



Laria

Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

LARIA Mini Newsletter December 2025

LARIA Updates

Well, 2025 is coming to an end, what a year. It's been the [sunniest for the UK](#) since recording began in 1910. I actually had a 'real' summer in the south of Scotland. I think this is about the best news I've heard this year.

Laria

Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

Looking forward the LARIA Conference and Awards 2026 will be on Wednesday 25 March 2026 at the Local Government Association in London. Want to participate and share what you have done with a focus on [Local Evidence Matters: Understanding Need Through Research and Data](#), then the submission date is Friday 9 January 2026.

LARIA continues to be a place (virtual and sometimes in person) where people interested in local area research, be it in local government, public health, or other organisations can share knowledge and successes.


Hope you have a festive holiday season and happy 2026.


Erin R Murray

Scottish Borders Council and Co-Lead of LARIA in Scotland.

Courses, Training Events and Webinars

[Webinar: Introduction to mixed methods](#)


 Wednesday 14 January 2026

 2 to 2:45pm

Dr Deborah Harrison will provide an introduction to mixed methods research including different study designs, challenges and considerations. Deborah is a Research Design Methodologist based in the NIHR RSS Specialist Centre for Public Health. Her background is in applied public services research, and she has worked with local authorities, VCSE organisations, social care providers, NHS and emergency services.



 Prevention Research 2026

 the Vox, Birmingham


 4 and 5 March 2026

 [Register here](#)

The NIHR has joined Prevention Research 2026 as a conference partner. This is the second Prevention Research UK conference, and is being organised jointly by the UKPRP Prevention Research Network and Population Health Improvement UK with support from NIHR. The conference will seek to explore the latest research and collaborative strategies for preventing non-communicable diseases and reducing health inequalities across the UK.

If you are funded by NIHR and your research is relevant to the prevention of non-communicable diseases, evaluating the development, implementation or impact of interventions or public policies to improve health and reduce health inequalities, or new approaches or methods in the conduct of prevention research, you can submit an abstract by Friday 9 January 2026.

Key features of the 2-day conference are:

 Free registration for policy, NHS, practitioner and third sector partners. Highly subsidised rates for everyone else. Early bird rates are available until Friday 30 January 2026, with

registration closing on 1 March 2026.

↔ Disciplinary and topic breadth: including upstream prevention (housing, urban development, environment, commercial determinants) and complex challenges (violence prevention, mental health improvement, food systems).

☒ Dual emphasis on:

- emerging high profile research findings from diverse prevention research studies and consortia
- improving the practice of prevention research (learning from each other on topics like inclusive approaches, impact generation, systems thinking).

If you have any issues/queries/questions, please email: preventionresearch26@gmail.com



Code anxiety club

6 January 2026, 1:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

Project organisation: Introduction to Python and R - your first scripts

Content:

- Create your first coding script in Visual Studio Code (Python) or RStudio (R).
- Master basic syntax and get to grips with functions.
- Practical exercises using the coding packages 'pandas' (Python) or 'dplyr' (RStudio) to explore a simple dataset.

[More information and booking](#)

Computational social science drop-in

13 January 2026, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

Do you find yourself:

- stuck on a project with no one to ask about it?
- not sure what to learn next?
- the only person in your team using computational methods?
- wanting to meet other computational social scientists?

- interested to learn or teach some data skills with like-minded individuals?

Join our free UK Data Service data drop-in where everyone can get or give some help on computational social science projects, including how to get started, what useful software options might be, or how to resolve common problems.

[More information and booking](#)

Code anxiety club

20 January 2026, 1:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

Getting started with Git: Version control basics

Content:

- Understand the importance of tracking changes to files over time.
- Install Git and master basic Git commands such as git init, git clone, git status, git add, git commit, and git push.
- Practical exercises to build confidence in using Git and GitHub.

[More information and booking](#)

Data on young people and education at the UK Data Service

28 January 2026, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

This free webinar will offer an introduction to the secondary survey data available from the UK Data Service for researching young people and education. It is aimed at anyone interested in learning about these data and will provide a starting point for those looking to begin research or teaching in this area.

[More information and booking](#)

Code anxiety club

3 February 2026, 1:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

Debugging demystified: Finding and fixing errors

Content:

- Understand the most common errors that first-time coders run into, and how best to avoid them.
- Learn how to use Visual Studio Code's (Python) or RStudio's (R) built-in debugger to spot problems in your scripts.
- Practical exercises to build your own function and explore why 'variable scope' is important.

[More information and booking](#)

Computational social science drop-in

10 February 2026, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

Do you find yourself:

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[More information and booking](#)

Code anxiety club

17 February 2026, 1:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

Building confidence: Q&A and open coding session

Content:

- Something still not sticking?
- Would you like us to go through a topic again?

This session will be an open forum where there will be an opportunity to ask questions about any of the topics we have covered so far. Perhaps there is an aspect of working the command line, version control, or coding that is frustrating you. We've all been there! Come along to seek some friendly advice and useful tips. This livestream will follow the same format as the others,

so just type a question in the chat and we will try our best to help you out.

[More information and booking](#)

Using agent-based models as a simulation tool to generate synthetic data

18 February 2026, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Online

This free online workshop explores the intersection of two computational social science ideas. First, synthetic data are generated rather than observed and can be useful when research needs to balance research demands against data availability or security. Second, agent-based models are a kind of simulation which can generate synthetic data in diverse, anticipated or even counterfactual scenarios. Both are popular tools within social science research but benefit from careful attention to whether the synthetic data generation method and the research problem match in terms of being top-down or bottom-up.

[For more information and booking](#)

Computational social science drop-in

10 March 2026, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Online

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[More information and booking](#)

Crime Surveys User Conference 2026

11 March 2026, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Online

Are you interested in research on crime? Do you want to know the latest developments in crime data from UK social surveys?

This free conference, organised by the UK Data Service in collaboration with the [Office for National Statistics](#), [Scottish Government](#) and [Home Office](#), will be held online on Wednesday

11 March 2026.

[More information and booking](#)

Webinar on using performance, finance and risk information together to inform decisions, scrutiny and assurance.

27 January 2026 10:00-11:30

[More information and booking](#)



Webinar on data strategies, how councils are developing data strategies, why they are important, and how to gain buy-in within the organisation.

27 January 2026 13:00-14:30

[More information and booking](#)

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 22nd January](#).

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 22nd January](#).

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