

Case Study

Using LG Inform Plus for ward level health and wellbeing reports

The LG Inform Plus report writer is designed to save officer time and council resources by providing easy access to, and reporting tools for, small area data.

LG Inform Plus provided the architecture around which reports were created to support the Local Government Association (LGA) health and wellbeing peer challenge. These were first used by the LGA peer challenge team to inform the focus of the peer challenge and later made available to all local authorities, allowing them a clear and straightforward way to view and compare health inequalities across wards in their area.

The report was designed to provide easy identification of areas with particular challenges around health and wellbeing. It allowed repeat patterns of specific issues of concern (such as deprivation, low life expectancy and high levels of obesity) to be easily identified using charts and maps, giving a useful overview of clusters and groupings across wards.

The challenge

Philippa, a senior data analyst at the LGA, was tasked with producing a ward based report to inform the focus of the health and wellbeing peer challenge for North East Lincolnshire, comparing wards side by side across a range of measures relating to health and wellbeing outcomes and determinants.

The health and wellbeing peer challenge requires analysis to provide an overview across all wards within the area, across a number of different measures of health and wellbeing. Before LG Inform Plus was developed Philippa exported data for a range of measures from Public Health England's Local Health Profiles. She then created a number of Excel charts in order to review the variation across the wards in the area, applying local authority, regional and national data for comparison. Maps were created and exported using the Local Health Profiles tool, and inserted along with selected Excel charts into a narrative based on the analysis of the data.

This was all presented in a Word document report produced for the peer challenge team. Manually extracting the data, creating charts and maps, and producing an overview report for each health and wellbeing peer challenge was time consuming and repetitive.

Streamlining the process

The Local Health Profiles site allows users to explore ward level data through maps and summary profiles. But the approach requires selection of specific indicators and areas, or selection of a single ward of focus. Working with Public Health England Philippa was able to add the small area data to LG Inform Plus and produce a complementary report that enables a quick ward level overview for the authority as a whole, looking at different topics in turn and including ward level maps and charts for the local authority, with built in comparisons at regional and national level to provide the context.

Using the 'text token' functionality allowed a summary narrative to be developed, highlighting for example areas of most concern.

Whilst the first report took some time to prepare, for subsequent challenges Philippa simply changed the area, enabling her to create a report in seconds. The automation provided through LG Inform significantly reduced the amount of time spent preparing the basic information. This allowed for more focus on the interpretation and review of the findings. The ability to look at any council area with ease also supports easy comparison between areas.

The reduction of steps involved in producing the report and its re-usable and interactive nature provide key benefits to councils wishing to create a similar report.

Text tokens

The 'text token' function allows users to automatically draw out system generated words and values based on logical criteria. For the North East Lincolnshire report these included areas which had the best and worst health outcomes on a specific measure and also highlighted where health outcomes within the area were consistently better or worse than the national and/or regional picture.

The text token feature can also pull out the overall values for the local authority area as a whole, the region or the national figure, bringing data into the text in a way that is interactive and reusable for other areas. Philippa explains:

"I think a lot of the time you give people reports where there are loads and loads of charts with little explanation, so the ability to write some narrative but also provide some interactive data in there was really useful".

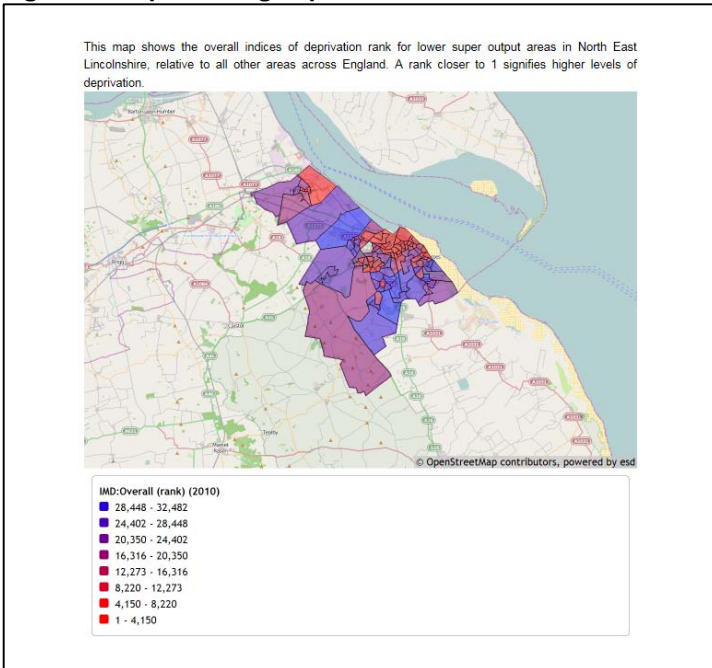
Charts versus maps!

The LG Inform Plus report builder provides the opportunity to use a range of charts and maps to display data. In this instance the use of a map view allowed easy identification of geographic clusters of particularly poor or of better health. The option of this mixture of tools is useful as some data is easier to view on a map, whilst other data display more effectively on a chart. For some indicators a combination of the two proved useful – the maps highlight where issues are clustered around neighbouring areas, whilst a chart provides a clear view of the scale of the differences within an area.

When producing a report if users are not well versed with the area involved, using maps allows them to quickly familiarise themselves with regional characteristics, for example looking at the areas of highest population/population density, identifying the levels of employment, and also highlighting geographic features such as boundaries and coastlines:

"For North East Lincolnshire I was able to identify that the biggest inequalities were focused on the more densely populated coastal area around the middle of the authority. Looking at further charts and maps also highlighted a further area separate from the first cluster that also had issues of concern that were worth further investigation".

Figure 1: Map showing deprivation levels



Reuse

After setting up the report the first time, the fact that it can be re-used to quickly create new reports is a great benefit.

The ability to write automated narrative and also provide interactive data which can be adjusted for future reports also makes the tool extremely flexible:

“Having set up this report once, by saving a further copy and editing I was able to use it as the basis for other reports. This provided incredible time savings”.

Savings

The report writer saved Philippa time and allowed her to create high quality and consistent reports, as the data in LG Inform Plus is reliable and comparable. The reusable template can be saved and edited to create new reports. The tool allows for either short summary reports, ad-hoc maps and charts or longer more detailed reports to be created.

“I found it useful, reliable and an easy to use tool and it saves a lot of timeaside from doing the polished long detailed report I think there is value in just being able to pull out data into a table and there is value in being able to investigate something on an indicator by indicator basis so even if you are not going to write long reports it is a quick and easy view to get data at that level”.

Philippa thinks the subscription to LG Inform Plus provides value for money as the tool is well supported and easily accessible. The report function can be adapted for all authority types, to enable larger county councils to view measures at district level as well as at county level while for unitary authorities with several wards, charts can be tailored so that they only highlight those wards with the best or worst health outcomes.

Ease of use and support

The report writer is designed to be straightforward to use.

“It was pretty intuitive and did what it was meant to do, when it was meant to! ...it was very easy to move things around, very easy to move charts, very easy to look into the charts”.

Where Philippa had queries, the LG Inform Plus team provided a prompt, comprehensive and customer focussed service.

“They respond quickly and do answer your question (which some support services don't!) and give you the level of detail that you need as well. They don't just give a standard response but dig in to what the real issue is and try to work on that”.

Information sharing

The original report was put together to support the health and wellbeing peer challenge, a programme of work undertaken through the LGA for the Health and Wellbeing System Improvement Programme. Having access to LG Inform Plus makes the data analysis element of the programme much more efficient and robust. The report produced for North East Lincolnshire peer challenge using LG Inform Plus was of a high quality, easy to read and did not need any manual editing. Having set up the report once it has been reused numerous times to support peer challenge for other areas, and provided the starting point for a publicly accessible ward level report produced to support health and wellbeing boards.

To view the health and well-being report: http://www.local.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing-boards/-/journal_content/56/10180/6111055/ARTICLE

Here is a link to health and wellbeing report as was initially designed for the North East Lincolnshire project. Use it to select your area of interest: <http://reports.esd.org.uk/reports/516?>

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