Local Government
Knowledge Navigator

Collaboration in Action:
local authorities that are
making the most of research

A
Local Government Knowledge Navigator
Evidence Review

Jill Mortimer
June 2014

Local Government
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FOREWORD

The Local Government Knowledge Navigator is a two-year initiative funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and steered by ESRC, Local Government Association and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. It was launched in January 2013 with the aim of helping local government to make better use of existing national investment in research and research-derived knowledge and evidence, and to influence future research agendas, programmes and investment.

The Knowledge Navigator team is Professor Tim Allen, Dr. Clive Grace and Professor Steve Martin.

We invite and welcome views and feedback: if you would like to comment, please email admin@ukracs.co.uk with your input.

JILL MORTIMER

Jill Mortimer has worked for Local Government in a wide range of policy and research roles. For the Local Government Knowledge Navigators, Jill has examined existing local government and research community collaboration and what has worked, and explored the extent of potentially relevant sources of research knowledge.

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This evidence paper sets out findings from work by the ESRC-funded Local Government Knowledge Navigator on examples of Local Authority and Research Collaboration. It is a contribution to the work of the Local Government Knowledge Navigator in developing closer and more productive engagement between the research community and local government in the UK.

Local government is challenged both by the impact of austerity, and by pressures such as demographic change, and a shifting relationship between state and citizen. Robust knowledge and evidence are vital if the changes needed are to be well-informed and wise, both in the short and longer term.

The UK research base is a national asset, yet one that is inadequately harnessed to support local government, with the two communities lacking systemic means to engage productively on the scale that would benefit both.

In developing our conclusions for how to create a more mutually productive relationship between the two communities, we have engaged extensively across the local government and research communities in a journey that

has yielded both a need for change, but also diverse stories that graphically show why ESRC were right to push again for better focused research impact in and for local government.

This Evidence Paper both identifies the factors that make for successful collaboration between local government and the research community, and tells some of the stories that we have encountered in the hope that they engage and excite an appetite for wider partnerships and ventures between the research and local government communities.

The main body of the paper examines the characteristics and ingredients for successful local government and researcher collaboration. **Annex 1** describes a cross-section of local government and research collaboration case studies in more detail.

2. BACKGROUND

Local authorities are responsible for a significant proportion of public services expenditure and face huge challenges. The UK's research community is a major national asset. Yet links between local government and social science and the wider research community are underdeveloped.

With notable exceptions, local government in general has too little awareness of the large and potentially useful body of research-derived knowledge and expertise, and relatively few academics see local government as a partner in, or potential user of, their research expertise.

Recognising this, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) launched a bold initiative, the Local Government Knowledge Navigator project, to analyse the nature of this failure and, crucially, to help fix it. This two-year initiative is funded by ESRC, and steered by it, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). The key tasks are to:

- Identify local government's knowledge and evidence needs;

- Establish how and where research-derived knowledge and evidence can meet these needs;

- Develop local government capacity to influence research agendas, become a smarter commissioner

and a much greater beneficiary of the social & scientific research base;

- Offer a credible and widely supported proposition for longer-term arrangements to deliver local government research and knowledge needs; and

- Deliver practical examples to demonstrate the benefits, including through a series of rapid research reviews, to test out a variety of different ways of accessing existing research-derived knowledge and evidence.

This Evidence Paper provides details of findings and analysis with regard to the fifth of these requirements in relation to exploring recent and current productive research and local government collaborations. Our focus has not been on the small number of academic institutions that have departments with a specific local government remit and a longstanding relationship with local government on that basis, but to explore how partnerships have developed in the wider research world where such a specific local government remit does not exist.

3. OVERVIEW: THE INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

Despite generally modest research capacity in local government and low levels of awareness of initiatives designed to promote knowledge exchange, we found a rich diversity of examples of local government and research collaboration. Whilst these were often 'one-offs', they illustrate the potential benefits of research and local authority collaboration across a diverse range of circumstances and local authorities.

In identifying these examples, we spoke to the researchers involved and the local authorities to understand how both parties viewed the collaboration, unless validation was already available to attest to the impact achieved.

In terms of the approach from the research councils and the universities, the following features supported successful outcomes:

Focus on issues relevant to local government action

Whilst this may seem obvious, one of the barriers to productive research relationships between academics and local government is the capacity for both sides to formulate research questions relevant to the policy and decision making context of local government. The definition of 'Evidence based policy and practice' reported by Professor Hardill for the Engaging Scottish Local Authorities Programme (Case Studies 3 - 8) is useful:

> "...an approach that helps people to make well informed decisions about policies, programmes, projects and practices by putting best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation... encompassing not just what works, but also what is the nature of the problem, why does it occur and how might it be addressed".

Partnership intrinsic to the research

The projects funded through the Engaging Scottish Local Authorities fund required joint applications from academics and local government, and specified the way the two sides would work together. Local government contributed at least 20% of the funding. The funding contribution was shared by a number of authorities in some of the projects. The bids were in relation to priority themes agreed between the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), and the Scottish Government.

For the Care Life Cycle Project (Case Study 9) funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), working with local authority practitioners was intrinsic to the development of the model.

Similarly, in the two projects that won ESRC impact awards (Case Studies 1 and 2), academics working with schools was integral to the research: Sheffield University's work with school staff to help parents improve their children's literacy, and Cardiff University's work on transforming school catering arrangements and supporting sustainability in the food supply chain.

Applied research programmes

Some university departments already work on programmes that are directly relevant to local authority decision making, thus making the transition to working together much easier. This is the case for the Sheffield University partnership with Sheffield Council on Sheffield Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Case Study 10), and Southampton University's work on the Care Life Cycle as well as the two winners of the ESRC impact awards.

In instances where a university has specialist knowledge relevant to a local authority's needs it may also be possible to tap additional funding. In Sheffield's case, by having a partnership rather than a tendering process, the project was able to draw upon the university's partnership fund.

University working on relevant 'burning issues'

For councils and other public and voluntary services in the North East, there is concern both about high levels of unemployment that have been the norm for decades, and about a tendency to assume people accept unemployment as inevitable, underpinning the stereotype of three generations of unemployment. Teesside University's research challenged this (Case Study 11), and helped identify the type of work that would lift people's employment opportunities.

The partnership between the University and Middlesbrough Council took the form of a knowledge exchange project and attracted considerable interest in the region.

Similarly there was strong support for knowledge transfer on Child Poverty in the region.

Funded brokerage

The Institute for Local Governance (Case Study 14) and the Research Exchange for Social Science (Case Study 15) both exist to broker links between local government and the research world, focused respectively within the North East and South Yorkshire.

The Institute for Local Governance was initially funded by the ESRC on 2009. It is now funded by subscription of participating local authorities. It helps councils develop research questions and identify and connect them with relevant academics and research programmes in the locality.

The Research Exchange for Social Science is funded for four years from 2011 by the Higher Education Innovation Fund. It initially had housing and planning as its core activity and helped develop the partnership with Sheffield City Council. In 2014, it will link with the Sheffield Urban Institute, widening its remit to include engineering, with Arup and Siemens as well as Sheffield City Council.

Long term relationships, for example through:

PhD and Masters placements: Southampton University has had MSc and PhD placements in Hampshire County Council Adult Social Services Departments since 2005, supporting good relationships and mutual knowledge and understanding before the work on the Care Life Cycle Project began.

A history of working together: Sheffield University also worked with Sheffield City Council on the respected 'State of Sheffield' report.

Senior collaboration: the seven North East region local authorities have senior and long term relationships with the region's five universities, with Chief Executives, Leaders and Vice Chancellors coming together on the Institute for Local Governance Strategic and Management Boards.

Resilience in the face of local authority reorganisations and changes in personnel

This was raised as an issue for the Engaging Scottish Local Authorities projects and for the Care Life Cycle Project. The projects need to be able to accommodate changes in key personnel in the council, and be able to induct and work with officers who are new to the project. Senior management support within the council is helpful in ensuring the projects continue to be supported. One university suggested a signed Concordat at the beginning of the project might also help.

Flexibility around precise time allocations and timetables

The projects inevitably had a degree of uncertainty in how they would develop over time, and success is likely to bring with it increased activity and demand for the academics. It is helpful if this can be accommodated without time consuming renegotiation of contracts and agreements.

Leadership from the university

Last but not least, in times of shifting priorities, Sheffield University academics stressed the importance of having support from the Vice Chancellor to ensure the importance of the projects continued to be recognised and additional academics' time made available.

The following features of local authorities' approach to research supported successful engagement:

Senior appreciation of and support for research evidence

Leaders' and/or Chief Executives' support for research has been a key element at the London Boroughs of Newham, Enfield and Redbridge, and Southampton City Council, Sunderland City Council and Middlesbrough Council (Case Study 13).

Experience of using research and data to inform decision-making

The Chief Executives of Enfield and Sunderland councils both had research backgrounds and therefore already appreciated how research and data can underpin better decision making.

Consortia, to spread the cost and reduce risks to reputation

The councils involved in Engaging Scottish Local Authorities Programme were able to share the cost of their contribution to each project, which made it more viable for individual authorities whilst also spreading the direct impact of the research.

During Local Government Association work in 2010, which brought leading councillors and academics together, one council leader suggested that working as consortia would also help councils spread the risk of working with academics to pilot new approaches. It could also help to regard these new approaches as prototypes, where the need to trial, evaluate and re-scope where necessary is integral to the project.

Support from brokers with the expertise and time to develop proposals

This is the fundamental rationale for the funding of the Institute for Local Governance and the Research Exchange for Social Science, recognising that refining research questions and projects, identifying appropriate researchers and developing effective proposals for funding takes time and skills that councils may not have.

The ability and skills to successfully commission research (or access to them)

The London Borough of Newham (Case Study 12) has invested in a research team which is able and skilled in developing research questions, and which commissions research from leading universities.

Local authority research teams, and service managers establishing relationships with local universities

Some councils and departments take the initiative to develop relationships with local universities, for example, to support mutually beneficial Masters and PhD programmes around specific problems or challenges. One academic suggested that Education and Social Services departments might have a greater affinity with university research programmes.

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ANNEX 1: CASE STUDIES

1. **Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 2013 Impact Award:** Supporting parents to raise their children's literacy
Sheffield University with practitioners in nursery and pre-schools in Sheffield and Kirklees

2. **Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 2013 Impact Award:** Sustainable food systems and quality school meals
Cardiff University and a Cardiff school

3. **Engaging Scottish Local Authorities (ESLA) Co-ordination and Evaluation:**
Northumbria University and Manchester Metropolitan University

4. **Engaging Scottish Local Authorities (ESLA) project:** Involving Service Users to Improve Public Service Delivery in Social Work
University of Edinburgh, with East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders Councils

5. **Engaging Scottish Local Authorities (ESLA) project:** Dementia Care: Service Delivery in Remote Rural Areas
University of the Highlands and Islands, Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Sciences; Scottish Agricultural College with Orkney Islands and Scottish Borders

6. **Engaging Scottish Local Authorities (ESLA) project:** Child Poverty: Co-ordination of service provision for children in severe poverty
University of Strathclyde; with Glasgow City Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and Save the Children Scotland

7. **Engaging Scottish Local Authorities (ESLA) project:** Community Carbon Emissions: Co-design of Strategy to Engage Communities for Carbon Emission Reduction
University of St Andrews and University of Dundee, with Fife Council and the Sustainable Scotland Network

8. **Engaging Scottish Local Authorities (ESLA) project:** Safer Communities
University of Glasgow, University of Dundee and University of Edinburgh with Scottish Community Safety Network

9. **Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC) funded Care Life Cycle Project:** University of Southampton with Hampshire County Council

10. **Strategic Housing Market Assessment**
Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam Universities with Sheffield City Council

11. **Worklessness, Social Exclusion and the Experiences of Young People**
Teesside University with Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough Strategic Partnership

12. **The London Borough of Newham**

13. **Leadership in Local Authorities:**
Southampton City Council; Sunderland City Council; the London Borough of Enfield; the London Borough of Redbridge

14. **The Institute for Local Governance**

15. **The Research Exchange for Social Science**

16. **The National Foundation for Education Research**

CS1

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 2013 award for Outstanding Impact in Society

University of Sheffield with Sheffield and Kirklees Nursery and Pre-School staff

This involved working with 20 early-years practitioners to adapt the family literacy framework ORIM (Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Models). Practitioner workshops enabled the families they were working with to raise children's literacy achievements. The original 20 practitioners shared their work resulting in around 300 practitioners getting involved, between them reaching 6,000 families.

This work is part of a long-term research programme, started in 1995, through which the ORIM framework was developed. The innovation in the latest stage of the project is the focus on working with the practitioners in a Sheffield Nursery School whose catchment is in one of the most deprived areas in the City. These staff then trained other practitioners.

Kirklees Council has also adopted the same programme in three pre-school settings, with similar ambitions for dissemination.

This is an instance where engagement with local public services is intrinsic to the research.

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http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/videos/celebrating-impact-prize-winners-2013.aspx?media-component=tcm:8-26075&type=video

CS2

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 2013 award for Outstanding Impact in Public Policy

Cardiff University and a Cardiff Secondary School

This project highlights the potential of public procurement to promote sustainable food systems in schools.

It developed one of the UK's finest kitchens and canteens in a school in a very deprived area of Cardiff. The space is convivial and pleasant, and messages about healthy eating in the classroom are reinforced by the food serviced in the canteen. The project engaged with every part of the food chain – farmers and producers, public procurement officers and local authorities. The school catering staff learnt to cook good quality low cost food from raw, and they take great pleasure in seeing the children enjoy it. This raised the dignity and self-esteem of the staff. The pupils enjoy the food, its' affordable, and for many it's the only hot meal of the day.

The project's work is informed by examples of good practice from all over the world. Dr Sonnino's comments are worth quoting here:

> "The real world is way ahead of academic theories. So you're not going to learn how to produce impacts by reading the latest literature in the field. It's important to talk to real people; to enter their world to see what their needs are...

> "Over the years I've been invited to something like thirteen different countries to talk about school meals. There's extra time in travelling, talking to people and doing advisory work for policy makers but for me it's a crucial part of my identity as an academic."

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http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/videos/celebrating-impact-prize-winners-2013.aspx?media-component=tcm:8-26076&type=video

CS3

Engaging Scottish Local Authorities Programme (ESLA)

Evaluation by Northumbria University and Manchester Metropolitan University

The ESLA programme was set up to respond to the knowledge needs of local government in Scotland, and increase Knowledge Exchange between local authorities and Scottish Universities. It was funded jointly by the ESRC, the Scottish Funding Council and the Local Authority and Research Councils Initiative (LARCI), with input from SOLACE, COSLA and the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA).

Proposals were invited for knowledge exchange projects that addressed at least one of six priority themes for local authorities. Each proposal had to include the following:

- A synthesis of existing research on the topic theme, which had implications for local government in Scotland, to be presented at a seminar or workshop within three months of the award commencing;

- Impact generating activity, engaging with at least one Scottish local authority. This engagement was embedded in the project proposal, and the local authority partners were involved at this stage, and had to contribute at least 20% of the funding;

- Placements, whereby academics worked in a local authority setting and local authority officers working in an academic unit for at least one month (although not necessarily in one block of time);

- Seminars or workshops to encourage interaction between Scotland-based researchers and Scottish local authorities

- Building the capacity of local authority staff to understand and apply research by enabling them to acquire a range of skills and experience that they didn't usually get in their work.

The authors of the evaluation expressed the ESLA approach to evidence-based policy and practice as follows:[1]

> "Evidence-based policy and practice is a contentious notion, often associated with narrow technical interpretations of 'what works' and particular kinds of hard evidence…In the ESLA programme, it was used in a broad sense as 'an approach that helps people to make well informed decision about policies, programmes, projects and practices by putting best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation… encompassing not just what works, but also what is the nature of the problem, why does it occur and how might it be addressed'…".[2]

The ESLA approach "reflects thinking within the social sciences that has tended to reject direct versions of 'transfer' from researcher to user as over-simplistic". Professor Hardill cites Best and Home, who identified:

> "three generations about knowledge to action:
> - Linear models (1960s to mid-1980s) predominantly consisting of 'knowledge transfer' and 'dissemination';
> - Relationship models (mid-1990s to present) – the key processes are the relationships that develop within networks of collaborating producers and users of research;
> - Systems model (emerging) – while relationships are important, research needs to be interwoven with the priorities and cultures and contexts of organisations."

The ESLA projects used a relationship model at the beginning, but showed some evidence of moving towards the systems model through the life of the programme.

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1. Engaging Scottish Local Authorities: Process and Impact Review, p10

2. Nutley et al 2007, p11

CS4

ESLA project: Involving Service Users to Improve Public Service Delivery in Social Work

University of Edinburgh, with East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife Council and Scottish Borders

The project's activities and outputs included:

- A series of literature reviews placed on the project website
- Three knowledge sharing seminars
- Six practitioner projects
- A good practice guide summarising the project findings in an accessible booklet.

Highlights included:

- Influencing local policy and practice: one local authority incorporated one of the reports into a service review; another used one to develop a training course; another used one of the reports in their induction pack for new staff, and for post-induction training;
- Some practitioners reported changing their own practices; others said they were using research more;
- The literature reviews and good practice guide were incorporated into social work teaching programmes at Edinburgh University and adopted by the Open University.

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CS5

ESLA project: Dementia Care – Service Delivery in Remote Rural Areas

University of the Highlands and Islands, Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Sciences; Scottish Agricultural College with Orkney Islands and Scottish Borders

Activities and outputs included:

- Placements
- Research synthesis co-produced with council staff
- Knowledge Exchange events to share placement report findings, and the use of drama as a knowledge-exchange vehicle.

Highlights included:

- Council staff developed an appreciation of research evidence and new research skills;
- The project stimulated council staff dialogue about service delivery
- As a result of the first research seminar, funding was secured to provide one council's staff with training on 'Talking Mats'
- The pilot of the Talking Mats tool was developed in conjunction with Stirling University.

CS6

ESLA project: Child poverty – Co-ordination of service provision for children in severe poverty

University of Strathclyde; with Glasgow City Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and Save the Children Scotland

The project's activities and outputs included:

- A literature review
- Five workshops on how agencies and families can work together to address child poverty
- Three placement exchanges
- Five mini projects involving children and families.

Highlights included:

- One Council used the literature review to develop its child-poverty strategy;
- Academic staff on placements contributed to policy initiatives
- Councils regarded the project as 'value for money'.

CS7

ESLA project: Co-design of Strategy to Engage Communities for Carbon Emission Reduction

University of St Andrews and University of Dundee with Fife Council and the Sustainable Scotland Network

Activities and outputs included:

- An interdisciplinary scoping study
- Four seminars on Food, Transport, Energy and Community
- Two capacity building workshops with Council staff
- A series of Shadowing Days
- A co-designed strategy for councils to engage communities in carbon-emission reduction
- Dissemination to other councils through the Sustainable Scotland Network.

Highlights included:

- The Council adopting the co-designed strategy
- The embedding of sustainability values across the Council
- Some Non-Government Organisations and communities reporting an improved understanding of the Council
- Through networking within the project, an affluent community mentored a less affluent one on sustainability initiatives.

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CS8

ESLA project:
Safer Communities

University of Glasgow,
University of Dundee and
University of Edinburgh with
Scottish Community Safety Network

Activities and outputs included:

- Co-production of practitioner resources: thematic reviews; practice notes and effective intervention reviews

- Success of Practitioner Fellowships, such that four were planned, but six were awarded because of demand and the quality of the applicants

- Dedicated website, serving as repository for resources.

Highlights included:

- The Scottish Community Safety Network adopted the definition of community safety

- The Practitioner Fellowships evaluated as a positive experience, changing working practices

- The project generated requests for research advice.

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CS9

Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC)-funded Care Life Cycle (CLC) Project: Predicting Demand for Health and Social Care

University of Southampton with Hampshire County Council

Southampton Adult Social Care Services already had extensive links with Southampton University, including (since 2005) placements of Masters and PhD students who develop their dissertations on issues useful to the service: such as evaluating a new extended care scheme from the viewpoint of the users.

Aims of the research project

The Care Life Cycle Research Project aims to gain a better understanding of the factors which affect the supply and demand for health and social care in the UK, in the context of an ageing population. It will do this by developing a systems dynamic model which examines the behaviour of complex systems over time. One of its key features is its ability to identify feedback within systems, whereby relatively small, apparently rational and beneficial changes in one part of the system can lead to counter-intuitive results or unintended consequences elsewhere.

What is the model?

The model uses information on the health of the older population, as well as their living arrangements and a range of other characteristics from local and national data sources. In addition, the team works with local health and social care providers to include data on their services and planned changes in these, such as the likely impacts of the new health structures and GP commissioning groups.

Data on the population over 65 includes information on informal systems of support, from family, neighbours and friends and the way these vary with different family structures and the location of family members. The model highlights the extent to which helping carers support older people can reduce the demand for more intensive – and expensive – local authority services.

Developments over time

The model is now in its fourth iteration, as the CLC team and people from Hampshire's health and social care teams refine the variables and input information about new developments, such as the possible impact of GP commissioning groups, to future-proof the predictions.

As well as a basis for predicting future demand for social care, the process has had further very useful impacts. It has enabled different parts of the system to see the whole picture, and have a much better understanding of the role their service plays, and the impacts that changes in their service can have on others.

There have been delays, due to re-organisation in Hampshire and changes in lead personnel. This is a common issue for partnerships between local councils and universities in these turbulent times. However the process was merely delayed, not derailed, and it looks like a very effective tool will be the result.

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CS10

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam Universities with Sheffield City Council

Sheffield City Council's Knowledge and Research Team already had good working relationships with Sheffield University, which enabled them to work together in producing the successful State of Sheffield report.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a statutory duty, carried out approximately every 5 years to inform the Council's housing plans. 2007's SHMA was carried out by a consultancy; and although it was of a good quality, it lacked useful strategic recommendations for the council to take forward into strategy and policy development, and the sub-area housing analysis lacked an understanding of the different local housing issues in the city.

The Council decided to explore a different approach for the 2012/13 SHMA, developing a partnership with Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam Universities. Anticipated benefits were:

Improved value for money The universities have students working in the study areas, who can be involved in the survey, for example, as part of their degree. This is likely to improve quality, as they already have expertise in the field. It also reduces cost in comparison to outsourcing the survey work.

Lever in additional funding The University of Sheffield can access funding for work carried out with a strategic partner which could not be accessed if the University were to have to tender competitively. This therefore provided the basis for the Council to provide a waiver for the tender of this contract, and provided additional funding for the SHMA to improve its quality.

Expand the SHMA's scope Through the partnership, the process has access to previous research and information held by the Universities. With private contractors, this information is not usually available for reasons of commercial confidentiality. With Sheffield City Council officers as part of the project team, the project can be more flexible and draw upon their expertise and insights. Equally, the project can be flexible and develop in relation to the academics' expertise and insights.

Contribute to the developing partnership between the City Council and the Universities Both sides benefit from the pooling of staff and resources, and developing valuable sources of data and information. The Vice-Chancellors of both universities and senior managers at the City Council are keen to develop such partnerships in their mutual interests.

Aims of the project

The overarching objective of the 2012/13 SHMA is to produce a comprehensive and reliable assessment of Sheffield's housing market, including the sub-housing markets within the city, and how they interact with each other. Specifically, it should describe the current and future housing markets within Sheffield, including the supply and demand balance in the different housing sectors and the key drivers underpinning the housing market.

Key outputs

- A final report describing the city's housing supply and demand, and affordable housing requirement. It should make recommendations in relation to future policy and strategy development
- Associated datasets, including secondary data and the survey results
- Maps demonstrating issues for the city
- Supplementary reports on the specific housing needs of different groups
- Presentations to councillors, officers and partners
- Potential future support (subject to a new contract) as Expert Witnesses to defend the SHMA in any planning inquiries, appeals or examinations.

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CS11

Worklessness, Social Exclusion and the Experiences of Young People

Teesside University with Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough Strategic Partnership

The Social Futures Institute at Teesside University had 15 years of research, expertise and specialised knowledge on worklessness, social exclusion and the experiences of young people. The Chair of Middlesbrough Strategic Partnership was interested in accessing and applying this knowledge locally. At the same time the Chief Executive of Middlesbrough Council was pursuing improved research-practice links (a research partnership) between the Council and Teesside University and had met with its Vice-Chancellor.

Aims of the Knowledge Exchange Project

''...Transfer to Middlesbrough Council, its partners in the Local Strategic Partnership and wider policy and practice audiences in the North East of England, the knowledge and research conclusions from a range of sociological studies about worklessness, social exclusion and youth transitions conducted by Teesside University Social Futures Institute.''

This included challenging prevailing concepts about 'three generations of unemployment' and demonstrating, through robust research, that very few people had never worked, and the vast majority were available for, and eager to find, paid employment. The main issue was opportunity.

The Process

The project was to be delivered over a one-year period, and would include:

- A series of stakeholder multi-agency events to share and debate research findings
- The production of research summaries in a non-academic format
- Using existing internal and partnership networks and communication systems to share the findings and encourage discussion to inform and influence needs assessments, policy and decision making
- Evaluation of if (and how) the research had influenced decision making.

The findings from the research were presented and debated via three half-day stakeholder events:

- GROWING UP AND GETTING BY IN DEPRIVED NEIGHBOURHOODS
- DISCONNECTED YOUTH?
- UNDERSTANDING AND TACKLING WORKLESSNESS

Venues were donated by community partners. In total 270 people attended the events, for some 79 different partner organisations, including residents and volunteers. 64 staff from Middlesbrough Council attended, from Central Services, Children, Families and Learning, Health and Social Care, Regeneration, Members' Services and Environment.

Evaluations of the first two events indicated people wanted greater involvement from the private sector. Energies were targeted to involving employers in the third event. This included speakers from Tees Valley Unlimited, and PD Ports, joined by panel members from Erimus Housing and the North East Chamber of Commerce. As a result of these events, separate information sharing sessions were requested by Middlesbrough Council's Leadership Network (which included 54 Directors and Senior Managers), and Middlesbrough College Staff and A-level students.

Evaluation of the projects

85% of those who completed the evaluations at the event rated it as good or very good, and 130 of the 174 delegates said they thought the learning would be useful or very useful. Impacts included:

- Provided evidence in funding bids
- Dispelled myths, for example for staff in Job Centres
- Analysed types of job opportunities required.

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CS12

The London Borough of Newham

At Newham, the research agenda is driven by the Mayor, who is a strong advocate of evidence-based policy, supported by other enthusiastic leading councillors. There is a two-year research and evaluation framework, linked to academic research and practice evaluation to develop and test policy. Examples include working with:

- London School of Economics (and using Joseph Rowntree Foundation methodologies) to understand the impacts of welfare reforms and using narrative-based research to understand what makes some people / households resilient and, for example, able to manage on low incomes, and others not. Anne Powers at LSE is leading

- Institute of Employment Studies on a 'backward study' to look at life courses for 16 – 22/25 year olds to identify differences or similarities between those who, at age 16, go directly into work, and those who adopt a vocational training route (e.g. wage differentials) using Labour Force Survey methodology

- Institute of Education to look at the impacts of the use of musical education to improve literacy and numeracy

- Staffordshire University on the impact of the Newham for under achieving children. (Dr Kennedy is a visiting fellow)

- Birmingham University on understanding best practice in commissioning – what works, what doesn't.

Newham also 'mirrors' the ESRC Understanding Society publication by producing one for the Borough, with Essex University and the Institute for Fiscal Studies as contributors.

The Research Business Manager is Local Government Policy Fellow at the University of Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy, working on the ageing population. She is also a visiting fellow at Staffordshire University.

Contact

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CS13

Leadership in Local Authorities

Southampton City Council
Sunderland City Council
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Redbridge

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

A previous Leader of Southampton City Council, who has a background in environmental science and a PhD from the University of Southampton, established the Head of Southampton University's Energy and Climate Change Division as a Chief Scientific Adviser for Southampton Council. His interest began with environment and climate change, but the approach he has adopted is much broader-based, working with the Chief Scientific Adviser to use energy saving / carbon reduction as a starting point to generate economic growth, for example through improving housing stock owned by the council, and applying Joseph Rowntree Foundation work on the intermediate labour force to reach young people classified as Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) and others needing improved skills etc. in achieving this, and reducing energy poverty. For example, the CSA has led assessments on payback and viability (e.g. the Thornhill Estate project).

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SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Sunderland City Council's Chief Executive has an academic background with a research-based PhD, and was also a social worker by profession. He has shifted the Council perspective to gathering intelligence about customers and communities, rather than just services. They are now addressing the technological requirements to make the data more manageable, streamlining systems and requirements, working with IBM and also linking with Belfast via Smart Cities.

Contact

Chief Executive, Dave Smith, c/o Janet Harrison
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LONDON BOROUGH OF ENFIELD
LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive of Enfield made extensive use of research in a previous work role and has been building Enfield's approach to and use of evidence. This is now further supported by the Leader, who also has a background in the use of evidence.

Collaborations have included Manchester University on economic renewal, helping to 'organise the Council's thinking'.

Contact

Chief Executive, Rob Leak, c/o Angela Pringle,
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LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive of Redbridge has a research background and worked in the Social Services Institute where there was a tradition of working extensively with local government and public health.

He is now a Board Member of the Open Data Institute, a member of the Local Public Data Panel, and a strong supporter of the importance of learning from the experiences of people outside local government.

Contact

Chief Executive, Roger Hampson
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CS14

The Institute for Local Governance

The Institute for Local Governance was established by the ESRC with objectives to co-produce research and knowledge by collaboration between local government and academic researchers focused on a locality – the North East. It has therefore been able to work with five universities and local government (seven councils, police and fire and rescue, and the Association of North East Councils) and build relationships and develop knowledge and research in relation to their specific concerns. It has also been able to extend relationships to other partners in the area, and broker resources for additional research programmes. In this way, it has worked both to establish need, and develop the local authority client capacity, at the same time as developing the supply from local academic institutions.

Strands of activity include:

- **Local Authority Research and Knowledge Exchange:** where a small dedicated budget is allocated to each of the local councils to undertake a research and knowledge exchange project tailored to their needs. Topics include: Barriers to Entrepreneurship; Evaluation of a Child Poverty Local Authority Innovation Project; an academic rapporteur of the Newcastle Fairness Commission; the evaluation of a whole-family approach to families with multiple problems; and knowledge transfer of research on poverty, worklessness and regeneration into the policy and delivery mechanisms of a council and its partners.

- **Support for policy clusters of academics and practitioners:** examples are Climate Change and the North East; Liberating the NHS - Implications for Local Government; North East Housing Innovation Forum; Criminal Justice and Community Safety Group.

- **Regional Impact Projects** (currently two underway): The first is with Durham County Council and Northumberland County Council, action research to support social enterprises in the delivery of public services, and in assuming responsibility for community buildings through asset transfer. This will also involve other partners, including Sunderland and Gateshead Councils, the North East Social Enterprise Partnership, and a bid into the Regional Growth Fund.

  The second is an evaluation of the 'Diamond Model' which is a new way of delivering local services for young people which is being implemented by the Regional Youth Work Unit. The model will be piloted in Darlington and Gateshead in the first instance. A research and knowledge transfer network has been set up.

- **Research and Knowledge Exchange on Child Poverty:** including servicing the North East Child Poverty Commission, and a programme of work led by an ILG-funded co-ordinator, bringing together a network of local academics and others, through seminars etc.

- **Brokering Service:** the Institute has brokered 13 research and consultancy projects on behalf of local universities.

Contact

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CS15

The Research Exchange for Social Science[3]

Sheffield University, with Sheffield City Council, Doncaster, Barnsley and Rotherham Councils

The Research Exchange for Social Science (RESS) is funded for 4 years from the Higher Education Innovation Fund to engage with private, public and community stakeholders within the Sheffield City Region and beyond.

Based at Sheffield University, they do considerable work with Sheffield Council (see Sheffield's Strategic Housing Market Assessment above) and are building relationships with Doncaster, Barnsley and Rotherham Councils. Current work includes:

Police and data: academics have been mapping crime to locality, and are working with the police on how this could be useful, resulting in a project to create an App to inform the activities of police on the beat.

Public Health: a priority because of the major re-organisation and the new role for local authorities. RESS is organising a workshop with the academics working on public health, their contacts in the health service and the local authority officers with the new responsibilities for public health.

Economic Development: academics initially tried working with local authorities. However, they didn't get the level of engagement hoped for, and they are now working with the Local Economic Partnership on the economic development evaluation and the growth fund.

The wider RESS offer includes:

Brokering research funding: the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Knowledge Exchange Funds, the Technology and Strategy Board (TSB) Knowledge Transfer Partnership and the University of Sheffield's R&D Collaboration

Bid writing and support e.g. to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), NESTA, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Big Lottery Fund

Events bringing together academics and public policy officers, networks, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Festival of Social Science

Strategic Partnering with the South Yorkshire Local Authority and University Network; the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Education (DfE)

Sharing good practice: briefings, workshops, White Rose Doctoral Training Centre (WRDTC) Impact Module, International Co-Production Seminar

Doctoral Research: PhD placements, WRDTC Collaborative Awards, WRDTC Regional Research Collaborators Club.

From 2015, work will be undertaken from the Sheffield Urban Institute, with a widening of the remit to include engineering and the involvement of Arup and Siemens.

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3. Conversation with Jill Mortimer, 2014

CS16

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Research centre with established links to Local Government

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is an established research institution that operates as a charity and specialises in education and learning from early years to higher education, and in policy and practice around children and young people, with a long-standing background and experience in working with local government and the Local Government Association.

Its services include a new 'NFER thinks' series of publications to engage policy makers and policy influencers by responding to topical policy issues where NFER has good evidence. The first publication highlighted NFER evidence to suggest that proposed (Key Stage 4) policy reforms announced in December 2012 would have a potentially negative impact on a group of at risk young people.

More widely, NFER also have experience and learning around:

- How to make data and findings available, for example through events and online networks

- The importance of understanding research requirements

- How to define impact in terms of what works and what doesn't

- Achieving ownership from those commissioning / needing research

- The role of sector 'champions' for research findings

- Distilling findings into 'the 5 things you need to know'.

Contact

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