing up more time to focus on the strength and quality of the borderline matches rather than processing the sheer quantity of potential links. This has proved to be an invaluable new tool in our armoury, and we are now looking at a range of other use cases to support our work including adding in education data and deduplication of records to improve data quality.

Open data – there is a plethora of open data available that can provide useful evidence to local authorities. At WCC, Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) data has been accessed under license that will inform a project relating to public health, net zero and cost of living. A model has been developed that estimates EPC ratings for properties that do not have them, enabling an understanding of the full picture across the county. Multiple machine learning approaches were used to achieve this using clustering algorithms against each post town.

Artificial Intelligence – it is difficult to avoid the mention of AI, and expectations as to what it can do for local government are high. As a BI service we are in the early stages of investigating ways in which generative AI can be used safely to help us in our day-to-day work. Some things where it can potentially be useful, are trouble-shooting code examples in programming languages such as DAX, SQL, R and Python, generating ideas for reports, and creating images. It can also be used in researching topics but with caution if sources aren't returned. I did ask Microsoft Copilot to write this introduction. I was impressed but it was very generic and made lots of assumptions on what was going to be in the rest of the newsletter which I didn't want to rely on!

Enjoy your newsletter.



Doing more with less: School Transport

Aside from the challenges associated with balancing Council books, there have also been multiple warnings about the spiralling costs of school transport budgets leading to this becoming the next ticking timebomb for Local Government.

In November 2023, a report by Isos Partnership for the County Council's network highlights a number of factors – including yearly increases in eligible SEND pupils and parental expectations for individual travel arrangements – which contribute to this problem. Their report estimates costs are set to triple to an eye-watering £1.125bn nationally over the course of a decade.

This month, BBC Panorama's 'Paying More for Less: Council's in Crisis' (aired 18th March) featured the school transport challenges faced by the London Borough of Havering who are responsible for 420 students at a cost of £6.5m (or £2,500 per pupil) per year. Without proper funding they were looking to cut many of these services, which mainly impacted the at-risk and vulnerable in their communities as well as their families.

While this is a very complex challenge, there are solutions designed to ease the pressures facing school transport and crucially help reduce budgets. CACI's cloud-based route planning and optimising solution, Pin Routes, allows delivery, collection and service providers to assess and build efficient routes for single or multiple pick up/drop off points. Accessible either off the shelf or via an API, Pin Routes enables users to plan around time-windows and adjust schedules or routes accordingly. Once implemented the solution results in significant savings in driving hours, mileage and overall transport costs.

At a time of increasing demands, spiralling costs and cuts to budgets there is no better time to have access to right technology that helps deliver significant savings while at the same time improve services for those in the community who rely on these critical services. With organisations such as Boots, Alliance Healthcare and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue already using these and other CACI logistics and data solutions, this demonstrates why our products and services should be adopted by your local authority.

[Click here for further information about CACI's Pin Routes.](#)

If you would like to discuss how CACI's Pin Routes could help your authority please get in touch with [Stewart Eldridge](#) or [Jamie Clark](#).

NIHR Social Care Research Opportunity



NIHR's Research Programme for Social Care is once again offering funding for research proposals that will generate evidence to improve, expand and strengthen the way that adult and children's social care is delivered for people - across all four nations of the United Kingdom - who draw on social care support and services, carers, and the public.

The Call opens on **March 6, 2024**. Apply online by **June 26, 2024**. For more information, [please see here](#).

NIHR is running an online Research Information Event on **04 April 2024, 10-12 BST**. Please join us to learn more about NIHR's Research Programme for Social Care, and how to apply for Call 2. You can [sign up to this event here](#).

Courses, Training Events and Webinars

How to utilise geographic data



This year's GeoPlace annual conference takes place in Manchester on 21st May. Anyone who is interested in utilising and analysing geographic data is welcome to attend. Topics include: broadband delivery, 3D models for planning, healthy homes and communities, energy use in buildings, how local government supports the production of ONS & DfT statistics, faster home buying and selling, and plenty more.

[Register for free here](#).

Dear colleagues – we are pleased to invite you to a new webinar in the HSCWRU Homelessness series:

Psychological approaches to working with people experiencing homelessness

Tuesday 21 May 2024, 10 to 11am [Book here](#)



Also, a reminder of the April webinar:

Try not to look away: the epidemic of brain injury in multiple exclusion homelessness groups

Thursday 18 April 2024, 10 to 11am [Book here](#)

Events are online (via Teams) and open to all.

Webinar on Cancer Statistics

Organised by RSS Official Statistics Section and Health Statistics User Group

Friday 19 April 2024

12:00 – 13:30



The Health Statistics Users Group and the RSS Official Statistics Section are organising a webinar to discuss analyses using Cancer Registry data, and also hospital activity statistics for cancer.

[Registration for this event is available here.](#)

Please note that the webinar is free to RSS Fellows and e-student members but there is a registration fee of £10 for other participants.

Programme

Overview on Cancer Registry data.

Paul Jennings (Analytical Programme Manager, National Disease Registration Service, Transformation Directorate, NHS England) will provide an introduction to Cancer Registry Data in the UK – including similarities and differences between the Registries in the four countries.

Paul is Chair of the Cancer Statistics Theme Group so can also give an overview of the Theme Group, its activities and plans.

Zoe Venables, NHS England – [Skin cancer epidemiology](#) using national cancer registry data.

Hanhua Liu, NHS England - [Acute myeloid leukaemia \(AML\) epidemiology](#) using national cancer registry data for adults (aged 18-99 years).

Ryan Pike, who is Head of Hospital Statistics for the Welsh Government, will present on the national statistics they publish on cancer activity and performance.

Speaker from **Public Health Scotland** on cancer statistics in Scotland.

Speaker from **N Ireland Cancer Registry**

Jobs

To submit a job advert to appear in the newsletter or on the LARIA website, please download and complete this [form](#) (Full Corporate and Corporate Members only). You can also post Job Vacancies on the Jobs Board in the LARIA [Members' Area](#).

The next newsletter submission deadline is [Thursday 25th April](#).

Are you a Corporate or Full Corporate Member?

Laria

Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

Your LARIA Corporate Membership entitles you to submit content to the monthly LARIA newsletter, if you have any research, events, job adverts, resources or news which you would us to include please send it to admin@laria.org.uk.

The next newsletter submission deadline is [Thursday 25th April](#).

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