

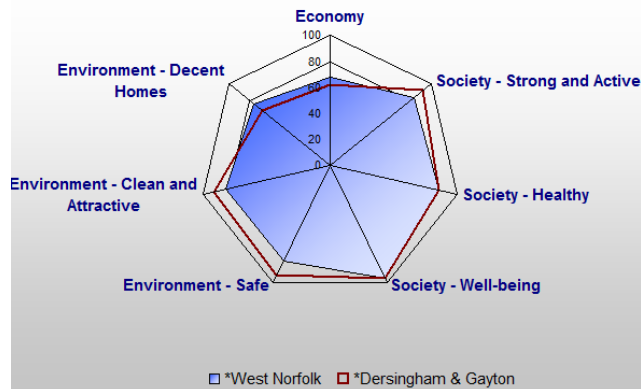
Case Study: Using Quality of Life data to shape and evaluate SSCF and LSP Sustainable Community Strategies

BACKGROUND

The increasing policy focus of local government on 'place shaping' has prompted a shift in the emphasis of consumer research from service processes to outcomes. In particular it has generated growing interest in measuring 'quality of life' (QoL) perceptions. Reflecting this development, the West Norfolk Partnership (WNP) commissioned M·E·L Research (working alongside the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Council) to carry out two replica cross-sectional QoL surveys, in 2007 and 2009.

The objectives of the research programme were to find out more about the quality of life in local neighbourhoods, the most important factors influencing these perceptions, and current trends.

The first baseline survey in 2007 was used by WNP to help shape strategic priorities for the partnership, while a sub-set of the data collected more intensively in five SSCF wards, focused particularly on issues of environment, safety and regeneration. The tracker survey undertaken in 2009 aimed to track changes and evaluate the impact of interventions on outcome QoL indicators.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

The methodology and sample design has remained consistent in both survey years to allow accurate comparisons in the data to be made over time. In 2007 and 2009 M·E·L undertook 2,850 face to face interviews with residents living across West Norfolk. A complex sample design ensured statistically significant results for each of the nine neighbourhoods and the five SSCF wards, with each separately reported unit having a minimum of 250 completed interviews. Taking the unique profile of West Norfolk into consideration, residents with '2nd home status' were eligible to take part in the survey provided they lived in the area for more than two months of the year, and migrant workers were included where they had already lived in the area for six months and were planning on staying for another year.

Results highlighted the substantial variations in results across the districts, and have conclusively confirmed the need to address QoL in a targeted way through neighbourhood action plans, rather than the prevalent district level planning regime. M·E·L developed a range of 'composite indices' (illustrated above) as a way of summarising the results of a number of key themes, all playing an important role in contributing to QoL.

CLIENT SERVICE AND SUPPORT

The project was led by M·E·L's Consumer Research Account Manager, Helen Clive. Helen said about the project "The results from the baseline survey were applied by the neighbourhood theme groups to develop local priorities – an innovation in LSP integrated service planning processes for West Norfolk, and the results from the 2009 are being used to test the extent to which these priorities have successfully addressed local QoL outcomes. The study has shown both the extent and the limitations of the LSP in affecting QoL, and helped set realistic expectations on delivery outcomes for the LSP. It has also shown the limited scope of the formal Place Survey in addressing these more complex issues, and has given indications of the more fruitful areas for in-depth research for authorities now undertaking 'between Place' Surveys"

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