



AGM proposal and Ballot: SSRG merger with LARIA

The Annual Report describes changes in Health and Social Care and the challenges posed to SSRG's role. In particular, increasingly over the past few years, SSRG members or potential members have been moved to central corporate departments and have a wider span of interest. In addition, there is an ongoing movement for integration with health and reducing the boundaries between sectors. Such developments have prompted the SSRG Executive Committee (EC) to consider whether there is a long-term future for SSRG as a standalone specialist social care organisation. Please read this proposal and vote on the ballot, details of which are given at the end of the text.

[The Local Area Research and Intelligence Association \(LARIA\)](#) has been in existence almost as long as the SSRG and is also an independent, membership-based organisation. It has very similar aims and objectives, in relation to promoting the use of research and other evidence in improving services, and providing a network of researcher and others people working in the field. The network aims to improve communication between research staff and particularly promotes sharing methods and technical skills. Crucially, LARIA covers all local authority services, including education (and therefore children's social care) and housing which have many direct overlaps with SSRG interests, as well as other functions.

Given the similar aims and natures of the two organisations as well as the difficult financial outlook for the next four years of continuing funding restraint outlined in the Spending Review, the EC has taken a view that seeking a merger between SSRG and LARIA would be the best way to secure a long-term future for SSRG. This would enhance LARIA's presence in the social care field, in which it has not previously been very active, partly because of the existence of SSRG. The merger would not mean the end of SSRG, which would continue in an identifiable form within the structure of LARIA, with a level of independence. SSRG would continue to focus on social care but also seek to contribute to LARIA events and projects covering a wider range of topics. Members of SSRG will continue to receive the same benefits from SSRG membership until the merger and for up to a year afterwards (until their normal membership renewal date). It is highly unlikely that membership fees for any new merged organisation would increase.

As chair of SSRG I had an informal discussion with the chair of LARIA, who suggested that the idea of a merger might be well received. Following this initial discussion, a subgroup of the EC developed an [outline proposal](#), which was again well received by LARIA. [This proposal](#) made the formal suggestion of a merger, and identified further work that would be

needed in order to pursue this idea. No irrevocable decisions about a merger have been made.

There are a number of areas which will require further discussion, such as:

- Future existence of SSRG within LARIA in relation to level of independence and governance
- Decisions about how to merge finances
- Support for current SSRG services and activities (Events, Newsletter, E-Bulletin, Research Policy and Planning)
- Membership fees and structure – LARIA has a very different membership structure to SSRG.
- How to merge SSRG and SSRG Scotland into LARIA, given the degree of separation between SSRG and SSRG Scotland.

Your EC recommends that SSRG should merge with LARIA, providing an acceptable proposal can be agreed. Given the problems we have encountered in maintaining membership numbers and in attracting delegates to events, the EC believes this would provide the best chance of continuing the work of SSRG in the future.

Ballot

This is a preliminary ballot to seek your agreement in principle to pursue a merger. If the majority of members who vote agree in principle to the merger, the EC will develop a detailed proposal, and seek agreement with the LARIA council. A further ballot of SSRG Members will be required to make a final decision about whether to go ahead with the merger, once the details have been addressed.

The ballot question is:

Do you agree in principle to SSRG merging with LARIA? Please tick the appropriate box
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Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
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No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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We would also like to hear your views about what aspects of SSRG you would like to see retained in any new merged organisation

Have you any other comments about the merger? Please email the Chair at the address below

There are three ways to vote on this ballot

- In person at the SSRG [AGM, held at the Annual Workshop](#) in Birmingham on the 15th March.
- In an [online ballot](#) (you will need to enter your name and email address)
- By emailing your vote to martin.stevens@kcl.ac.uk
- By posting a hard copy vote to: Martin Stevens, 25 Court Lane, Portsmouth PO6 2LQ