



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

LARIA Newsletter June 2025

LARIA Updates

Hello and welcome to the June edition of LARIA News.

Towards the end of the last Government there was one announcement that seemed to slip through the net of most news monitoring, policy channels, and what the public were talking about every day. This was that the Government commissioned a review of the 1974 Friendly Societies Act. Whilst this announcement passed most people by, it is of huge relevance to LARIA as we are classified as a Special Authorised Society under the 1974 Friendly Societies Act, a status we have held since we first registered as long ago as 1992.

The incoming Labour Government then supported the continuation of the review, and the Law Commission is now underway with the task of looking at the relevance of the 1974 Act in modern times for organisations that are still registered with it, scoping improvements that could be made to it, and also exploring whether the Act should be repealed altogether with those remaining covered by it recommended to convert and re-register using alternative and more up-to-date Mutuals legislation.

At first glance, LARIA was probably not an obvious organisation to register using that particular legislation at the time that it did. Originally, the 1974 Act was passed to bring about a consolidation of organisations that provided mutual aid of some description across the UK. From the late eighteenth century until the early 1970s most Friendly Societies were formed to help communities manage sickness, death, and unemployment through pooled savings and managed credit facilities in local communities or sectors. Over time these societies became more formalised, and at the time the 1974 Act was passed typical organisations consisted mainly of Working Mens Clubs, Miners Welfare Associations, Benevolent Societies, and the like.

However, Specially Authorised Societies are a specific category within the 1974 Act that enable organisations to offer services beyond the scope of typical mutual aid, provided these are approved by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). This is well-suited to professional, educational, or community-based organisations that operate on a not-for-profit, member-benefit basis, such as LARIA. With the passage of time though, there are now only around fifty such societies remaining registered under the 1974 Act. And in the modern age, we have found some of the governance requirements cumbersome and old-fashioned. Even the Annual Return finances template form we need to complete for the FCA certainly looks to belong to a very different era!

So, the Government's review of the 1974 Act is both timely and welcome. At the briefing sessions run by the Law Commission that I have attended recently they have reiterated the huge importance of Mutuals as a key and fundamental part of the UK economy, the critical role they play in civil society, and in the economic, social, and environmental well-being they bring to local communities.

They also set out the potential benefits to organisations like LARIA that a change to the legislation could bring about, either through an update to the 1974 Act or through conversion to alternative Mutuals legislation such as the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, including:

Modern Legal and Governance Frameworks – to simplify compliance and reduce red tape.

- Expansion of Permitted Activities – which could allow LARIA to diversify our services, and offer a wider range of training, consultancy, or other research.
- New Funding and Growth Opportunities - improving capital-raising options or grant eligibility could enhance LARIA's sustainability and our capacity to invest in digital tools, events, or partnerships.

If new legal forms do emerge from the Review, and it is highly likely that they will, we will of course consult the LARIA membership base so that members have the opportunity to consider all options around the future legal status and governance structures that we are regulated by. All of this, as suggested by the Law Commission, could take place over the coming 2-3 year time-period.

Whatever the outcome of the review, some change is certain to be required to LARIA's legal status and governance structures over the next couple of years, which should undoubtedly help in continuing to make LARIA as efficient as it can be, whilst bringing additional opportunities for us to better support local area research and intelligence.

We will keep you posted!

Andy

Andy Davis,
LARIA Treasurer

News

LARIA in Scotland Webinar a Success

On Wednesday, 11 June 2025 LARIA in Scotland in partnership with the Improvement Services, ONS Local and SPRE (Scottish Policy & Research Exchange) held the **Enhancing evidence use in Scottish local policymaking** webinar. Over 100 people attended from Scottish Local Authorities, other Public Sector and Scottish Higher Education Institutes.

It was a great occasion for connecting networks and better understand how evidence use is impacting Scottish local policy making. There were 4 distinct speakers and good opportunity for connecting across sectors.

- David Boyle, a Principal Economist within the **Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub**, presented on how the Glasgow City Region gather evidence to inform policy development and decision making at a Regional and Local Authority scale. [View recording of Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub presentation here.](#)
 - Mark Wong, a Senior Lecturer in Public Policy and Research Methods and Joint Head of Social and Urban Policy at the University of Glasgow presented on **racial bias in artificial intelligence and data**, and valuing lived experience in digital innovation and co-design of public services. [View recording of racial bias in artificial intelligence and data presentation here.](#)
 - Gerard McCormack, Head of Transformation, Performance and Improvement Manager with the Improvement Service, presented an **overview of the Solace / IS Transformation Programme**, from initial development to implementation, and highlighting the important role evidence plays in informing the decisions at each stage. [View recording of Overview of the Solace / IS Transformation Programme here.](#)
 - Emma Miller, Senior Research Associate in Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Strathclyde, presented on the **potential contribution to be made by the re-focus on personal outcomes** and renewed interest in relationship based practice in Scotland, with reference to barriers, strategies and limitations. [View recording of the potential contribution to be made by the re-focus on personal outcomes here.](#)
-

Enhancing data and technology to build better outcomes for the future

It is essential for public sector organisations to deliver the right services to the right people, in the most efficient way. That's why at CACI we're thrilled to partner with Snowflake to democratise access to data right across the public sector.

In our new brochure, you'll find out how to establish a strong data foundation that unifies service user, operational and commercial data. With insights that are more accessible and easier to understand at speed, you can drive government efficiencies and improve outcomes for residents.

Here's what's inside the brochure:

- The challenges to achieving meaningful change
- Establishing the right data foundations
- Supercharging public sector impact

CACI and Snowflake are working together to democratise access to data right across the public sector so you can deliver better outcomes for residents and the wider community. Explore the full story in our latest brochure, which you can download [here](#).

Cross-referencing commercial data unlocks millions in revenue in Camden Borough Council

Camden has long been committed to the value of accurate, integrated property data, with a well-established Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) underpinning many of its services. While residential records were closely aligned through Council Tax and consistent UPRN usage, commercial properties posed a different kind of challenge. Unlike residential addresses, commercial premises frequently change use, are repurposed, or disappear altogether – and the separate operation of the National Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) system meant that some properties could fall between the cracks.



The case study examines the processes that took place to recover nearly £3.5 million in backdated business rates – plus secure ongoing income from those properties going forward.

[See more here.](#)

**Funding opportunity from NIHR RSS Specialist Centre
for Public Health - Local Authority Research
Practitioners (LARPs)**

NIHR | Research
Support Service
Specialist Centre for Public Health
delivered by Newcastle University and Partners

Opportunity for local authorities to apply for £52,500* for 24 months (pro rata for reduced timeframes) to appoint a LARP.

This call is open to colleagues in local authorities in England. Those in the devolved nations should speak with relevant funders to explore similar opportunities.

[NIHR Health Determinant Research Collaborations \(HDRCs\)](#) and local authorities who have previously submitted a successful LARP application are not eligible for this call.

LARPs are dedicated to facilitating public health research and supporting the development of research governance systems and processes, enabling public health research to happen within local authorities and the communities they serve.

Successful local authorities will receive up to £52,500 per award for a period of 24 months (pro rata for reduced timeframes) i.e. the maximum available for 12 months is £26,250. The award will be a contribution (typically 50%) to the salary costs of a LARP and includes the employer's contribution to National Insurance and Superannuation. The local authority, or wider local system, is expected to match fund and provide significant 'in kind' support, the employer must be a local authority.

*In line with inflation, the SCPH Operations Board have approved a 5% increase in the funding we can offer. The maximum funding you can now apply for in this round is **£52,500. Match funding is still required.** You can still apply for £50,000 if you cannot match to the maximum amount.

 Key dates:

- Closing date for submissions: 5pm on Monday 30 June 2025
 - Panel meeting date: Week commencing 24 July 2025
 - Decisions announced: Early August
 - Funding commences: 1 October 2025 – 31 March 2026 date to be agreed between the SCPH (Newcastle University and partners) and the local authority.
-

Guidance for reviewers of research applications based in settings outside of the NHS: We want to hear your feedback

The SCPH works closely with local authority colleagues and other partners who are working in settings outside of the NHS, as part of the R&D Forum Wider Care Settings Working Group. We have supported the development of the [Guidance for reviewers of research applications based in settings outside the NHS](#). In doing this, we have ensured local authority representation and contribution in each of the workstreams.

We would like you to consider piloting the use of the guidance and checklist when reviewing any planned research proposals or when approached by researchers to support the delivery of research in your organisation. We would also encourage completion of the feedback survey by Friday 11 July.

The results of the survey will be used to produce the final version of the guidance for publication. The SCPH will also use the outcomes of the survey to help inform our future research governance and ethics projects that will be undertaken alongside local authority colleagues.

For more information on the guidance, and survey link, please see the email below. Please share this with any colleagues that may be involved in reviewing research applications.

Many thanks for your support

Kay Howes (she/her) | Chief Operating Officer

Help improve how government supports decision-making in councils

MHCLG is exploring how to better support councils to use data effectively for decision making and driving service improvements across communities.

The department is carrying out research with councils to understand how data is currently used for strategic planning, decision-making, prioritisation and measuring progress.

The researchers are keen to speak to council heads of service or those with strategic oversight in one or more service areas.

Participation involves:

- A 1-hour online chat to help understand the decision-making and prioritisation processes in a service area

- A 1.5-hour online workshop with other key roles in your council (such as strategic directors, finance officers, service managers, data specialists and policy leads) to explore these processes in more detail

[To take part, please complete this quick survey.](#)

Courses, Training Events and Webinars

LARIA One Day Conference 2025 Save The Date!

We're pleased to announce that on Tuesday 11th November 2025 LARIA, supported by the Local Government Association will hold their one day conference and awards at the LGA offices in London.

Laria

Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

Further information will be available soon!

User Perspectives on the Code of Practice for Statistics

Friday 25 July 2025

12:00 to 14:00

The Health Statistics Users Group (HSUG) and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Official Statistics Section are organising a webinar to discuss user perspectives on the Code of Practice. This webinar is intended to follow on from the revision of the Code of Practice by OSR (Office for Statistics Regulation) - not within the consultation period, but as part of the implementation and Way Forward - looking at issues from the perspective of a user.

A report of the recent Code of Practice consultation has been published by OSR - [see here](#). This report summarises the findings and next steps. OSR is now moving ahead with the refresh of the Code and is aiming to release the third edition in autumn 2025. Although the consultation has closed, OSR is open to receiving further feedback as they finalise the Code.

This webinar will therefore not look at the Code of Practice directly, but at some aspects of quality and accessibility that are relevant for users, and whether having the Code of Practice can help with these. It will consider how users and producers can work together to ensure the Code of Practice delivers on its promises, and what are the challenges.

[Register for this online event here.](#)

There is a registration fee of £10 for non RSS Members.

Programme

1. Statistics Under Pressure: informing decision-making at pace – discussion of the RSS initiative exploring the trade-offs that need to be made in pressurised situations.
Deniz Gursul (Campaigns and Policy Manager, RSS).
2. View from a local authority on how users and producers can collaborate more effectively in the future to meet the aims of the Code of Practice.
Elisa Bullen (Manchester City Council).
3. Perspective of a user involved in research that draws on official statistics.
Rachel Plachcinski (Independent consultant in parent, patient and public involvement in health research)
4. The experience in Scotland - issues in relation to PRA (Pre Release Access) which is currently being reviewed.
Jessica Shields (ScotCen – Scottish Centre for Social Research)
5. **Penny Babb** (OSR) to speak on how the Code might help to meet the challenges that have been raised, and also comment on the planned way forward.

The presentations, a meeting report and a recording of the webinar will be posted on the HSUG Community on AnalystX / Future NHS, and also on the Health and Care group on StatsUserNetwork. People who are not able to attend on the day will be able to view, and comment on, this material.

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 24th July](#).

Are you a Corporate or Full Corporate Member?

Laria

Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

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 July**.

Copyright © 2025 LARIA, All rights reserved.

You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website.

Our mailing address is:

LARIA
Tower House
Mill Lane, Askham Bryan
York, North Yorkshire YO23 3FS
United Kingdom

Add us to your address book

Email - admin@laria.org.uk

Web - www.laria.org.uk

X - [@laria](https://twitter.com/laria)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

