

Delivering local services in partnership

For over 35 years, we have been working with local authorities to provide robust evidence to inform strategy, bring them closer to their customers and promote effective services.

Facing the future

Throughout Britain, the devolution of power to local councils, and through them to local people and communities, will create new challenges for local authorities. For example, the LGA's 2004 Manifesto said, *"... in future, local needs, aspirations and choice should drive improvement in local public services and outcomes rather than central, standardised directives and regulations. Local public services, empowered to respond to local choices hold the key to innovations and sustained improvements as well as greater trust and involvement in local governance."*



How we can help

We identify needs, advise on approach and delivery and track residents' satisfaction with services and their local community whilst helping to resolve conflicting priorities.

The information we give you helps you decide **strategic direction**, set priorities and respond to the needs of your communities.

Our customer satisfaction surveys, opinion polls, panels and mystery shopping exercises help you **deliver effective services**.

Information has no value unless it is used. So we advise on incorporating the results of research and consultation exercises in your **planning and management** processes.



Whether you require qualitative research to help you understand people's behaviour or opinions or quantitative research to enable you to make decisions based on robust representative data, our psychologists, statisticians and others work with you to ensure that the research answers your questions in a timely and cost-effective way. We use our extensive GIS capability to create thematic maps, eg highlighting 'hot spots' where public opinion of council services is particularly good or poor.

Getting close to all your customers

To tailor services to different users it is important to talk to all types of customers. We have particular experience of research among socially excluded and 'hard-to-reach' groups, on many subjects. We have conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with minority ethnic groups and hard to reach groups such as homeless people, drug users, asylum seekers, HIV positive people, and people with disabilities.

Strategy development

We research councils' strategies and consult on draft strategies. We reviewed the ward co-ordination structure for Manchester City Council proposing changes to the structure and the way it operates.

"The MVA report will undoubtedly have a big impact on the future development of Ward Co-ordination. As a team, we were impressed with your thoroughness, professionalism, accessibility and flexibility in accommodating our additional requirements. The team will definitely consider MVA for future work." Manchester City Council

We consulted the public about the council's budget in Trafford.

"May I say how impressed I am that you managed to undertake all of this work, and make it so clearly presented, in such a short space of time." Trafford MBC

Service planning and delivery

We can help you to improve service delivery. For example, we reviewed the delivery of community care services supporting sensory impaired adults in Scotland. We identified good practice and gaps in service provision and made recommendations for service developments.

In Surrey we examined alternative systems of allocating school places. We provided Surrey County Council with a good understanding of public views on the schools admissions system for use in developing policy in this area.

"I've been very pleased with the high standard of work and your commitment and flexibility. I will certainly recommend you for other projects."

Surrey County Council

We use advanced research design and analysis techniques to help you achieve your objectives, for example:

Our customer satisfaction measurement techniques go beyond the relatively simplistic ratings of satisfaction (very satisfied, satisfied etc) applied in many surveys. We enhance this by looking at the gap between people's expectations and perceptions of the service using techniques such as ServQual.

If a survey has taken place for several years there is a wealth of time-series data available. The comparative data also represents a rich source of information. Our statisticians can undertake advanced statistical analysis and rigorous trend analysis to give you the most value from your data.

Employee research

Effective communication between employers and employees can increase employee satisfaction and morale, reduce absenteeism, lower stress levels and enhance performance. We have conducted research with staff in many areas including monitoring changes in attitudes and satisfaction, internal communication, and employee development.

