

COHDMAP case study

In Practice: Southwark Neighbourhood Analytical Project (SNAP)

A partnership between Southwark Council, Southwark PCT and Mayhew Associates was established in 2006 to make better use of locally available administrative data to:

- Improve local knowledge
- Aid decision making, planning and policy analysis; and
- Support the provision of analysis and information required by central government.

A unique feature of Mayhew Associates' approach is the matching and geo-referencing of data at the household level. Systematic analyses are adopted to pinpoint key features of local areas in terms of services provided, crime, health, educational or other outcomes.

The first stage of the project was to acquire various datasets including: PLASC i.e. Pupil level Annual School Census, GP register, Council Tax, Local Property Gazetteer, Housing tenure, Electoral Roll and births and deaths.

The results are still coming through but so far the Southwark neighbourhood analytical project (SNAP) has provided a comprehensive demographic picture of the borough, which indicates that Southwark's population is higher than that estimated by the Office of National Statistics. This is an important finding not least because one of the factors that might account for the disparity is the way in which migration is estimated.

Southwark is now layering additional data on the basic population analysis to better understand its communities, particularly looking at children and young people.

In the medium term Southwark is building an enterprise data warehouse (EDW) which will be an integrated collection of historical data and associated applications across an entire organisation. This will enable Southwark to get a multiple view of the customer and will support an automated approach to understanding the composition of the community.

The administrative data discussed above provides a tangible evidence base. However, on its own it is not sufficient to satisfy the need to understand communities. Authorities need also to gather and use information on how communities perceive their areas and how relationships between communities are progressing. Typically this information would be gathered through an annual residents survey. However, in very diverse areas, there is an argument for undertaking 'cohesion' surveys more locally – say at estate level – to understand how people are feeling about their area in more detail.

In Southwark, 'cohesion' surveys are being piloted on two local authority housing estates. The aim is to interview as many residents on the estates as possible in order to develop a baseline and assess change over time. Residents are being asked questions relating to their sense of satisfaction with their community, life opportunities, respect for diversity, their sense of belonging and some demographic details. A "tension question, 'How much tension between different people from different ethnic groups would you say there is in this estate?' is included and results will inform locality plans.