



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

LARIA Mini 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still registered with it, scoping improvements that could be made to it, and also exploring whether the Act should be repealed altogether with those remaining covered by it recommended to convert and re-register using alternative and more up-to-date Mutuals legislation.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

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.



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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?

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](#).

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