



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

LARIA Newsletter September 2024

LARIA Updates

This month in Scotland saw the publication of the new Programme for Government (PfG) setting the legislative priorities of the Scottish Government for the year ahead. This was the first for the new First Minister, John Swinney, and came the day after the announcement of emergency spending cuts by the Scottish Government.

These announcements coincided with publication of a [report](#) by the newly established Scottish Health Equity Research Unit (SHERU) that warned that for many areas of Scottish Government policy “the data is either unavailable or unreliable enough to measure impacts” and that “the Scottish Government is not investing the necessary skills and resources to fully assess the effectiveness and value for money of public spending—a concern that becomes even more pressing in times of budgetary pressure.” Clearly, spending cuts and policy developments, such as those in the PfG, should be underpinned by evidence, but according to SHERU this is an area where we could be doing a lot more.

So, what does this mean for local government and those working in local areas? While the Programme for Government sets out the ambitions of the Scottish Government, local government will be a key partner in delivering its aims. As the First Minister says, “they are on the frontline of realising many of the actions that will contribute to the successful achievement of our priorities.” Given this delivery role, it is equally as important for local government and partners to have the right skills in place to assess impact and direct resources where this is greatest. This is especially true as budgets continue to tighten. As we all know, financial pressures

are especially acute for local government, both in Scotland and across the UK, making it difficult to invest in these skills locally. In this climate LARIA has such an important role to play in sharing best practice and developing skills, but also ensuring that the profile and importance of evidence use and our role as researchers and analysts is raised.

I already mentioned that local government is a key delivery partner in the Programme for Government, but what are the priorities, how does this relate to local government, and what are we already doing?

- The first and top priority within the PfG is tackling child poverty. Scottish local authorities and their partners already play a crucial role through delivery of services, and develop [Local Child Poverty Action Reports](#). Within the Improvement Service (IS) we are currently exploring work with ONS Local to allow us to develop comparative groups of local authorities UK-wide and learn from good practice outside Scotland.
- Second is growing the economy. Again, local government is essential in delivering this outcome through economic development activities, as well as City and Region deals for example. Within the IS it has been announced we will host a new [Planning Improvement Hub](#) and we work to support [Community Wealth Building](#) approaches as practiced in several areas.
- Tackling the Climate Emergency is the third priority. Local authorities are taking steps to reduce organisational and area-wide climate impacts, with ambitious goals for achieving net zero. To support this, the IS has newly launched the [Scottish Climate Intelligence Service](#) (SCIS) together with the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute. The SCIS will help local authorities to deliver climate action through access to a shared data platform and capacity development.
- Lastly, is ensuring high quality and sustainable public services. This includes improving school attainment and attendance, improving population health, and prioritising preventative approaches. The IS is working with local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships across these areas and will continue to support these developments.

It remains to be seen how local government and partners are empowered to continue to deliver in these areas. A lot of work is underway, but it will be important to assess how this is having an impact. Developing research and analytical capacity, and of course engaging with LARIA, to make better use of evidence

locally and to understand this impact is more important now than ever.

Nick Cassidy – Research Manager Improvement Service

LARIA One Day Conference
Tuesday 26 November 2024
Local Government Association



Registration is now open for the One Day Conference: We are not alone: artificial intelligence and data science – friend or foe?

In Partnership with



Conference Supported by



[Download Full Programme](#)

For further information and to book your place, visit our [website](#). Please note, limited places are available.

LARIA Research Impact Awards 2024

We are delighted to announce that the competition for this year's LARIA Research Impact Awards is now open. With multiple challenges in society, evidence-based decision-making remains a crucial way of councils focussing limited resources or testing innovative activity, and these awards aim to showcase the impact research and data analysis can make at a local level. We welcome entries for one of five categories.

As in recent years, we have an **award targeted at district councils**, who may have less research resource than others. We're really keen to hear about districts' interesting projects, even if they are less ambitious than some of our award-winners in the past.

This year's categories are:

A: Best use of local area research – sponsored by the [Local Government Association](#) (LGA)

- B: Best use of data** – sponsored by [CACI](#)
- C: Best use of data or research in a district council**
- D: Most engaging communication of local area research or analysis**
- E: New researcher/analyst of the year**

More details of what we're looking for can be found on our [website](#).

The deadline for entries is by **5pm Monday 7 October 2024**, and winners will be announced at the LARIA event at the Local Government Association in London on 26 November 2023.

We look forward to hearing from you, and good luck.

News

In today's rapidly evolving consumer landscape, AI and data science are revolutionising the public sector's approach to data analysis, task automation, and decision-making. While

AI's rise has sparked a range of reactions, it has also raised important questions about its integration, risk management, and the potential for being a catalyst for many challenges the sector is facing.



In our recent webinar for the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA), CACI's Director of Data, Sue MacLure, and Ed Sewell, Data Strategy Partner, shared CACI's journey of implementing and leveraging AI techniques within our segmentation tools. They discussed how these techniques enhance data interpretation and application, addressed ethical and legislative challenges, and shared how organisations using CACI's AI-driven tools have improved consumer and residential experiences. You can watch the webinar [here](#).

Interested in diving deeper into AI tools, technology, and data science techniques to advance your data-driven community strategy? [Register here](#) to access the videos from our recent Data Summit Conference, where we demonstrated how our datasets and AI innovations can empower your organisation.

Courses, Training Events and Webinars

Data Maturity Assessments in Local Government webinar - 7 November 2024

ONS Local, in partnership with the Local Government Association, are pleased to invite you to the [Data Maturity Assessments in Local Government](#)

webinar. This webinar will feature the LGA and Surrey County Council as they share the value of data maturity assessments and how the results are used to drive change. This event is open to all, in particular anyone working at a local level on the strategic use of data.



UK Data Service introductory training series: Autumn 2024



We provide access to a wide range of social science data for reuse. To help you get the most from these resources, we run a free introductory training series every spring and autumn to introduce different aspects of the UK Data Service.

Our training series workshops in autumn 2024 are listed below and you can also browse our [training and events](#) pages for a full list of what is available.

- [Data in the spotlight: Large scale social surveys](#), Tuesday 24 September, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Introduction to effective and practical research data management](#), Monday 30 September, 10.00 – 11.30
- [How to become a computational social scientist](#), Tuesday 1 October, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Dissertation projects: Introduction to secondary analysis for qualitative and quantitative data](#), Tuesday 8 October, 10.00 – 11.30

- [Ethical and legal guidelines in data sharing](#), Thursday 10 October, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Getting started with secondary analysis](#), Tuesday 15 October, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Role of Informed Consent in Ethical Data Collection, Sharing and Reuse](#), Thursday 24 October, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Introduction to copyright: Copyright and publishing](#), Tuesday 29 October, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Introduction to copyright: Copyright and secondary data use](#), Tuesday 5 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Introduction to the UK Data Service](#), Thursday 7 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Introduction to anonymisation techniques for social sciences research data](#), Tuesday 19 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Finding and accessing data from the UK Data Service](#), Wednesday 20 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Best practices for documenting social sciences research data](#), Tuesday 26 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Data in the spotlight: International time series databanks](#), Thursday 28 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Data in the spotlight: Longitudinal data](#), Thursday 5 December, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Data in the spotlight: Census and population studies](#), Tuesday 10 December, 10.00 – 11.30
- [Data in the spotlight: Qualitative and mixed methods data](#), Tuesday 12 December, 10.00 – 11.30

Recordings of UK Data Service events are made available on [our YouTube channel](#) and, together with the slides, on [our past events pages](#) soon after the event has taken place.

Jobs

**Vacancy for Public Management
Teaching Fellow (University of
Birmingham)**



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

The Department of Public Administration and Policy (DPAP) at the University of Birmingham, which incorporates the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV), is recruiting a new Teaching Fellow to teach and support a mix of international postgraduates and UK public sector professionals, helping to develop the next generation of senior public sector managers and leaders. The successful candidate will have a higher degree in a relevant area (or equivalent qualifications), high level analytical capability, and the ability to design and deliver module teaching materials successfully. Starting salary is £35-44.3k, and the post is initially for one year. Application deadline is 30th September. [Further details here.](#)

To submit a job advert to appear in the newsletter or on the LARIA website, please download and complete this [form](#) (Full Corporate and Corporate Members only). You can also post Job Vacancies on the Jobs Board in the LARIA [Members' Area](#).

The next newsletter submission deadline is [Thursday 24th October](#).

Are you a Corporate or Full Corporate Member?



Your LARIA Corporate Membership entitles you to submit content to the monthly LARIA newsletter, if you have any research, events, job adverts, resources or news which you would us to include please send it to admin@laria.org.uk.

The next newsletter submission deadline is [Thursday 24th October](#).

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