

Population & Society Topic Group

11th October, 2010

Minutes



West Midlands
Regional
Observatory

www.wmro.org

1. Attendees

Richard Wilson (Chair) (RW)	West Midlands Quality Institute
Chris Allen (CA)	University of Birmingham
Rosie Day (RD)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Evette Jayatilake (EJ)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Gareth Jones (GJ)	WM Faiths Forum (WMFF)
Joanna Matthews (JM)	Regional Disability Network (RDN)
Oliver Nicholls (ON)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Stuart Onyeche (SO)	ONS
Linda Ridgley (LR)	
Susan Spencer (SS)	Age UK
Sharon Walton (SW)	West Midlands Public Health Observatory

Apologies

Dave Newall (DN)	West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership
Rosie Paskins (RP)	West Midlands Regional Observatory

Welcome and Introductions

A welcome and introduction was given to the group members

2. Approval of Minutes of the Last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes from the last meeting held on 21st May were discussed and approved.

Action

- *The State of the Region dialogue on Sustainable communities will not progress any further.*
- *The visualizing data event has been put on hold is not likely to go ahead due to funding restraints*

3. Topic Group news

- RW mentioned the ongoing debate around PCT's being replaced by GP Consortia

The SHA should be around until March 2012, however this is uncertain. This will be dependent on the results of white paper consultations ending 11.10.10

- RD updated on the work of the Observatory. RD mentioned that the Skills team has been doing some work on public sector cuts in the West Midlands. This will also be covered on the Politics Show in October.

Two reports have been published recently by the Economic Inclusion team:

1. Economic Inclusion Annual Report - The Economic Inclusion Annual Report 2010 provides an update to the [baseline report](#) (published March 2009), identifying how worklessness issues in the West Midlands have changed, and to what extent long-term issues identified in the baseline report remain.

To view the report, please click [here](#)

2. Worklessness in the West Midlands. To access this report, please click [here](#)
This report looks at isolating particular risk factors and how they affect a person's chance of being in work. E.g. ethnicity, age, skills levels etc

RD also mentioned that WMRO is carrying on updating the unemployment figures on the website on a monthly basis

- ON highlighted that the Skills Assessment will be done by the end December 2010.

State of the West Midlands will be published in the middle of November 2010

A follow up to the Fit for the future, based on a vision of a low carbon future for the West Midlands will be published week commencing 18th October. This will be [published online](#) where people can read and comment.

- GJ advised that he is very busy. He mentioned that the 2nd National Interfaith week which takes place from the 21st – 27th November. WM Faiths Forum (WMFF) is supporting local interfaith groups, local individual faith communities and local communities as a whole.

GJ mentioned that the future of WMFF is very uncertain. All nine regional faiths forums are funded by Communities and Local Government (CLG) until March 2011

GJ mentioned that Islamic awareness week takes place the start of November

- SW advised that WMPHO is waiting for the public health white paper to be published to find out what is happening with Public Health Observatories. There is some talk that they might be absorbed within the wider public health service.

SW mentioned that the 2010 regional health profiles have now been published. Regional Health Profiles show data used in the 2010 local authority and county health profiles at a regional level and present further information for each region

Some older peoples' profiles have been produced by the WMPHO. The interactive mapping tool has been produced by WMPHO using Instant Atlas and allows the user to view selected indicators relating to older people at local authority and regional level for the whole of England.

SW also mentioned that she is also currently working on 'practice profiles'.

- SO advised that he has been working on is a Child Poverty Tool which was published on the 30th September. This is an Interactive Data tool created in Excel which generates charts, tables and automatic text for a national number of indicators at Local Authority level relating to child poverty. It has been created as a means to supporting Local Authorities and producing a child poverty means assessment.

The ONS regional presence ceases March 2011, however SO advised that he has accepted a new in Newport ONS, working for public sector finances and will be leaving the WMRO on the 1st November.

- JM advised that her post ceases in May 2011, however the project continues until 2012.

JM advised that they are responding to the Department of Health consultation in terms of 2 aspects:

- i. Reminding people that disabled people are citizens along with everyone else. Some case studies have been collected and three of these will be published on the website, and individual disabled peoples' experiences of the health service, in terms of training of staff and accessibility, highlighting everyday experiences.
- ii. Treating long term chronic illnesses and looking at the social aspects

JM advised that they have got a new chair called Andrew Moulton from the Walsall disability forum.

- CA advised that he had a big project working with Muslim communities. However due to the change in Government, this project was cancelled in June

CA has been doing a national evaluation of entry into employment schemes for young people with no education, no employment or no training. This has been ongoing for about six months, with about 100 individuals being tracked through this scheme across nine different locations in the UK.

In terms of the West Midlands, Birmingham University is undertaking a project based on Exit Strategies for young black males, hoping to exit guns and gangs lifestyle which is a huge issue in Birmingham. The length of the pilot study is 2 years.

A project just started is Pathways out of worklessness for refugees in Birmingham – looking at how institutional partners work with grass roots and community based

organisations to feed information and advise individuals looking into moving on from worklessness.

- SS advised that Age UK is campaigning on short term protection and long term vision. Age UK is looking into 2 key areas: statutory obligations and how these will be preserved, and all third sector work that is happening.

Another area that is being looked is access to independent information and advice.

- ON advised that RP leaves the Observatory on the 21st October after taking early retirement. Stephen Howarth will be taking the position of acting Chief Executive after RP's departure.

Action

- *RW to give JM the contact details of Maverick TV regarding NHS Local who could give more coverage relating to the Department of Health consultation.*

4. The Future of the Observatory

ON updated the group on the future of the West Midlands Regional Observatory (WMRO). WMRO is legally a funded project of Advantage West Midlands, whereby funding is due to cease in March 2011.

- RP has been carrying a series of meetings between Local Authorities and partners trying to establish what work would want to be kept by LEP's. Key area's keen to retain are skills, economic inclusion, the annual state of the region report, Policy Assessment Model (PAM), and elements of the RDIN network.
- RP mentioned that two proposals were taken to the Observatory Board meeting on the 16/09/10. As a result of that, a preferred bidder has been selected, which may give some Observatory staff the opportunity to carry on.
- AWM will now put in place a process to take this forward, including a prospectus to be sent to other potential bidders. This will then be presented to the AWM Board at the end of October for decision.
- It was also mentioned that RP will be leaving WMRO on the 22nd October, taking early retirement with Stephen Howarth acting up as Chief Executive
- It was announced that WMRO staff are to move to AWM as from the 22nd October.
- Once funding ceases in March, WMRO will possibly become absorbed in AWM.

5. The future of the Network

RW and ON provided group members with a series of questions which can be seen below.

1. Do you see a future for the regional data & intelligence network?

2. If the Observatory didn't continue or continued in a reduced capacity, do any of you have an appetite to continue the network voluntarily?
3. Is there any capacity within your organization to maintain elements of the network? i.e host meetings, coordinate meeting agendas, minute meetings
4. How do we protect the evidence base of the West Midlands
5. How do you feel about the proposals to archive the regional resource catalogue?
6. Is it worthwhile us continuing working together to identify research gaps?
7. How could we act together to influence consultations on future government policy re evidence?

It was decided to defer this discussion until maybe December / January time following the outcome of the December Board meeting. However some of responses from the group can be seen below:

- I was felt that there was still a purpose for the group and hosting a meeting could be easily done – whether this be through a virtual social network (such as LinkedIn), or face to face. It is a good way of sharing discussions and making useful contacts
- It was seen as a good opportunity to re-energise the group following the spending review on the 20th October
- It was mentioned that it is vital to identify where we go with the network, what are the main areas to focus on, what does the group want to work towards and what is the identity of the group?
- It was felt that group needs to bring together public and private sectors together at senior level?

Action

- *RW and ON to have a meeting with other topic group chairs after the December Board meeting*
- *RW and ON to set up a topic group meeting for December / possibly the 2nd week in January*

Next meeting:

- Tuesday 8th February 2011, 10am-12pm (provisional)