



Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

## LARIA Newsletter August 2025

### LARIA Updates

#### LGOF: CPA-lite or Daily Mail target practice?

Last month, Local Government Minister Jim McManus

announced a new Local Government Outcomes Framework

(LGOF), which ([he said](#)) “forms an integral part of this

Government’s reforms to ensure we have a sector which is

fit, legal and decent”. These reforms are already pretty extensive, including LG reorganisation, devolution, community engagement, member standards and funding arrangements.



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The LGOF framework, the Minister hopes, “will help to put the right checks and balances in place to ensure value for the taxpayer and results for citizens to whom councils are ultimately responsible”. Given the removal of most systematic monitoring of local performance and outcomes in England with the demise of the Audit Commission a decade ago, is this a new dawn for helpful local insights and intelligent central steering, or the raw material for a crude league table that obscures more than it illuminates?

History shows the difficulty of designing and using performance measures effectively. Whilst the logic of measuring what matters to inform management (and political) decision making is clear, and there are many examples of successful applications, there are enough examples of failures and unintended negative consequences to encourage caution.

The immediate precursor to LGOF was a set of measures developed by the ill-fated Office of Local Government (OFLOG). These were immediately manipulated by the Times newspaper into a league table, labelling Nottingham as the worst council. The fact that this took place during the pre-election period only made the impact more negative, leading to a stinging [letter](#) from the LGA to the then Secretary of State, Michael Gove. OFLOG was in some ways set up to fail. Sited

inside the Ministry, its political independence was immediately open to challenge. And reconciling providing local authorities with better data at the same time as acting as an accountability mechanism to central government was always going to be tricky.

The health service experience of performance measures and targets presents mixed evidence. It appears that four-hour A&E waiting times targets were associated with reduced mortality, but at the same time there were examples of departments admitting patients near to the time limit at the expense of others more in need of urgent care, a few examples of blatant misrepresentation of figures, and some bizarre holding of patients in ambulances and redefinition of corridors as wards.

Key lessons from these examples include the importance of having a clear focus for the LGOF and the adoption of a broad 'exploratory' approach to presenting the performance measures. As the Institute for Government argued for OFLOG, a key contribution could be making data more consistently available, comparable and usable – and hence supporting evidence-based policy making through the deliberative use of robust evidence.

The LGOF data needs to be presented in ways that enable and encourage exploration and questioning, rather than simplistic league tables which ignore the inherent differences between different councils in terms of population, geography, deprivation, funding, etc. It therefore needs exhibit what I call the three Cs: to be comparable across councils, contextualised to reflect local circumstances, and citizen-focussed (accessible to lay people).

There are many positive features of the new framework, including its attempt to look at missions and outcomes (rather than just council outputs). Interested parties have until 12 September 2025 to respond to the Government's [consultation](#). Councils can easily see how the proposed LGOF measures look for them using the excellent new LG Inform LGOF [report](#).

Dr Jason Lowther

Director of Inlogov (the Institute of Local Government Studies) at the University of Birmingham.

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## News

**Making data accessible to enhance your community output**



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.

Within our 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.

**Within the brochure, you will understand:**

- The challenges to achieving meaningful change
- How to establish the right data foundations to deliver change
- The insights required to supercharge your public sector impact

[Download the brochure here today.](#)

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**LG Inform App**

We are excited to announce the launch of the innovative LG Inform App, which gives you quick and easy access to key data about your council and how it compares to others.

Providing a snapshot of 110 metrics over 11 topic areas, we developed the App to complement the popular LG Inform website. The App is available to all here - on the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play Store](#), for those who want up-to-date data at their fingertips. If you have any questions about the App or the wider LG Inform offer, feel free to contact [lginform@local.gov.uk](mailto:lginform@local.gov.uk)



**Shining a spotlight on local government's best kept secret**

At this year's GeoPlace conference, Mark Williams, Senior Advisor at the Local Government Association (LGA), delivered a lively and insightful session centred on the value of geospatial data in local government, and the critical role of address and street information in service delivery, policy planning, and cross-sector collaboration.



Mark began by outlining the LGA's data improvement programme, which supports councils in advancing performance management, data maturity, transparency, and the adoption of data standards. He then addressed a fundamental challenge shared by many in the room: the problem of inconsistent, fragmented, or difficult-to-locate data.

[Find out more here.](#)

**Highlights and resources from the GeoPlace Conference 2025**

With over 500 registrations, 25 exhibitors and knowledge partners, 36 speakers, and 37 roundtable facilitators, this year's GeoPlace annual conference provided a full day of insight, discussion, and innovation.

We've published a set of useful resources from the day onto the conference website. [See here](#).

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**MSc in Social Research Methods and Statistics (FT/PT)  
at the University of Manchester**

<http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/social-statistics/>



The MSc provides a firm grounding in advanced quantitative methods, taught within an applied framework. The programme is designed to be accessible to people without a statistical background. It includes training in: survey design, how to analyse data and how to use statistical analysis software such as R, SPSS and Stata. The MSc modules are taught with an emphasis on hands-on training in the application of methods and software. Modules include: Statistical Foundations, Introduction to Statistical Modelling, Survey Research, Demographic Analysis, Social Network Analysis and Longitudinal Data Analysis. The MSc includes a series of pre-session training courses before the MSc starts. The MSc is available full-time over one year or part-time over two years.

The MSc course offers relevant and marketable skills for a career in research and is recognised for PhD training by the Economic and Social Research Council. Advanced skills in data analysis and research are at the heart of social research, policy making across government and consultancy. Graduates of the MSc are in a good position to obtain jobs in government, the academic sector, local government and within the commercial research sector. Many SRMS MSc graduates often go on to study for a PhD. [See here](#).

Social Statistics and the School of Social Sciences at the University of Manchester are home to world leading academics. <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/research/centres/>

**How to apply**

[Please apply on-line here](#).

Application Enquiries

Please email [pg-soss@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:pg-soss@manchester.ac.uk)

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## Courses, Training Events and Webinars

### Webinar: SODA - A guide to successful data sharing across public services

Our next data webinar looks at data sharing across public services. The Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics (SODA) will share how they overcome information governance, processes and systems including how they shared record-level data that is identifiable.

We will also hear how they set up a linked dataset using Splink (an open-source Python package which helps deduplicate and link records without common UIDs) from planning to implementation along with an outline of the process and use cases.

This webinar is free to all English council officers and will be suited to analysts, intelligence specialists, and service leads from all departments who are keen to make better use of their data.

Date: 17 September 2025

Time: 11:00 until 12:00

Link: <https://lgaevents.local.gov.uk/lga/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=921907&eventID=2645>



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## 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 25th September](#).

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### 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](mailto:admin@laria.org.uk).

The next newsletter submission deadline is [Thursday 25th September](#).



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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](mailto:admin@laria.org.uk)

Web - [www.laria.org.uk](http://www.laria.org.uk)

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