



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

LARIA Newsletter January 2025

LARIA Updates

Happy New Year to LARIA!

For many of you January is a busy month getting ready for the next budget and business planning cycle. In Bury we held our budget consultation with residents in December and are now busy reviewing all the feedback and finalised budget papers for February Cabinet and Council Meetings. Lots of the feedback was similar to previous years and the challenges of doing more with less remain as acute as ever but there were also lots of question about what a new government may mean for the future of public services.



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

In setting budgets and writing business plans, as well as listening to the priorities of our residents, we have been refreshing our corporate performance data and reflecting on a year of change since we last went through this process. As part of the changes brought in by the new government, the Office for Local Government has been closed. There had been some anticipation that OfLOG would reintroduce performance tables and standard indicators for local authorities but for now that seems unlikely. Instead the feedback from the Local Government Minister, Jim McMahon has been that government 'will be working with the sector to establish other ways to ensure that local authorities are fit, legal and decent.'

For local authorities this has meant that we continue to work with our peers to share benchmarking data and best practice. LG Inform continues to be a great source of sector based data, not just for local authorities but for any organisations looking to undertake place based research. As outlined on their website, LG Inform provides access to over 1,800 items of relevant contextual and performance data and can be accessed here -

Hopefully those of you who attended LARIA Conference last year also picked up on loads of good ideas and new data sources to support your work in 2025/26. It is great to see our regional networks taking forward local networking opportunities to build on this and we are also looking at more online events to bridge the gap until our next Conference. We would welcome your ideas and suggestions for how we can keep in touch more frequently.

So, all the best for 2025/26. I hope that you have got some exciting projects and work programmes to be involved with. It feels like another year where there will be a lot of focus on technology and what it can do for us and there are undoubtedly many benefits to be had from increased access to data and insight – artificially generated or otherwise. As ever our role as research professionals is to advise on the appropriate use of such data and continue to uphold standards of good practice. We look forward to hearing about your work throughout the year and seeing it written up as part of the next round of Awards!

Kate Waterhouse, Chair of LARIA

LARIA Regional Representatives Update

We are delighted to announce that we have three new LARIA regional representatives for the following local groups:

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Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

- LARIA Wales – [Hayley Randall](#)
- LARIA North West – [Will Phillips](#)
- LARIA Northern Ireland – [Gareth Downey](#)

A bio of our new and existing LARIA regional representatives will be included in recent and upcoming LARIA newsletters so our members can get to know them and what they have to offer a bit better. We do hope that LARIA members will look to get involved with local LARIA activities and if there are any questions or particular events you would like to see please don't hesitate to get in touch with your local representative:

- LARIA Scotland - [Erin Murray](#) and [Nick Cassidy](#)
- LARIA Yorkshire and the Humber – [Andy Morton](#)
- LARIA West Midlands – [Jason Lowther](#)
- LARIA East of England – [Richard Potter](#)
- LARIA London - [James Rapkin](#), [Gayle Gander](#) and [Timothy Harper](#)

We are still on the lookout for representatives in the following areas:

- LARIA North East
- LARIA South East
- LARIA East Midlands
- LARIA South West

LARIA representatives can be either an individual or a small group working together. If you think you may be interested in becoming involved with a LARIA regional group or have any questions please get in touch with [Gerallt Evans-Hughes](#), MD Global 1-Digital Insight and Chair of LARIA CPD Events Group, LARIA Council Member and LARIA Trustee.

Introducing LARIA Regional Representatives

[LARIA in the North West:](#)

Will Phillips

Email: william.phillips@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

[Will Phillips | LinkedIn](#)



Hello! My name is Will and I am a Lead Analyst in the research team at Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). My work covers the broad thematic areas of education, work and skills, with a focus on the labour market, technical education, post-16 learning, and earnings. I am interested in how these areas relate to social mobility, inequality and deprivation, and work closely with colleagues from across GMCA's research team to produce research and analysis for strategy and policy directorates at the combined authority.

I am a mixed-methods researcher experienced with both quantitative and qualitative methods. My background is largely in education; prior to my current role at GMCA I worked as an analyst in another part of the research team, supporting Greater

Manchester's school readiness (Early Years) programme. Before joining GMCA, I worked at an education and social research consultancy where I delivered a range of projects including Childcare Sufficiency Assessments.

I currently live in Manchester and have done since starting university (where I studied for a BA in Politics and Modern History and MA in Politics); I am originally from north Leicestershire in the East Midlands. Outside of work, I am a keen footballer, playing for a Saturday team based in Stockport (no, not County). I'm also an avid gig-goer: everything from indie rock and synth-pop, to electronic dance and hip-hop.

How Kirklees Council enhanced its digital service efficiency with the help of demographic insights



Kirklees Council, the third largest authority in West Yorkshire, faced high call volumes related to council tax enquiries, adding significant strain to their call centre resource. To address this, the Council used CACI's Acorn segmentation tool to gain a deeper understanding of the demographics of the residents contacting them about council tax issues to help shape the solution.

With Acorn the Council identified the key demographic groups contacting the call centre, such as Cash-Strapped Families and Urban Diversity, would benefit from improved self-service options.

As a result, the Council redesigned its website and implemented chatbots and a Council Tax Balance Checker to provide an easier digital experience for residents and subsequently help ease the demand on the call centre.

[Read the case study](#) to discover how Acorn helped guide this decision-making, and the benefits the Council is receiving from the roll-out of these initiatives.

[Try Acorn today](#) to discover how your organisation can benefit from these valuable insights.

News

The value of sharing. A few years ago a group of Local Authorities started meeting to talk about what they do, would like to do, and to see how other Local Authorities carry out their work. We're all in different areas and different Councils. The topics might be the same or they might be different but needing similar approaches. But it always helps to check in and chat.

We last met on 10th December and talked about:

- Possible changes to the funding of Local Authorities by central government
- Can you identify financial risk for your council?
- Migration trends over last 10 – 20 years, age groups and where they have come from
- The published life expectancy data - report to Council with comparison with other areas
- How to do population projections if you haven't done them before
- Work on veterans in the Local Authority

[Richard Potter, Analytics Cambridge](#)

'First homes' built on UPRNs



GeoPlace's new case study 'First homes built on UPRNs' highlights how Homes England's 'First Homes' scheme leverages UPRNs to assist individuals in purchasing their first homes. The initiative offers properties at discounted rates, and to manage these effectively, local authorities utilise Digital Property Logbooks underpinned by UPRNs. These logbooks facilitate the monitoring of property status and ownership changes, ensuring that only verified owners can access them. The case study focuses on their use in Bristol City Council, as well as the wider home buying and selling market, with UPRNs providing the key identifier that's needed at the heart of data exchange.

[Read more here.](#)

Call for Presentations - SRA Conference 2025: Embracing change, driving discovery

Our Call for presentations for the Social Research Association's 2025 annual conference is now open and we're inviting submissions for this in person event on Wednesday 9 July at the Royal College of Physicians in London.

At last year's conference we welcomed attendees from national and local government, other public bodies, research agencies and institutes, academia, the voluntary and independent sectors, and more!

Do you have something to share? We are delighted to offer opportunities to present to this audience, in a 'Research in Practice' session. Send us your abstract for a 20-minute presentation to help researchers learn from your practical experiences: the research problems you faced, what you learned, what worked and what didn't, and why. Some theme suggestions to get you started:

- AI and social research
- Innovation in design
- Research impact and influence
- Insight and behavioural science
- Mixed methods
- Where are we now? Equity, diversity and inclusion
- Rapid response research
- Partnerships that deliver impact
- 'Bring your own topic'

The deadline for submissions is Friday 14 February at 5pm. The SRA Events Group will review entries and aim to let you know the outcome in March.

Each presentation will have 30 minutes (plus 10 mins Q&A). Presentations will be paired and run in parallel workshop sessions. One presenter per submission will pay a reduced delegate rate of £65.

We hope you will consider making a submission for the conference. And of course, please feel free to share this call with your colleagues and networks.

Submit your abstract on the template Word doc, [downloadable from the SRA website here](#).

Courses, Training Events and Webinars

Webinar: How to improve adult social-care for seldom heard groups

NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research

How can research improve social care services for seldom-heard groups?

Find out in our webinar featuring findings from 3 NIHR studies on:

- 🛡️ Safeguarding & homelessness
- 👤 End-of-life care for learning disabilities
- 🏠 Dementia support in homecare

Presentations will be followed by a Q&A session, giving you a unique chance to quiz the speakers on how this research could be implemented at your organisation.

[Secure your spot here](#)

Becoming an Insight-Led Organisation: Derby City Council's Data Journey



Join us on Monday, 3 February 2025, from 11:00 to 12:00 for our online event. Hear from Jane Godfrey (Head of Policy and Insight, Derby City Council), along with Mark Lockton and Dave Sheppard (Embracent), as they share Derby City Council's journey toward unifying data and creating a joined-up view of residents.

The webinar will delve into the steps taken to tackle data silos, including the development of a strategic automated solution to integrate data from six application sources. Learn about the project's successes, challenges, and next steps, and take advantage of a live Q&A with the speakers.

This session is ideal for data and intelligence officers, council analysts, and service leads interested in leveraging data to enhance services and improve efficiency. [Register here](#).

Natural Language Processing within Councils

Join us on 13 February 2025, 13:00-14:30, for our Advanced & Predictive Analytics webinar exploring the potential of Natural Language Processing (NLP) in local councils. This session

will feature examples from Lewis Edwards (ONS), who will provide an accessible introduction to NLP and its real-world applications, Samantha Starling (Wiltshire County Council), who will share their journey using NLP to analyse community feedback, and Debbie Archer (Kirklees MBC), who will demonstrate how NLP enhances Freedom of Information processes.

Designed for Heads of Analytics and Lead Data Scientists, this webinar offers practical knowledge, case studies, and a Q&A with our speakers. [Register here.](#)



ASSESS: SPSS (SPSS IBM STATISTICS) USERS GROUP

FRIDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2025

ONE-DAY SPSS WORKSHOP TO BE LED BY CHARLES DENNIS:

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS WITH IBM SPSS AMOS

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

ASSESS is an independent user group for SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics), a computer package for analysing and presenting data. It is run by users, for users and is completely independent of manufacturers of the software.

Since 1996 ASSESS have given a wide series of one and half-day workshops at venues around the country on many areas including SPSS syntax, SPSS macros, Survival analysis in SPSS and Analysis of categorical data in SPSS.

An in-person one day workshop is provisionally planned to be held at the MRC Cognition & Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge, on Friday 17th October 2025.

Workshop topics and other details are at <https://assess-spss.co.uk/amos-course>.

The aim of this course is to give delegates with little or no computational experience the confidence and skills to be able to use SPSS AMOS from scratch. This workshop introduces basic concepts (e.g. paths, variable types) and structures (e.g. factor correlations) together with aspects such as model specification and fit diagnostic interpretation, used in fitting factor analysis models using SPSS AMOS. The course will

enable you to use AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis and mediation analyses to address research questions of interest. You will learn how to interpret the output, and how to modify models when appropriate.

This is an opportunity to acquire life skills from someone who is an experienced teacher in the practical use of computer software and statistics. Throughout the day, there will be tutored hands-on sessions and class exercises to explore the points being made. Delegates should bring their own laptops for use on the day with SPSS and AMOS loaded on to participate in the course.

The course tutor, Charles Dennis, is Professor of Consumer Behaviour at The Business School, University of Newcastle (UK) and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the International Journal of Consumer Studies. His main teaching and research area is (e-)retail and consumer behaviour. He has taught courses, given presentations and written papers based on his research using SPSS AMOS.

All example files and notes will be given to all workshop attenders (on USB sticks). This is an opportunity to acquire life skills from someone who is an experienced teacher in the practical use of computer software and statistics.

The day will run from approximately 9-30am to 4-30pm. This The booking fee includes mid-morning coffee, lunch and afternoon tea but not overnight accommodation.

Further details will be sent out to delegates upon receipt of booking forms.

Telephone enquiries about bookings: (01223) 766166 x69479 or (01223) 769479 (direct line) (both numbers have an answerphone)

E-mail enquiries about bookings: peter.watson@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk (important: put ASSESS in the Subject field)

Jobs

Newcastle City Council (HDC) - Business Analyst (HDC Data Analyst)

Salary: £35,235

Contract Type: Permanent

Work Location: Newcastle upon Tyne (Hybrid, 1 day office per week minimum)

Hours: 37 per week

We are offering an exciting opportunity to join Newcastle City Council's Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) team.

About HDRC Newcastle

In 2022, in partnership with Newcastle University, we were successful in our bid to the National Institute for Health & Care Research (NIHR) to establish an HDRC.

Stable employment, quality housing, good schools, accessible green space, safe neighbourhoods, and inclusive communities are all associated with good health.

The ambition of the HDRC is to strengthen research culture in local government, to deepen a useful evidence base on the wider determinants, or drivers, of health and how local governments can influence them. Supporting council services to better understand the important role they play in the health and wellbeing of Newcastle, and make positive changes to policies and services that reduce health inequality and promote health equity is at the heart of what we do.

Data Analyst Role

We are looking for a data analyst who shares our ambition and wants to use their skills and experience to make a difference to the lives of those who live and work in the city.

The successful candidate will collaborate with Council colleagues and wider stakeholders to develop analysis plans or data tools to generate actionable insights.

They will clean, preprocess and explore a wide range of datasets from across city council services and external data sources. The data analyst will apply statistical methods to extract insight and communicate findings through clear data visualisations and reports for both technical and non-technical audiences. They will also play a key role in fostering a vibrant analytical community within the Council and strengthening the organisation's capability for data-driven decision-making, with a health equity lens.

Sitting within the HDRC, the successful candidate will have the opportunity to learn about and work on the Council's highest priorities, influence the health and wellbeing, and improve the lives of people in Newcastle.

Application Deadline: 04/02/2025

[Business Analyst \(HDRC Data Analyst\) - Newcastle City Council - North East Jobs](#)

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 20th February](#).

Are you a Corporate or Full Corporate Member?

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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 20th February](#).

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