

Report of the Cheshire Information Liaison Group

Research and Intelligence Support for the Communities of Cheshire Partnership

Summary

The Cheshire Chief Executives and Local Strategic Partnership Chairs, on 10 March 2006, considered a joint report from the Cheshire Local Area Agreement, Cheshire Performance Practitioner and Cheshire Information Liaison Groups. It was agreed that the Cheshire Information Liaison Group should:

“Undertake a full review of the current Research and Intelligence arrangements and capacity across the partnerships and to recommend options as to how the R & I needs of the new Cheshire Partnerships Framework can be met in the future.”

This to be reported to the inaugural meeting of the Communities of Cheshire Partnership on the 6 April 2006.

This report:

- (a) reviews current Research and Intelligence activity across the partnership; and
- (b) promotes the case for developing a co-ordination group to support the range of research and data management required to meet the needs of the LSP work programmes.

Recommendation

That the Communities of Cheshire Partnership:

- (a) notes progress so far in the development of a structure to support research and intelligence activity for the partnership;
- (b) supports the proposed development of a co-ordination group; and
- (c) notes that this is work in progress and that a further report reviewing research capacity and examining further development of a co-ordination role will be presented to a future meeting.

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1 Introduction

1.1 This paper aims to :

- Describe the scope of research and needs to support the new Communities of Cheshire Partnership framework
- Develop the case for a co-ordination role for the research and intelligence support required to meet those needs
- Consider some of the issues to be addressed in implementing an effective co-ordination role

1.2 The discussion is based the need to structure support around the 5 themes identified in the newly agreed LSP framework. The current Cheshire Information Liaison Group is identified in the new LSP framework as a County-wide Support Group.

2 Research and Intelligence Needs

2.1 A range of research and intelligence needs within each of the 5 blocks can be identified. They can be viewed as both county or district level needs. The needs are extensive as reinforced by Government proposals for developing Sustainable Community Strategies. The following list is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive partly because they are not static and partly because they are still developing within the partnerships concerned. Indeed , the roles of the partnerships in some blocks , e.g. Environment are still being resolved: -

Safer and Stronger Communities

- Crime and disorder audits
- Monitoring community safety strategies
- Analysis and monitoring of fire prevention strategies
- Research into factors determining social cohesion
- Analysis of social inclusion patterns
- Consultation with hard to reach groups
- Supporting local public service agreements
- Collect and analyse performance indicators

Healthier Communities and Older People

- Analysis of community health trends
- Demographic analysis, estimation and forecasting
- Monitoring health inequalities
- Researching impact of health promotion strategies.
- Supporting local public service agreements
- Analysis of needs of older people
- Research outcomes of care plans for older people
- Collect and analyse performance indicators

Children and Young People

- Support for Joint Area Review
- Transforming learning communities
- Consultation with young people
- Supporting local public service agreements
- Research into factors influencing outcomes
- Develop learning facilities for post school education/training
- Collect and analyse performance indicators

Economic Development and Enterprise

- Support Cheshire and Warrington economic strategy, e.g. evaluate strategies to increase employment participation
- Collect and analyse performance indicators, e.g. GVA, new business growth
- Monitor training needs and provision in the economy
- Forecast labour supply
- Research to evaluate initiatives to expand employment (e.g. opportunities for disabled people)

Environment

- Monitoring data for Local Transport Plan, e.g. transport patterns
- Research and monitor data for the Waste Local Plan
- Support for Sustainable Cheshire Forum
- Monitor sustainability indicators
- Air quality measurement and analysis

The briefing pack¹ for the consultation on the new framework sets out a range of potential data needs. In addition to this there will be a need to determine what primary research can best inform the action plans, i.e. understanding the factors affecting quality of life as well as measuring them.

2.2 In addition to these blocks of demand there are a range of topics of a cross-cutting nature that link to all blocks but not the province of any one block, e.g.:-

- Rural development
- Housing needs assessment
- Joint consultation research (e.g. Best Values User Satisfaction Surveys)
- Land use strategies
- Population estimation
- Census
- Issues not covered through blocks but relevant to community strategies
- Maintaining consistent standards of research and analysis
- Facilitating data sharing between agencies

¹ Review of LSP Arrangements across Cheshire, Briefing Pack

Clearly, if the information needs of the various blocks are to be met adequately, this amounts to a considerable workload.

3 Research Capacity

- 3.1 It is difficult to quantify the potential research and Intelligence capacity, but the scope of existing capacity covers: -
- Cheshire County Council Research and Intelligence Unit
 - Cheshire County Council Social Care Information Unit
 - Cheshire County Council Education Research and Statistics Unit
 - Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance Economic Research Team²
 - Learning and Skills Council, Needs, Analysis and Planning researchers
 - Cheshire Constabulary Management Information Unit
 - Cheshire Health Informatics Unit
 - Public Health Analysts in PCTs
 - Chester City Council Research and Intelligence Unit
 - Macclesfield Borough Council Research and Intelligence resources
 - District Council Community Planning officers
- 3.2 In addition, within each partner organisation, there are professional and technical officers who are and would be engaged with supporting research and information work programmes. Also, research is not necessarily the whole of someone's job. A small amount of research is commissioned externally, mainly by agencies with little capacity of their own. Thus, there is significant imbalance across providers in research capacity. To meet a significant amount of the need for information to support the partnership work programmes, these resources would continue with their present activities, but much of the need would require developing new data collection and management mechanisms. Project groups within the 5 blocks are likely to need dedicated staff resources to maintain the workload.
- 3.3 It is not clear how much of the existing research capacity currently provides the range of data and analysis relevant to the needs of the theme blocks. Work will be developed to try to clarify this in the next stages of development.

4 Management of Research and Intelligence Activities

- 4.1 The outcome blocks in the proposed structure are in some cases fairly self-contained. For example, research and data monitoring needs to support the Children and Young People's block would be generated and commissioned from the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). Similarly, the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance largely addresses the aims of the Economic Development and Enterprise block.
- 4.2 Data needs relating to the Safer and Stronger Communities block would be managed through the new Safer Stronger Communities Group.

² Currently funded on fixed term contract by NWDA and managed by Cheshire County Council

4.3 Healthier Communities and Older People would involve a range of partners with a focus on health and social care incorporating a range of policy streams such as Supporting People, Choosing Health.

4.4 Although research and data needs can be generated principally out of the theme groups, there will be overlapping requirements. For example, issues associated with community involvement and volunteering can impact on supporting older people. However, there is also scope for duplication and inefficiency. There is a need to ensure that data items are only collected and analysed once and that effort is not wasted through more than one theme group collecting the same information. Also it is important to recognise where there are opportunities for sharing data collection and research across blocks to take advantage of economies of scale. This implies a need for co-ordination. This is not to suggest a further tier of management. But there will be issues/activities relevant to all or most blocks where a joined up approach would add value. A few to be explored are: -

- Co-ordinate and produce monitoring reports at county and district level
- Manage joint surveys , e.g. quality of life surveys
- Support and develop data sharing
- Advise on development of indicators for community plans
- Develop library of statistical data for monitoring community plans
- Develop systems/mechanisms for maintaining indicators/statistics
- Identify co-ordinate primary research needs to support the range of work programmes at county and district level
- Develop and manage work programme of cross-cutting research
- Manage pooled research budget
- Commission external research as appropriate from either pooled budget or from joined up research capacity
- Monitor regional and national research developments and communicate these to members of the partnership

5 Possible Co-ordination Group

5.1 CILG is considering a number of ways in which a co-ordinating group could enable the 5 blocks to further their work programmes effectively. In discussing these options, members of CILG agree strongly that there is a need for consistency across the blocks in approaching the challenge of supporting the work programmes of the various themes. A co-ordinating group could provide this consistency.

6 Conclusions

6.1 From the above a number of general conclusions can be drawn: -

- There are significant benefits in trying to co-ordinate the considerable work programmes required to provide the various theme blocks of the framework with timely and meaningful information
- If research and monitoring is not co-ordinated across the countywide

framework opportunities will be lost to achieve economies of scale and to reduce duplication

- A lack of consistency in collecting data and presenting analysis is likely to lead to wasted effort
- Provision of a common data and research facility could add considerable value to the evidence base for all 5 blocks and therefore the partnership as a whole
- Effective links between a co-ordination group and the 5 blocks would be achieved through a dedicated resource attached to each theme block to co-ordinate the data and analysis needs of that block's work programme and also to support effective coordination across all blocks on data and research standards and mechanisms
- At present research capacity is distributed unevenly across agencies
- Whatever co-ordinating model is adopted there will be a need for clarity from all participating partners as to the roles (and priorities) of those staff with responsibility to support the framework
- The group will need to have effective working links with the Cheshire Practitioners' performance management group