Laria
Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

LARIA Mini Newsletter October 2026

LARIA Updates

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Investing in Ourselves

Local government faces an increasingly complex environment. Councils are expected to respond to growing demand, financial pressures, rapid technological change and evolving community needs, sometimes against a background of reorganisation, all while making the best possible use of limited resources. In this context, researchers and analysts play a vital role. Their work helps councils understand local challenges, evaluate what works, target resources effectively and make evidence-based decisions.

Yet developing and maintaining the analytical and research skills needed for this can be difficult. Training budgets are often among the first areas to come under pressure when finances are tight. Many council leadership teams find themselves balancing immediate service pressures against longer-term investment in staff development, particularly for roles that sit behind the scenes rather than on the frontline.

As a result, finding time and resources for learning can sometimes feel challenging for researchers and analysts themselves. But while councils benefit from having skilled analysts and researchers, the benefits are just as significant for individuals. Developing new skills, expanding professional networks and keeping up to date with emerging methods can increase analysts and researchers' experience and confidence, improve career prospects and make day-to-day work more effective and rewarding.

Professional development is about much more than learning a new software package or analytical technique. The best analysts and researchers continually update their knowledge of methods, tools, ethics and good practice. They learn from peers facing similar challenges, gain exposure to new approaches and develop the confidence to apply their skills in different contexts. This helps councils remain adaptable and innovative, particularly as areas such as data science, artificial intelligence and advanced analytics become more important to public service delivery. It also gives organisations the capacity to test new ideas, evaluate change effectively and make better-informed decisions.

The good news is that meaningful professional development does not always require a large budget. Peer learning, communities of practice, webinars, mentoring, conferences and short courses can all play a valuable role. Some of the most valuable learning opportunities come from sharing experiences with colleagues in other authorities who are tackling similar issues and working through similar challenges.

With this in mind, there are several organisations and programmes that make professional development accessible, practical and relevant for local government professionals.

Of course, as you already know, LARIA has long provided a professional home for researchers, analysts and intelligence practitioners working in local government and related sectors. Through conferences, webinars, networking opportunities and knowledge sharing, LARIA enables members to learn from one another's experiences and stay connected to emerging practice across the profession. It is not simply a training provider; it is a community that supports continuous learning throughout a researcher's career. If you've not spotted it, our next one-day event is on 9 March in London, and the call for papers is currently out. Save the date!

Other free or low-cost options for continuous professional development include:

- The learning opportunities available through the Local Government Association's Data Programme, which supports councils in strengthening their data and analytical capabilities through training, webinars and learning resources. There's also a new geospatial data workstream.
- The ongoing programme of accelerator courses delivered by the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade (BIST), which provide practical, hands-on opportunities to develop new skills and apply them directly to local government challenges. Contact ai-accelerator@dsit.gov.uk to express interest in the AI Accelerator or Data Science Accelerator, both open to local government.

- The Social Research Association, which offers researchers access to professional standards, learning resources, training and a wider community of practitioners; and training, which is deliberately kept low-cost to support the public and third sector.

As councils continue to navigate uncertainty and change, the need for skilled researchers and analysts will only increase. Organisations will always benefit from investing in analytical capability, but professional development is not solely dependent on formal training budgets. Much of it comes from a commitment to continuous learning, curiosity and engagement with the wider profession – and that rests with you!

For you, as researchers and analysts, the message is clear. Investing in your professional development is one of the best investments you can make. Every new skill, every new connection and every opportunity to learn from others strengthens your ability to make a difference through your work. Whether through LARIA, the SRA, the LGA's Data Programme, BIST accelerators or informal peer networks, continued learning helps you build your career, increase your impact and provide better evidence and insight for the communities you serve. Of course, especially through LARIA!

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CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS
#LARIA2027

LARIA Conference and Awards
Tuesday 9 March 2027
Local Government Association, London

From data to place:
Building community insight for local decision-making

From data to place: Building community insight for local decision-making will bring together researchers, analysts, and those interested in information for local decision-making to explore how evidence can help organisations understand places at a more meaningful level and make better decisions.

The conference will focus on community-level, local area and neighbourhood insight. It will consider how data, research and lived experience can be brought together to reveal differences within and between places, identify need and opportunity, shape priorities, target resources and support practical action.

Partnership working will be central to the programme. We welcome examples of councils, health organisations, universities, voluntary and community organisations, businesses and residents working together to develop shared evidence, align priorities and improve outcomes. Sessions may explore the practical challenges of sharing information across organisational boundaries, building trust, agreeing common measures and ensuring that local communities influence how evidence is interpreted and used.

The conference will also examine data and digital innovation and the growing role of artificial intelligence. We are interested in responsible and transparent uses of data and AI that help teams analyse complex information, connect quantitative and qualitative evidence, identify emerging patterns, communicate insight and make local intelligence more accessible. Contributions should reflect on data quality, ethics, bias, governance and accountability and the continuing importance of professional judgement and community knowledge.

We want to hear about work that others can learn from. This may be a completed project, an approach currently being tested, or an honest account of work in progress. Proposals could cover:

- Neighbourhood profiles, community intelligence platforms and place-based data hubs.
- Combining administrative data, survey findings, qualitative research and lived experience.
- Partnership approaches to sharing evidence and making decisions across organisations.
- Using local insight to address inequalities and improve services or outcomes.
- Community engagement, co-production and participatory research.
- Responsible uses of artificial intelligence in local research and intelligence.
- Data governance, ethics, transparency, bias and public trust.
- New methods, tools and visualisations that make community insight easier to understand and use.

We are particularly interested in what worked well, what did not work, how the research or data was communicated in a way that decision-makers could use it, what changed as a result and what others should consider when adopting a similar approach.

Click here for further details and to submit your form by Monday 16 November 2026.

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In Partnership with CACI

Conference Supported by Local Government Association

Courses, Training Events and Webinars

LARIA Autumn Webinar Series 2026

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🍁The leaves are turning and the evenings are drawing in, the perfect time to settle in with a good webinar.

We're delighted to share that recordings and presentations from the LARIA Autumn Webinar Series are now available in the Members Area.

If you missed a session or want to revisit the insights with a mug of something warm, everything is ready for you to explore at your own pace.

A huge thank you to our speakers for bringing such rich learning to this autumn season.

Log in, get comfy, and enjoy the content.

Masterclass: Modernising performance management through automation and low code tools (20 November 2026 14:00)

Local Government Association

Join us for this session to hear how Rutland

County Council is using automation and low code tools to replace burdensome manual processes, improve data quality and timeliness, and develop a corporate performance app that helps services identify and respond to issues more quickly.

Sign up here.

Upcoming webinar – 'From manual to automated: Lewisham's data-driven approach to housing cost verification' (4 November 2026 14:00)

Join us in this webinar to hear how Lewisham Council transformed a time-consuming manual process into an efficient automated service. Mia Polovina (Data Science, Insight and Performance Lead) and colleagues will showcase how Lewisham's Data Science and Insight Team worked with housing income and support to develop a data-driven Robotic Process Automation (RPA) solution. By automating universal credit housing cost verifications via the DWP Landlord Portal, the team have reduced delays for tenants and freed up significant staff time. The webinar will conclude with a live Q&A session, where you'll have the opportunity to ask questions and find out more about the projects and tools discussed.

Sign up here.

Better Records Together: working together to improve the management of care records (Thursday 3 December, 14:00)

This session introduces the Information Commissioner's Better Records Together campaign and Care Records Standards and is designed for officers involved in the care records process, including information governance practitioners, data leads, children's social workers and directors of children's services/service managers. Attendees will leave with practical steps to improve how their organisation creates, manages, and provides access to the records of people who have had experience in the care system.

Registration link.

UK Data Service introductory training series: Autumn 2026

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 2026 are listed below and you can also browse our training and events pages for a full list of what is available.

- Best practices for documenting social sciences research data, 29 October, 10.00 – 11.30
- Data in the spotlight: Census and population studies, 3 November
- Data in the spotlight: Longitudinal data, 5 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- Data in the spotlight: Qualitative and mixed methods data, 13 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- Introduction to anonymisation techniques for social sciences research data, 24 November, 10.00 – 11.30
- Data in the spotlight: International time series databanks, 7 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.

Subscribe to the UK Data Service Newsletter

ONS Local

What is ONS Local?

ONS Local is an advisory service supporting local leaders with data, statistics, and analysis for evidence-based decision-making. Our analysts are based across the UK to provide tailored insights.

The ONS Local analytical service offer is based on five main pillars:

- analytical
- data
- network
- strategic
- building capability

ONS Local Presents

Join us for the next in our series of ONS Local Presents webinars to learn more about:

- Livelihood, insecurity, productivity and earnings - 4 November
- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Community and engagement survey - 10 November

Register for ONS Local webinars

The Office for National Statistics are conducting usability testing sessions in Southampton on Tuesday 10 November. If you are interested in taking part, you can book one of our sessions here.

Criminalisation of children with neurodisability: Insights from admin data

Thursday 26 November, 10:30am to 11:30am. Online

Dr Hope Kent a Research Fellow at the University of Exeter, presents findings from an ADR UK Research Fellowship using linked Ministry of Justice and Department for Education data.

The research explores how school exclusion, unmet educational needs, and child poverty shape contact with the youth justice system.

Findings highlight systemic disadvantages for children with neurodisability and point to the need for earlier intervention and population-level approaches.

Register for this virtual talk

New webinar in this series. Please share widely - events are open to all:

LAUNCH of Mental Capacity & Homelessness Study: Guidance & Tool + Animation

Thu 17 Dec 2026, 10-11am Book here

Reminder of November's event:

Dying Homeless Project 2025: Unequal even in Death

Tue 17 Nov 2026, 10-11am Book here

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 19th November.

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 19th November.

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