



'Ask The Academics' Webinar – Q&A Transcript

Each of our two Hidden Needs 3 webinars comprised of a presentation from the academics behind the research, followed by a question and answer session where webinar participants could raise relevant questions with the academics. This is a transcript of the questions raised and the responses to them.

Q: Early on in the report there is a narrative around ethnicity and ageing population, but then the rest of the report doesn't reference deprivation affecting BAME groups, is this because of the way that the IMD collects and presents data at a spatial level, as opposed to say the census which has more detailed information on the composition of households?

A: It is indeed. The way the IMD data were created did not differentiate, at individual level, between households of different ethnic backgrounds. One can, however, explore in more detail how neighbourhoods with a larger proportion of BAME groups perform in terms of relative deprivation. There is the caveat that this cannot be extrapolated at individual level – the analysis and interpretation need to stay at geographical level.

Q: The report shows that relatively speaking Suffolk is becoming more deprived, do you think this is down to a worsening of deprivation amongst the most deprived parts of Suffolk or is it more because of a decline in the more prosperous areas?

A: I think it is both. Most deprived neighbourhoods tend to stay in the bottom categories in terms of relative deprivation, but that does not mean they do not change in absolute terms (for example, getting worse). We have also seen that relatively less deprived neighbourhoods are losing ground and becoming more deprived. For a deeper understanding one would need to take a closer look at those neighbourhoods.

Q: The report speaks of an increase in deprivation in rural areas, with housing quality and access to services cited as being drivers for this, what would cause this decline over the last few years and why is it becoming more of an issue now?

A: Rural areas will be subject to many of the same forms of deprivation affecting Suffolk generally (albeit, perhaps, in less concentrated forms) e.g. low pay.

In addition to these underlying factors, our research found that some forms of deprivation were more concentrated in rural areas:

- Accessibility: cuts to public sector funding may have led to the centralisation of some services. Since 2007 there have been many post office closures. Post offices in rural areas often included shops or petrol stations – and such closures often



represent the loss of an important resource for (often more vulnerable) people in rural areas

- Housing quality: older rural homes are harder/more expensive to heat than houses in urban areas. Suffolk's rural nature means that this is a big issue. The SCF's Surviving Winter campaign highlights the high demand there is for help with this issue.
- House prices: figures in our report suggest that the rate at which affordable housing is being built in Suffolk has been in decline since the last recession. In addition, house prices are increasing sometimes at a greater rate than wages, this leads to an increase in the ratio between house prices and income and in doing so makes them less affordable to some people.

Q: How do you think the current economic downturn may affect Suffolk in terms of deprivation and do you think that it will affect Suffolk more or less than other parts of the country this time around?

A: We have had one C19 recession and may face a second. The furlough schemes have been shielding the effects of recession and, when the scheme ends, there is likely to be a spike in unemployment and business closures

- A possible interpretation of the IMD is that the 2008/09 recession had a bigger impact on Suffolk than on England generally. We do not know if this is the case this time but we need to be prepared.
- Our best guess is that the C19 recession could have 3 effects:
 - Reduced public spending, with possible undermining of community, health and social services in Suffolk – and possibly other statutory services
 - Unemployment and (because of fewer jobs) a further suppression of wages in Suffolk. Employment levels after the 2008/09 recession fell significantly and took until 2014 to return to pre-recession levels
 - Young people always get hit hardest by recessions. While overall unemployment in Suffolk is lower than the national average, youth unemployment in Suffolk is the same as the national average. There have been predictions that, nationally, youth unemployment could triple as a result of the C19 recession and reach the level of 1980s unemployment.

Q: What is the evidence/level of social isolation and loneliness in the report and how is it being measured?

A: The IMD does not measure social isolation. Perhaps it should do, because it is recognised that loneliness has a demonstrable impact on health and wellbeing. The Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System focusses on loneliness as one of its key targets.

- We can see, from other sources, that it is an issue in Suffolk. In June this year, AgeUK found that at least 10%/17,000 older people in Suffolk experience loneliness. Loneliness affects younger people too.



- Next year's census may provide opportunities for estimated local level rates of loneliness in Suffolk to be identified.

Q: How can the number of people who are experiencing invisible vulnerability be quantified? (i.e. if they are off everyone's radar, how can these people be accounted for)?

A: The question somehow provides the answer: if they are invisible, if they are off the radar, they will not appear in measurements that try to quantify deprivation. An important task of a project like this is to do exactly that, acknowledge that there are 'hidden needs', try to bring them to light, and try to better understand them in the future.

Q: So we can take it that areas that suffer the worst deprivation will increase further post Covid-19?

A: If the trend we have seen in the long-term view, and especially the one concerning the last big recession, this is a distinct possibility. We have seen that, first, areas that are very deprived tend to stay deprived, and second, it is difficult (for Suffolk, in particular) to recover after a recession.

Q: Do you feel some of your research/findings could significantly change due to Covid-19

A: Yes – for the economic/recession-related issues discussed above.

Q: Does there need to be some open SCF or UoS seminar to explore specifically the Theory of Change framework & what needs to happen, who, how...?

A: SCF are actively considering how best to explore the findings from HN3 and work collaboratively with partners to address them. A detailed understanding of the findings and the drivers behind them is essential to ensure an informed starting position is taken prior to any future activity.

Q: This is a story of Suffolk being in a slow lane and losing ground. The incoming money from retirees is disguising a more endemic problem. What is the response of policy makers to this failure and are they open to any kind of discussion?

A: As a predominantly rural county, it's economic characteristics are different from those of the national average. We very much hope that everyone in Suffolk will play their part in addressing the needs that have been identified.

Q: Is there any evaluation of pupils with an Education Health Care Plan and the areas of deprivation?

A: Not directly in this report, for the reason that the measurements we used do not incorporate, distinctly, pupils with an EHCP.



Q: Has correlation between specific actions in an area and change in figures been looked at?

A: Not in this report, which was meant to provide a more descriptive analysis of the trends of deprivation in Suffolk, but it is something that could definitely be done.

Q: Accessibility to services is rapidly being adversely impacted by lack of access to the technology to access services that are increasingly only online. This is due to either poor internet or income deprivation bringing lack of access, this can be rural and urban. So will this get worse?

A: “Technology deprivation” is not an indicator that was used in determining the IMDs, and I wish it was, or hope it will be in the future. This is a very important point. Deprivation is bound to be compounded by access to good technology, including broadband and 3/4/5G networks. And indeed, can be compounded further due to income deprivation, although my view is that this would be less of a factor.

Webinar 2:

Q: I was unable to find any evaluation or reasons in the report to explain why those from BAME groups continue to not do as well in education year after year. Although it was reported there was no explanation, that I could see.

A. Hidden Needs 3 research is an analysis of the forms and distribution of deprivation rather than detailed explanations of causal factors of deprivation. Understanding causal mechanisms require a different approach than the more descriptive one we used. However, there is likely a great deal of academic research into educational attainment levels and why they differ across a variety of demographic factors.

Q: Does Suffolk Coastal being joined up with Waveney mask the level of deprivation in places like Lowestoft.

A: Waveney (as was) includes some of England’s most deprived neighbourhoods. Suffolk Coastal (as was) includes a mix of neighbourhoods – including some pockets of affluence and, where there is greater deprivation, it is not as severe as in Waveney. Arguably, East Suffolk masks the severity of deprivation in parts of Lowestoft. (Equally, Lowestoft means deprivation in East Suffolk overall looks worse than it is?). The creation of East Suffolk does mean that some statistics that used to be available for Lowestoft/Waveney are no longer available and where this is the case it’s harder to get as much detail about what’s happening in Lowestoft.



Q: How much does the youth unemployment rate benefit or improve as a result of education +16 becoming compulsory?

A: Hard to say, especially based on the data analysed in the Hidden Needs report. This will require a more targeted analysis of available data.

Q: On the basis of the experience of 2010-2015 (Overarching Dynamics 2) could we see a repeat if we go into recession in 2021?

A: We do not know the extent to which the sharp increase in relative deprivation between the 2010 and 2015 IMD's was caused by the 2008/09 recession, but it does alert us to the possibility that the Covid recessions could have a disproportionate impact on Suffolk. We will not get a clearer understanding of the effect of Covid/recession on employment rates/pay in Suffolk until the furlough scheme is lifted in March. And much will depend on the central government strategy in responding to the recession: austerity and public sector cuts are likely to result in increasing deprivation and hardship in communities.

Q: When do you expect Suffolk to hit its worst point in terms of deprivation? Do you expect the fallout from brexit to significantly worsen the problem in the coming years?

A: We will not get a clearer understanding of the actual effect of Covid/recession until the furlough scheme is lifted in March. We also need to be aware that recessions have a long tail: employment rates following the 2008/2009 recession took until 2013/14 to return to pre-recession levels.

Q: From a research perspective were there any surprises in the report? Do you get a sense that this report will influence local authority investment decisions, as the original Hidden Needs Report, encountered a little resistance!

A: The second question is probably more for Suffolk Community Foundation. In terms of surprises, maybe the trends in health and crime.

Q: I'm a little surprised that Sudbury has not been highlighted as a particular area of deprivation, especially since 50% of babies in this area are born into poverty, our food bank is running at capacity, etc.

A: This is rather due to the granularity level of the overall report – it did not focus on specific areas but presented the overall picture. However, IMD data is available at LSOA level, and one can easily zoom in on specific neighbourhoods, both on the overall IMD measure, and its indicators, including income deprivation affecting children.



Q: Are there any indications that will help us understand what the compounded impact of Brexit and Covid will be on deprivation particularly in the area of increasing employment poverty (18 -24)

A: Unemployment and a cooling off of the jobs market could have an impact on continuing/deepening relative low pay in Suffolk. Youth unemployment is a concern. Suffolk has a similar rate of youth unemployment to the rest of England. Recessions typically hit young people hardest. Nationally, there have been forecasts that youth unemployment could triple as a result of the Covid recession, possibly to similar rates experienced in the 1980s.

Q: Do you think Covid and the economic downturn will produce similar results in terms of deprivation that were recorded after the great recession?

A: see above

Q: I now have a whole load of additional information that I am curious about to understand drivers: e.g. how does Suffolk compare to other areas on the available number of well-paid job opportunities? Are there fewer well-paid jobs available or are people commuting into Suffolk to fill them because there is a lower skills base?

A: The conclusion of the report – and the value of the Theory of Change – are meant to help us to work through such questions, e.g. by drawing together the New Anglia LEP strategy together with other strategies and initiatives with a focus on tackling deprivation.

Q: Does the IMD Barriers to services look at public transport links?

A: The IMD measure, in its “Barriers to services” domain, only looks at average distances to a number of services, such as GP, store, or post office – it does not look at public transport. However, due to the granularity of the data available, which allows us to determine which specific neighbourhoods are more affected by this, one can create a pretty good picture by overlapping information about existing public transportation infrastructure in the area.