

Communications Annual Report: April 2016 to March 2017

Purpose of report

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report updates Leadership Board on the LGA's communications activity and the progress with our corporate campaigns.

Since December 2012, and following the publication of our communications plan and strategy, a monitoring and evaluation system has been developed to allow tracking and recording of key communications activity. Please note our engagement on the General Election was outside the reporting period but will be captured in the next report.

In order to achieve our organisational priorities, between April 2016 - March 2017 we:

- Increased national media mentions year-on-year from 1,520 in the same period for 2015/16 to 2,207 in 2016/17. (45 per cent increase in episodes of national media coverage).
- Submitted evidence in Parliament to more than 40 committee inquiries and briefed on 86 parliamentary debates, including on key legislation such as social care and housing; we achieved 1,053 mentions in Parliament, the equivalent of being quoted four times each day Parliament sat to debate policy and legislation.
- Drove 782,132 unique visitors to the LGA website, achieving a 1.5 per cent increase from the same period last year, and 2,330,878 unique page views. There have been 6,524 new subscribers to the LGA's ebulletins since 1 April 2016.
- Produced over 250 designed marketing documents, including major publications, posters, workbooks, summaries and items for social media, providing copy-editing, design and strategic support as part of our this work.
- Increased the number of followers of Twitter channel @LGAComms by 3,600 followers in one year and 7,578 followers increase over three years.
- Organised and delivered 83 events attended by 7,254 delegates. The commercial events have made £806,477.45 net income. Eighty-four per cent were free to attend and of these 18 per cent were semi-commercial (event management fee charged).
- Sent out 786 bulletins over the year.

*Please note from June 2016 we used a more accurate way of measuring performance regarding download figures for all website content.

Recommendations

That the LGA Leadership Board notes the communications activity for the period April 2016 to March 2017.

Action

As directed by Members.

19 July 2017

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Communications Annual Report: April 2016 to March 2017

Fair Funding

1. For the last few years, the LGA has been lobbying for reform of funding that would see English local government collectively retain business rates from 2019/20 and have a strong voice on the development of a new system. In 2015 the Government announced that local government would be able to retain all business rates raised locally by 2020.
2. During this report period, our campaign has focused on creating awareness of our calls for local government as a whole to keep 100 per cent of the business rates they collect and securing funding to support £300 million of discretionary relief, enabling councils to provide support to individual businesses in the most challenging circumstances in their local area.
3. We have also long argued that letting councils set discounts and reliefs themselves locally would help them better support small businesses and local economies.

The Local Government Finance Bill was an important step on the road towards this; it contained a number of provisions which come as a result of our lobbying on behalf of local government. The LGA briefed for each stage of the debate; Cllr Nick Forbes gave oral evidence to the Bill Committee while Shadow Minister for Local Government Gareth Thomas MP also made our case. Whilst it did not complete its passage through Parliament before the general election was called, we will be calling for the new government to reintroduce the Bill.

We helped deliver this by:

- generating 89 per cent positive media coverage on council funding through proactive media work
- ensuring the reputation of local government remaining consistently high across Parliament, with three-quarters of MPs and eight out of 10 peers agreeing that councils should have greater financial powers and freedoms (77 per cent MPs and 82 per cent peers)
- producing a briefing on the Government's consultation on business rates retention, highlighting our calls for powers to be extended to all areas, not just those with elected mayors
- delivering 13 local business rates retention events, reaching 725 people
- making the business rates hub, since its launch in mid-April 2016, one of the most viewed pages on the LGA website, with 12,687 unique page views (22,314 total views).

Media

4. We issued a total of 17 media releases related to the Fair Funding campaign throughout this period achieving 110 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months our most popular story was 'Government funding measures leave two thirds

of councils worse off in 2017/18, LGA warns' (27 January 2017), generating seven episodes of national coverage including BBC Radio 5 Live, Good Morning Britain and the Daily Mail.

5. 89 per cent of our coverage was proactive for the Fair Funding (business rates) campaign in the past year and 89 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

6. Over the last year, a 'Don't be left in the dark' publication, which gives an easy to follow summary of the key issues, was published. There have also been 30 items in First magazine and we have continued to manage the business rates web hub.

7. Key outputs:

- 7.1. 12,687 visits to the website (22,314 total page views)
- 7.2. visitors spend an average of 2 minutes 44 seconds on the page
- 7.3. 820 downloads of the publication.

Public affairs

8. Following our lobbying, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, announced at the LGA Councillors' Forum the responsibility for attendance allowance would not be included as part of the current business rate reforms. This is an important win for councils.
9. We published three briefings on the Local Government Finance Bill including summaries of each key bill highlights. The summaries in total have been viewed 323 times.
10. Our calls that councils should be able to allocate additional revenue raised from the transition to 100 per cent business rates retention were backed by the Communities and Local Government Committee.

Events

11. We held 13 events related to business rates in the last year, attended by 725 people in total. In the last six months these have included:
 - 11.1. 2020 Vision: LGA annual finance conference (5 January 2017, London) (100 attendees)
 - 11.2. Business rates retention consultation events 2016/17 (10 free regional events around the country) (473 attendees).

Social care

12. Our work on social care has seen us work together with councils and partners to call for the Government to commit to social care funding in councils to ease financial pressures in other areas of council budgets.

Following intense campaigning work, Chancellor Philip Hammond MP announced in the Spring Budget for 2017 that councils will receive £2 billion extra funding for social care over the next three years, including £1 billion in 2017/18. This additional funding represents vital funding for services caring for the most vulnerable in our communities over the next few years. The Government's Green Paper on social care will see local government leaders playing a central role in finding a long-term solution that reforms and fully funds our care system.

We helped deliver this by:

- generating 91 per cent positive coverage in the media
- bringing MPs and Peers onside, with three-quarters of MPs and eight out of ten Peers agreeing that they support additional funding for councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis (78 per cent MPs and 84 per cent peers).
- giving written and oral evidence to several important committee inquiries, including a Communities and Local Government inquiry into the financial sustainability of social care and the House of Lords committee on NHS sustainability
- producing our '2016 state of the nation' report which was downloaded 2,335 times, making it one of the top four most downloaded LGA publications in the last year
- setting up and promoting the STP bulletin [webpage](#) through the chief executive's bulletins. The page has had 327 unique page views (425 total page views).

Media

13. We issued a total of 55 media releases related to the social care campaign throughout this period achieving 359 episodes of national coverage.
14. In the last six months our most popular story was 'Budget 2017: LGA responds to social care funding' (8 March 2017), which was covered 21 times in national media including Sky News, BBC Daily Politics and ITV News. It was also referenced by leader of the opposition Jeremy Corbyn MP in Prime Minister's Questions.
15. 96 per cent of our coverage was proactive for the social care campaign in the past year and 91 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

16. We have championed our work on social care using digital and online channels, including a high profile publication, 'Adult social care funding: 2016 state of the nation report' which highlights public support for increased social care funding and launched at NCAS conference in November 2016. We also produced three additional publications for this area.
17. To demonstrate the scale of the challenge facing councils in meeting the £2.6 billion adult social care funding shortfall (by 2019/2020), we developed and launched an illustrative adult social care budget tool on our website that puts the user in control of a local council budget. The tool was promoted in the week of 13 February 2017 when it launched, reaching 30,900 people.

18. Key outputs:

- 18.1. the publication achieved 2,335 downloads of, putting it in the top five most popular publications on the LGA website in the last year
- 18.2. the social care budget tool was used 2,600 page views
- 18.3. The social care quiz was taken 620 times
- 18.4. a range of publications were launched at the National Children and Adult Services Conference (NCAS), in total receiving 4,444 total downloads
- 18.5. During NCAS conference our tweet launching the NCAS social care story reached 9,500 people.
- 18.6. There have also been 75 features in First magazine.

Public affairs

19. We have responded to two high profile committee inquiries investigating social care with LGA's key concerns on social care funding raised.
20. On 28 November, the LGA's Chief Executive, Mark Lloyd, gave evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee on health and social care integration. He called for national action to fund social care and highlighted the LGA's role in spreading good practice for health and social care integration. The committee recommended an increase in immediate funding from the Government, and an urgent review into the long-term funding of the sector. MPs also called on the Government to work with the LGA in order to improve the sharing of best practice.
21. Our lobbying for the Government to urgently invest more money in social care throughout the year was reflected when the Prime Minister, appeared before the House of Commons Liaison Committee in December 2016. Particular highlights of the session included questioning on adult social care funding, and the LGA's key concerns being repeatedly raised by the committee.
22. During Prime Minister's Questions in February 2017, the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn MP, referenced an LGA media release (8 March 2017) in which our chairman warned that rises in council tax permitted through use of social care precepts would be insufficient to adequately fund social care.

Events

23. We held two events focused on social care in the last year, reaching 971 people. These were:
 - 23.1. National Children and Adult Services Conference 2016 (2 - 4 November 2016, Manchester)(915 attendees) organised by LGA, Association of Directors of

Social Services (ADASS) and Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). It is an opportunity for adults and children's services lead members and officers to share experiences and learning. Delegates took part in a wide range of workshops, plenary sessions, discussions around funding, health, social care integration and the development of Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs).

- 23.2. Developing sustainable social care budgets and services (23 February 2017, London) (56 attendees).

Housing

24. We have been working to place councils at the forefront of driving housing growth, building more homes, looking at the role of councils in shaping homes within prosperous places and communities, housing and employment and housing an ageing population. Councils need more powers and funding to build more affordable homes, provide homes to rent and reduce homelessness.
25. During this report period we have continued to highlight that councils can do more if given more powers to borrow to invest in housing, keep 100 per cent of the receipts from properties sold through Right to Buy, replace homes and reinvest in building affordable homes. The LGA's Housing Commission final report set out some of our key asks in advance of the Government's Housing White Paper including 30 recommendations forming the basis of our activity throughout 2017 – shaping our investments in improvement, and good practice work with councils looking to innovate in how they meet the housing needs of their communities.

The Autumn Statement's confirmation of additional investment and flexibility for councils to help build affordable homes, and to invest in infrastructure linked to housing growth, both reflect central asks from the preliminary findings. A number of recommendations made in our Housing Commission final report have been taken on board including greater flexibility around starter homes.

As a direct result of LGA lobbying major changes were made to the Homelessness Reduction Bill which reduce the proposed burdens on councils. We also secured a commitment from Government to fully fund the new duties in the Act, and this has led to £61 million in additional funding for councils.

We helped deliver this by :

- publishing a total of 24 LGA parliamentary briefings on housing, neighbourhood and planning bills and homelessness
- producing 88 proactive media releases resulting in 86 per cent positive media coverage
- securing a commitment from Government to fully fund the new duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act, resulting in £61 million in additional funding for councils
- producing two Housing Commission reports and the Housing and Planning Get in on the Act, which were in the top 10 most downloaded publications on the website.

Media

26. We issued a total of 24 media releases related to the housing campaign throughout this period, achieving 173 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months, our most popular story was 'Proportion of 25-year-old homeowners halved in 20 years' (22 December 2016), which achieved 18 episodes of national coverage including the Times, Sky, BBC Breakfast, Guardian and Telegraph.
27. 88 per cent of our coverage was proactive for housing in the past year and 86 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

28. We have led on a range of activity to highlight our key asks on housing including producing two major publications, 'Building our homes, communities and future: preliminary findings from the LGA Housing Commission' and 'Building our homes communities and future: The LGA housing commission final report'. There have also been 46 items in First magazine.
29. Key outputs:
 - 29.1. 2,693 total downloads of the publications
 - 29.2. 67 tweets reaching 150,798 people
 - 29.3. our Christmas Twitter activity was read by 47,510 people
 - 29.4. Housing Commission webpage has received a total of 600 page views
 - 29.5. 300 printed copies of the preliminary findings housing publication were distributed at LGA Annual Conference 2016 housing session and campaign stand.

Public affairs

30. We published a total of 24 housing bill briefings on housing and planning, homelessness reduction and neighbourhood planning, including summaries of each key bill highlights. The summaries in total have been viewed 1,424 times. Our Housing White Paper briefing has been downloaded 372 times including 664 summary page views.
31. We worked with parliamentarians to table amendments to the Neighbourhood Planning Act allowing local planning authorities to recover the full costs of planning, which helped secure a government commitment in the Housing White Paper to increase fees by up to 20 per cent. We also secured greater powers for councils in the development of new towns and villages and for councils to limit office-to-residential conversion in some cases.
32. To support our work on housing, we provided written and oral evidence to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) into Housing: State of the Nation. A report was produced by CLG Committee with a recommendation that all Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing caps should be raised, a key component of LGA lobbying over the last year.

Events

33. We held six events across the country related to housing in the last year reaching 296 people in total. In the last six months these have included:
- 33.1. Building Homes, Reducing Homelessness, London (21 March 2017) (77 attendees)
 - 33.2. Building homes and funding associated infrastructure (27 January 2017) (96 attendees)
 - 33.3. Homelessness in London: sustainably managing and sourcing temporary accommodation solutions (12 December 2016) (53 attendees).

Devolution

34. The LGA believes councils not Westminster are best placed to ensure positive outcomes for people. Our DevoNext campaign was launched in March 2015 with the publication 'English devolution: local solutions for a successful nation', which demonstrated what devolution could look like on a local level.
35. Over the course of the year we have continued to help councils to secure the benefits of devolution for their residents, one of the LGA's top priorities. We have worked closely with councils to provide both direct support through devolution focused events, as well as online resources. The DevoNext hub, our one-stop shop for the latest learning and intelligence, includes a new section on devolution communications.

Peers voted in favour of councils retaining the power to form new municipal bus companies, which the LGA has been calling for. There has been good progress in moving the Government to a position where devolution is now well underway, with our devolution register showcasing over 200 entries. As well as the win on municipal bus companies, we opposed amendments intended to add restrictions to local authorities applying for partnership schemes or franchising powers, which were subsequently withdrawn.

We helped deliver this by:

- generating 44 episodes of positive devolution coverage during this period.
- offering a number of free to attend devolution events with around 342 delegates attending
- achieving over 200,000 views of our tweets
- making 'Devolution Deals' the most popular page on hub, achieving 14,527 total page views in the last year
- seeking agreement in Westminster for our asks, with three-quarters of MPs and eight out of 10 peers agreeing that councils should have greater financial powers and freedoms (77 per cent MPs and 82 per cent peers).

Media

36. We issued a total of 18 media releases related to the DevoNext campaign throughout this period, generating 44 episodes of national coverage.
37. In the last six months our most popular story was 'Bus services – new figures reveal reductions forced on councils' (12 November 2016) which achieved 15 episodes of national coverage, including BBC Breakfast, BBC News, Sky News.
38. Ninety-six per cent of our coverage was proactive for the DevoNext campaign in the past year and 100 per cent of the coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

39. Key channels for our work on devolution have been our refreshed DevoNext hub and two publications, 'Don't be left in the dark, devolution and mayors' (317 total downloads) and 'Devolution: our offer of support' (307 total downloads). We also produced eight additional publications for this area and a 'Devolution explained in 60 seconds, elected mayors' video. There have also been 24 items in First magazine.
40. Key outputs:
 - 40.1. 50,514 visits to the DevoNext hub (67,390 total page views)
 - 40.2. 'Devolution Deals' was the most popular page on hub – 14,527 total page views
 - 40.3. 2,600 downloads of ten publications
 - 40.4. 230 views of 'Devolution explained in 60 seconds, elected mayors' video
 - 40.5. over 200,000 people seeing our tweets across our devolution publications.

Public affairs

41. We published eight briefings of the Bus Services Bill, including summaries of each bill's key highlights. The summaries in total have been viewed 490 times. The Bill became an Act on 24 April 2017. We emphasised the importance of the Bill reaching Royal Assent and securing automatic franchising powers for mayoral combined authorities. We opposed amendments which intended to add restrictions to local authorities applying for partnership schemes or franchising powers, which were subsequently withdrawn. Following our lobbying on the Act, the Government confirmed it would review the Bus Service Operators Grant.

Events

42. We held seven events across the country related to devolution in the last year, reaching 342 people in total. In the last six months these have included:
 - 42.1. The road ahead for buses – a national conference on the future of local bus provision (15 February 2017, London) (46 attendees)
 - 42.2. Making the case for devolution (25 January 2017, London) (19 attendees)
 - 42.3. Shaping devolution: the role of communities and citizens (17 October 2016, London) (51 attendees).

Brexit

43. The LGA's EU Brexit team, media and public affairs teams and Brussels office are working together to understand the Government's preparations and ensure local government plays an important part in the preparations to leave the EU.
44. The LGA will continue to make the case for:
 - 44.1. new responsibilities to be given to local communities through local government
 - 44.2. powers and responsibilities setting out what local government should support at the local level so that public services can be designed around local need
 - 44.3. greater responsibility for funding with less legislative constraints at a local level to improve public services and ensure that local residents and business see how their money is used.

Media

45. We issued a total of seven media releases related to Brexit throughout this period achieving 16 episodes of national coverage.
46. One hundred per cent of our coverage was proactive in the past year and 100 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

47. Over the last year, we have promoted our messages on Brexit via the website and email bulletin coverage. There were 13 items in First magazine.
48. Key outputs:
 - 48.1. 4,278 visits to the website (5,112 total page views)
 - 48.2. visitors spending an average of 2 minutes 54 seconds on the page
 - 48.3. 29 per cent increase in bulletin subscriber numbers since July 2016 (five bulletins published during the timeline). The unique open rate remained consistent at 23 per cent.

Public affairs

49. Our statement following the EU referendum, in which we offered our full cooperation in helping to make Brexit work for local communities was discussed by Labour MP Graham Morris in a Parliamentary debate, who referred the Secretary of State for Local Government, Sajid Javid MP to our statement.
50. We wrote three briefings for parliamentarians, published on the LGA website and reaching a total of 1,194 people.

Children and young people

51. The LGA estimated that forced academisation of all schools would have cost councils up to £380 million by 2020 and has delivered significant work to stop this. Other key asks have also included work to prevent the Secretary of State amending social care legislation in a local authority, compulsory sex and relationship education in schools, and support for councils to better meet the need of unaccompanied children.
52. Our work in this area has also included the 'Come Back to Social Work campaign', jointly launched in September 2016 with the Department for Education, the Department of Health and JobsGopublic. The campaign was designed to offer former social workers the opportunity to come back to social work and provide them with free training to prepare them to re-register for the profession.

The LGA worked with parliamentarians and the Government to remove the power allowing the Secretary of State to relax or amend children's social care legislation in a local authority in intervention without proper local consultation or consent. The Government also amended the legislation to include our call for sex and relationships education to be made compulsory in all secondary schools. Children's Minister Edward Timpson MP moved amendments to put relationships and sex education and personal, social, health and economic education on a statutory footing. He commended MPs and the LGA who worked to raise awareness of the issue.

We won a commitment from Government to a national dispersal mechanism for unaccompanied children, with councils receiving between 20 to 33 per cent more funding compared to previous rates. These rates will be reviewed in 2017/18 and we continue to push for the costs to councils to be fully met. After lobbying strongly against academisation, Government announced that it would no longer legislate to force all schools to become academies.

Our Come Back to Social Work campaign drove 153 applications for 30 vacancies and 51 employers registered with the social work recruitment scheme.

We helped deliver this by:

- issuing ten parliamentary briefings issued on the Children and Social Care Bill
- Generating 436 episodes for national coverage
- producing a campaign communications toolkit for the social care recruitment campaign, which was downloaded 204 times.

Media

53. We issued 93 media release related to children and young people throughout this period.
54. In the last six months our most popular story was 'Lack of sex education fuelling sexually transmitted infections' (15 February 2017) which achieved 14 episodes of national coverage, including Sky News, Times, Guardian.

55. 86 per cent of our coverage was proactive for children and young people in the past year and 86 per cent of the coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

56. During this report period we created content for Come Back to Social Work for our website toolkit, Twitter and bulletin. We published a 'Get in on the Act for the Childcare Act 2016', highlighting our work influencing legislation and explaining the key tenets in the Act, downloaded 107 times. There were two features in First magazine.

57. Key outputs:

- 57.1. five publications downloaded 2,600 times
- 57.2. social care recruitment toolkit for councils downloaded 204 times
- 57.3. the microsite had 3,660 views (www.comebacktosocialwork.co.uk/)
- 57.4. three campaign update bulletins published to 82 subscribers achieving
- 57.5. three tweets on #worldsocialworkday, promoting trainees have now graduated from the programme and are ready to re-register with HCPC, achieved 5,000 views

Public affairs

58. We were at the forefront of calls to reverse the Government's ambition to make all schools academies. We set out our concerns of local government, and the Government subsequently dropped the proposal.
59. The LGA worked with parliamentarians and the Government to remove the power allowing the Secretary of State to relax or amend children's social care legislation in a local authority in intervention without proper local consultation or consent. The Government also amended the legislation to include our call for sex and relationships education to be made compulsory in all secondary schools.
60. In addition to providing a range of briefings on the Children and Social Work Bill, we have also briefed parliament on the importance of free childcare. We also pointed out the significant role of local government in early years' education and care, and called for the system to be properly funded.
61. We published 10 briefings on the bill, including summaries of each key bill highlights. The summaries in total have been viewed 411 times and the bill briefings were downloaded 356 times.

Events

62. We held six events across the country related to children and young people in the last year, reaching 1,110 people in total. In the last six months these have included:

- 62.1. The road ahead for buses – a national conference on the future of local bus provision (15 February 2017, London) (46 attendees)

- 62.2. Summit on refugee children (13 October 2016, London) (32 attendees)
- 62.3. Supporting unaccompanied children summit (13 October 2016) (32 attendees)
- 62.4. Early years: health (29 March 2017, London) (37 attendees)
- 62.5. National Children and Adult Services Conference 2016 (2 - 4 November 2016, Manchester) (915 attendees) organised by LGA, Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) and Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS).

Public health

63. The LGA is campaigning for properly resourced public health services. We have argued that integration of health and social care alone cannot solve the financial challenges facing health and social care, and that only an injection of additional government money will enable councils and partners to protect the services caring for our vulnerable and elderly.
64. During the report timeline as part of the Health Committee's inquiry into suicide prevention, our politicians gave evidence on behalf of the LGA. The committee's report emphasised the need for greater clarity over funding arrangements for mental health services, which we have been consistently calling for.

The LGA achieved a significant milestone on behalf of its membership in the commissioning of prevention services at the Royal Courts of Justice. The National Aids Trust (NAT), supported by the LGA, was successful at the High Court and subsequently in the Appeal Court in challenging NHS England's decision that it did not have the legal powers to commission the HIV treatment Pre Exposure Prophylaxis, also known as PrEP.

During this Parliamentary session, a number of cross-party MPs stressed the importance of investing in public health and prevention, particularly childhood obesity. Following our evidence submission to the Health Committee on public health responsibilities, MPs concluded that councils are well placed to deliver public health objectives across our communities. In the report, the committee supported the LGA's key messages that cuts to public health and the services deliver a false economy and it recommended that the Government needed commit to protecting funding for public health.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Innovation, Nicola Blackwood MP, announced the ring fencing of the public health grant would be extended for another year to ease the transition into business rates retention at the LGA/ADPH Annual Public Health Conference in March 2017.

We helped deliver this through:

- a total of six proactive media releases with 87 per cent of positive coverage
- the Healthcare Stakeholder Communications quarterly meeting, at which we outlined the LGA's parliamentary engagement on health and social care
- 9,177 downloads of 18 publications.

19 July 2017

Media

65. We issued six media release related to public health throughout this period including 248 episodes of national media coverage.
66. In the last six months our most popular story was 'Lack of sex education fuelling sexually transmitted infections' (15 February 2017) which achieved 14 episodes of national coverage, including Sky News, Times, Guardian.
67. Eighty-four per cent of our coverage was proactive for public health in the past year and 87 per cent of the coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

68. Over the last year we promoted our work on public health through 18 publications, downloaded 9,177 times. These included 'LGA Annual Public Health report, four years on' and 'Maintaining our momentum: essays on four years of public health', launched at the Annual Public Health Conference in March 2017. There have also been 17 items in First magazine.

Public affairs

69. As part of the Health Committee's inquiry into suicide prevention, Cllr Richard Kemp gave evidence on behalf of the LGA in January 2017. The committee's report emphasised the need for greater clarity over funding arrangements for mental health services, which we have been consistently calling for.
70. Following evidence from Councillor Jonathan McShane to the Health Committee, as part of its inquiry in public health responsibilities, the committee published its report calling for the Government to protect funding for public health. The report found that changes to local government funding, especially the removal of ring-fencing of the public health grant, needed to be managed so as not to further disadvantage areas with high deprivation and poor health outcomes.
71. Childhood obesity continued to be a priority for central and local government. As part of our child obesity campaign work, the LGA called for fundamental reforms, such as a mandatory reduction in sugar in soft drinks, better sugar labelling on food and drink products, calorie counts on menus in chain restaurants, and for councils to be given powers to ban junk food advertising near schools. The LGA also called for the income generated from the proposed sugar levy on soft drinks to be administered by councils, who are best placed to work with schools and communities to fight childhood obesity. Cllr Izzi Seccombe emphasised these keys messages as party of the inquiry into childhood obesity, held by the British-Irish Parliamentary Sub-Committee.
72. We also hosted the Healthcare Stakeholder Communications quarterly meeting, at which we outlined the LGA's parliamentary engagement on health and social care.

Events

73. We held two events related to health in the last year, reaching 230 people. These were:
- 73.1. LGA/ADPH Annual Public Health Conference 2017 (9 March 2017, London) (189 attendees)
 - 73.2. Think Autism: supporting the person, their family and their carers (23 November 2016, London) (41 attendees).

Reputation

74. The reputation of local government and the LGA has never been more important as local authorities are increasingly having to deliver more with less. In the last year our campaigns have focused on making the case for local government in parliament and creating awareness of the LGA's key asks, including for housing, social care, Brexit, devolution and business rates retention, through our media engagement, digital channels and events. While we have covered specific areas in different sections of this report, work that in itself has significantly contributed to overarching reputation, in this section we look specifically at how our work overall and across all areas has enhanced the reputation of the both the LGA and the sector as a whole.

Our stakeholders' perception survey, published in February this year, analysed comments from 862 stakeholders interviewed including chief executives, leaders and frontline councillors. Over four in five (83 per cent) believe that the LGA keeps them either 'fairly' or 'very well informed' about their work, which maintains the uplift seen in 2015.

As with previous years, respondents are most likely to find out about the work of the LGA via First magazine (76 per cent), with a range other forms of communication mentioned by at least half of respondents – media work/press releases (67 per cent), events and conferences (64 per cent) and the LGA website (59 per cent). However, significantly fewer respondents than in 2015 mention finding out about the LGA's work through publications (40 per cent compared to 50 per cent) while in contrast significantly more mention face-to-face contact (39 per cent compared to 32 per cent) and the parliamentary bulletin (33 per cent compared to 27 per cent).

The most common method of engagement with the LGA remains responding to consultations, mentioned by 72 per cent of respondents.

The LGA has been quoted 1,053 times in Parliament. Our perceived effectiveness amongst MPs measured in the 2016/17 Parliament has increased this year (53 per cent compared to 46 per cent) and remains constant with peers (59 per cent compare to 58 per cent).

We delivered this by:

- ensuring 84 per cent of media coverage was positive, with over 162,601 unique page views of media releases in this period
- driving our perceived effectiveness with MPs up by 7 per cent on last year
- bringing council officers together at our Parliamentary Network event to share best

- practice and update members on our political priorities
- achieving over 5.3 million impressions (5,373,000) for 2,194 tweets relating to councils during this report period
 - sending our CommsNet bulletin to a total of 1,706 subscribers every week, an increase of 330 (24 per cent) new subscribers since 1 April 2016
 - reaching over 18,500 followers with our Twitter account @LGAComms, an increase of over 3,600 followers in one year and 7,578 follower increase over three years.

Media

75. We issued 88 media releases beyond our immediate campaigns which have contributed to demonstrating the scope of local authorities' work, achieving 600 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months our most popular story has been 'Lorry drivers must use commercial satnavs, say councils, after new catalogue of chaos' (28 January 2017) achieving 600 episodes of national coverage. Cllr Tett was interviewed on BBC Radio stations, LBC, Sky News and radio, BBC News and BBC Breakfast.
76. 86 per cent of our coverage was proactive in the past year and 84 per cent of our coverage was positive.
77. There were 162,601 unique page views (192,952 total page views) of all media releases and an average time on page of 1 mins 46 seconds (about twice as long as site average).

Campaigns and digital

78. Over the last year, we highlighted the wide range of work councils do through a range of channels, including Twitter and CommsHub. We have created a steady stream of content that supported council priorities and showcased best practice. Our Purdah guidance was particularly successful, reaching 1,487 downloads during this report period. There were 12 items in First magazine generally related to councils' reputation.
79. Key outputs:
- 79.1. over 250 publications and marketing documents produced over the year, covering all areas of the LGA.
 - 79.2. 4,769 downloads of 10 publications relating specifically to issues of reputation and governance.
 - 79.3. our Digital Councils guide to social media engagement achieved 11,610 page views, (9,179 unique page views).

Public affairs

80. We hosted a number of events, including annual parliamentary receptions, roundtable briefings in Parliament and supported councils through our Parliamentary Network bringing together parliamentarians and council leaders to discuss policies affecting councils.
81. Three-quarters of MPs and eight out of 10 peers agree that:
 - 81.1. councils should have greater financial powers and freedoms (77 per cent MPs and 82 per cent peers)
 - 81.2. councils should have greater control over local public services in their areas (78 per cent MPs and 86 per cent peers)
 - 81.3. councils should have additional funding for councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis (78 per cent MPs and 84 per cent peers).
82. We submitted evidence to more than 40 committee inquiries and briefed on 86 parliamentary debates, including on key legislation such as social care and housing.
83. Over the last year parliamentary briefings and responses web pages have had a total of 37,788 unique page views (49,709 total page views) and average time on page of 1 mins 46 seconds (about over twice as long as the site average).

Events

84. We hosted four events related specifically to sector reputation, reaching 1,656 people. In the last year these were:
 - 84.1. LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition (5 – 7 July 2016) (1,512 attendees)
 - 84.2. New conversations: engaging with communities (27 February 2017) (69 attendees). We launched our publication 'New Conversations: LGA guide to engagement' at the event. The publication has received 1,063 total downloads.
 - 84.3. The impact of shared service partnerships in local government (23 November 2016) (43 attendees)
 - 84.4. Supporting unaccompanied children summit (13 October 2016) (32 attendees).

Sector-led improvement

85. Sector-led improvement is integral to all LGA communication work, with an element of sharing and promoting best-practice woven into all our campaigns.
86. We have worked closely with councils to support them in delivering sector-led improvement. Councils' take-up of our improvement support offer, peer challenge and leadership programmes remains strong. Our digital promotion includes direct and targeted support for councils through our #InnovateTuesday tweets focusing on both individual examples of councils' work and general council updates.

Our record over the last year shows the critical role played by the LGA, in partnership with others including DCLG, in ensuring the performance of councils, addressing those at risk of underperformance, driving improvement across the sector, supporting councils through significant changes and supporting strong local leadership. In 2016/17 we delivered 119 peer challenges, over 700 councillors participated in our various leadership development programmes, we provided tailored support through the use of member or officer peers for 193 councils, helped councils save an estimated £13.2 million through the use of collaborative procurement frameworks and our deployment of commercial experts, helped councils save in excess of £26 million through the deployment of our productivity experts, and created a new database for capturing and sharing innovative practice.

The Innovative Councils web page was in the top 10 most popular for engagement. We have supported and promoted the role of the LGA in the launch of the Public Sector Audit Appointments body (PSAA). Over 98 per cent of eligible authorities have opted into PSAA's external auditor arrangements.

We helped deliver this by:

- issuing 24 proactive media releases, achieving a total of 82 per cent positive coverage
- helping persuade over 98 per cent of eligible authorities to opt into PSAA's external auditor arrangements with 483 out of 492 authorities taking up the offer by 9 March 2017 deadline
- publishing 160 tweets celebrating #InnovateTuesday, reaching 375,873 people
- delivering the infrastructure and marketing support for the Innovation Zone at the LGA 2016 annual conference, bringing together over 30 councils to showcase their innovations to hundreds of delegates.

Media

87. We produced 24 media releases supporting sector-led improvement throughout this period achieving 78 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months, our most popular story was 'School improvement at risk (30 December 2016)', achieving three episodes of national coverage.
88. Eighty-two per cent of our coverage was proactive for sector-led improvement in the past year and 82 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

89. We produced 16 supporting documents for councils in the last year including eight in the last six months. The most popular publication 'LGA corporate peer challenge: an introduction to the peer challenge process and role of peers' achieved 1,116 total downloads. There have also been 13 items in First magazine.
90. Key outputs:
- 90.1. 7,344 visits to the website (24,736 total page views)
 - 90.2. visitors spend an average of 2 minutes 22 seconds on the page (in the top 10 for LGA webpages)
 - 90.3. 16 publications produced, including the Councillors' Guide 2016/17, which were downloaded 5,257 times

Events

91. We hosted 10 events related to sector-led improvement in the last year, reaching 470 people in total. In the last six months these have included:
 - 91.1. A year ahead in regulation (23 March 2017) (60 attendees)
 - 91.2. Five taxi and PHV licensing regional events (October and November 2016) (168 attendees) (We launched the publication 'Taxi and PHV licensing: a councillor's handbook' to coincide with the events)
 - 91.3. The LGA/ADCS Early Years Conference (29 March 2017) (37 attendees)
 - 91.4. Supporting unaccompanied children summit (13 October 2016) (32 attendees).

Communications improvement and support team

92. We have continued to develop our sector-led improvement offer over the last year. Activities have focused on continuing our core business of delivering three day in-depth communication reviews and rapid assessment one day communications 'health checks'. We have also extended our offer of bespoke strategic communications support, particularly in the areas of 'new councils' or council mergers, corporate narrative and place branding.
93. We have continued to focus on developing accessible online resources to assist local government communications teams during this period. Between October 2016 and March 2017, we launched two new best practice resources on strategic social media and resident engagement. We have also significantly increased the number of best practice case studies in our dedicated communications support library, developing a new template in the process to ensure that content is consistent, engaging and relevant and that high standards are maintained. There has also been a continued emphasis on supporting professional development across the sector through sponsorship and the delivery of a number of key learning events and providing opportunities for LGA communications staff and communicators across local government to take part in communication reviews and health checks.

Reviews and health checks

94. We have delivered seven in-depth communications reviews during this period. Five rapid assessment communications health checks were delivered.
95. We explored a range of issues across these reviews and health checks including strategic communications; structure, capacity and capability; member communications, marketing, digital and social communications, internal communications, place branding, partnership communications and corporate narrative.
96. A total of 221 best practice recommendations were made across all councils who have received health checks or communications peer reviews during this period.

Strategic support

97. In addition to the core support offer, we have also developed a number of bespoke packages for councils requiring more in depth strategic communications support. This has included the LGA spending days on site (team members and LGA associates) to support councils to restructure communications functions, advise on recruitment, develop crisis communication plans, create bespoke place brands and resident engagement plans and develop strategic internal communication plans.

Resources and case studies

98. In November 2016 we launched [Digital Councils – Social Media Strategy](#) in partnership with Comms2point0 at the annual Public Sector Communications Academy. During the period the resource received 9,275 unique page views with visitors spending an average of two minutes on page.
99. We added 32 new case studies to the communications hub online best practice library during this period.
100. In February 2017 we launched [New Conversations – LGA guide to engagement](#) in partnership with The Campaign Company. The best practice guide included an overview of engagement theory, practical advice for councils to improve their engagement activities and case studies from member councils already seeing the benefits of more effective engagement.
- 100.1. 70 people attended the London launch event including chief executives, heads of communication and members and engagement portfolio
- 100.2. 812 unique downloads of the publication from launch (27 Feb) to 31 March
- 100.3. 88.2 per cent of attendees reported that they were very or fairly satisfied with the event.
101. We have also published two quarterly resident satisfaction national polling surveys during the period October 2016 and March 2017.

Events

102. The LGA were the official partner of the 2016 Comms2point0 Unawards and masterclasses for the third year in a row. The awards recognise the talents of communications teams and officers from across local government and the wider public sector.
103. Three masterclasses were held in this period in London, Leeds and Birmingham. One hundred and seventy-four communicators attended including representatives from 34 LGA member councils.
104. Other events in this period also included a dedicated merger communications event for those councils in the process of new council discussions (East Kent, Dorset and Taunton Deane and West Somerset). Representatives from all councils attended the best practice and learning round table.

Training and development

105. We have continued to extend its reach across local government by offering learning and development opportunities for communications practitioners to take part in health checks and peer reviews. In the period October 2016 to March 2017:
- 105.1. six LGA communications team employees attended a communications review or health check as either a full team member or shadow.
 - 105.2. four communications professionals on the 2017 LG Comms Future Leaders programme shadowed a communications review.
 - 105.3. nine new peer reviewers joined the communications review peer pool and joined the teams for either a one day health check or three day review.
106. We have coordinated media training opportunities for Tower Hamlets members during this period.

#OurDay

107. #OurDay is a yearly LGA Twitter campaign highlighting a day in the life of local government, which promotes and creates awareness on how councils deliver over 800 services on a day-to-day basis.

Last year's #OurDay took place on 15 November 2016 and was the biggest yet, with over 9,000 people taking to social media to raise awareness of the services provided by local government, giving anyone who works or volunteers in public services the chance to share stories of what they do to improve the lives of residents and run their local services.

We reached over 20 million people. Throughout the day almost 37,000 tweets (18,754 in 2015) were sent from councillors, officers and volunteers, trending at number one most of the day.

Tweets posted on #OurDay 2016 by councils was almost double the previous year, indicating the day is becoming more popular with 36,690 tweets posted in comparison to 18,754 in 2015.

We delivered this by:

- encouraging over 37,000 tweets using the hashtag #Ourday, reaching over 20 million people
- inspiring 375 accounts to join in our thunderclap
- ensuring our Twibbon was used by 225 councils, organisations and individuals
- generating 7,915 visits to date to our #OurDay pages.

Media

108. To support the #OurDay tweetathon, the Guardian Online ran a feature which highlighted the work of local government and called on council staff to share pictures and stories with them that represent a day in their life.

Campaigns and digital

109. Key outputs:

- 109.1. the Thunderclap at 7am on the morning of #OurDay had a social reach of 2,613,421 people
- 109.2. on #OurDay alone our website toolkit was viewed 319 times
- 109.3. our top tweet 'Councils across the country are sharing a typical 24hrs, follow #OurDay to learn more', issued at 7.33 am, was retweeted by Angela Rayner, MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education and produced 165 retweets and 465,135 page impressions
- 109.4. there have also been two features in First magazine.

Improving Broadband (Up to speed campaign)

110. Reliable broadband is essential for the economy, education, preventing social exclusion and enabling older people to live in their homes longer. Up to Speed is an integrated LGA campaign to connect the final five per cent of people who will not be connected by the Government's Superfast Broadband Programme at the end of this year and to ensure future proofed broadband speeds for all. We called on the Government to tackle digital exclusion by guaranteeing internet connectivity in law.

A mechanism to tackle digital exclusion legally was achieved through the introduction of a broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO). We worked with MPs and peers to strengthen the USO so that minimum broadband connectivity keeps pace with average speeds. Following the campaign, the Government has committed to increasing minimum broadband speeds relative to average speeds. We also attempted to introduce a social tariff which would mean the least well-off could benefit from decent broadband, and the Government has indicated it is exploring this option.

We helped deliver this by:

- promoting the microsite speed test, which has been taken 2,648 times since campaign launch
- managing the Up to Speed website, which has received 6,730 visits (9,323 total page views)
- working with the Telegraph to launch our campaign, including successive front page stories supporting our call for a universal minimum broadband speed to rise in line with the national average, to extend broadband to all parts of the UK and for greater transparency from internet providers about their download speeds.

Media

111. We issued a total of 10 media releases related the Up to Speed broadband campaign throughout this period, gaining 26 episodes of national coverage. In the

last six months our most popular story was 'Call for broadband USO to include social tariff for most in need' (20 October 2016), which achieved four episodes of national coverage including the Times, Sun, I paper and on BBC Online.

112. Eighty-eight per cent of our coverage was proactive and 100 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

113. During the last year we have promoted our work on improving broadband on a dedicated 'Up to Speed microsite' and Twitter.

114. Key outputs:

- 114.1. Of the people have taken the speed test since launch April 2016 to the end of March 2017 we saw a broad range of visitors, including 1,970 members of the public, 345 working in a council, 279 councillors, 43 peers and 11 MPs
- 114.2. our tweets reached 146,673 people (26,774 in the last six months)
- 114.3. five publications achieved a total of 1,129 downloads
- 114.4. the most downloaded case study was 'A broadband boost for Berkshire businesses' (635 total downloads)
- 114.5. there have also been 13 items in First magazine.

Public affairs

115. On behalf of councils we called on the Government to tackle digital exclusion by guaranteeing internet connectivity in law. Since the introduction of a broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO), we have worked with MPs and peers to strengthen the USO so that minimum broadband connectivity keeps pace with average speeds. We sought to introduce a social tariff which would mean the least well-off could benefit from decent broadband, and the Government has indicated it is exploring this option.
116. We published 11 briefings on the Digital Economy Bill. The summary page achieved 476 page views and the bill briefings received a total of 233 downloads.

Events

117. We hosted one event related to the 'Up to speed' campaign in the last year, 'Connecting the Nation' (16 March 2017) (37 attendees).

'Be a Councillor'

118. Increasing the pool of talent from which councillors are elected is a key task for local government. Through our campaign we are keen to support individuals considering becoming councillors, as well as hear from places or local parties interested in exploring new ways to talent spot the leaders of tomorrow.
119. Our refreshed 'Be a Councillor' campaign was launched as a pilot in Rotherham. Following its success, other councils have approached us to support them with

similar, local bespoke campaigns, with projects in Lancashire, East Sussex and West Sussex.

120. The 'Be a Councillor' website at the heart of the campaign encourages councils, regional organisations and local parties to support 'Be a Councillor' by running a local version tailored to their particular area.
121. The campaign was successfully promoted during Local Democracy Week, October 2016, which celebrates the work of local government, and encourages residents to get involved with their local council, consider standing for election, and participate in their council's local democracy activities.

In the last year the profile of the Be a Councillor campaign has been raised with an increased social media presence, regional events and features at national conferences. A key objective of the campaign is to increase awareness of the role of local councillor, with a view to encouraging a diverse range of quality people to stand for election. We have been directly contacted by around 70 people in the past year, but this does not include people who have contacted political groups directly or have attended events run by councils, political parties or other groups. As much of the activity is about raising the profile, it is not always possible to quantify the exact number of people who have engaged with the campaign; however we are seeking more effective ways to evaluate the impact have started proactively contacting people who have attended our events, collecting feedback and requesting that those who run events on our behalf collect demographic information about prospective candidates.

We helped support the campaign by:

- ensuring the 'Be a Councillor' website was heavily visited, with 112,925 unique page views (139,588 total page views)
- disseminating 11 tweets reaching 20,000 people during Local Democracy Week,
- producing councillor twitter cards promoting the campaign during Local Democracy Week
- supporting the creation of the Lancashire local campaign, launched in October 2016, which is the most popular tailored campaign on the site.

Campaigns and digital

122. Over the last year, we have showcased the campaign via Twitter, pushing visitors to the 'Be a Councillor' microsite.
123. Key outputs:
 - 123.1. The Lancashire campaign film was viewed 717 times
 - 123.2. the website is the third most popular after the LGA website's home page and publications page
 - 123.3. Lancashire's tailored campaign page is the strongest for engagement – 2,794 total page views (2,117 unique page views) with people spending an average of two minutes 48 seconds on the page
 - 123.4. there have also been seven items in First magazine.