

Communications Report (April 2017 to September 2017)

Purpose of report

To update Leadership Board on the LGA's communications activity and the progress with our corporate campaigns for the first six months of the year.

Summary

This report reflects the priorities identified in the organisation's business plan. It tracks and records key communications activity for the past six months and how communications has contributed to achieving our key priorities. Please note during this report period there were two periods of Purdah for local elections on 4 May 2017 and the General Election on 8 June 2017 which placed some restrictions on our communications activity.

Recommendation

The Leadership Board is asked to note the communications activity for the period April 2017 to September 2017.

Action

As directed by Members.

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Communications Report (April 2017 to September 2017)

Background

1. This report reflects the priorities identified in the organisation's business plan. It tracks and records key communications activity for the past six months and how communications has contributed to achieving our key priorities. Please note during this report period there were two periods of Purdah for local elections on 4 May 2017 and the General Election on 8 June 2017 which placed some restrictions on our communications activity.
2. To support our organisational priorities, between April 2017 and September 2017 we:
 - 2.1 achieved 20,688 episodes of media coverage in national, regional, trade, broadcast and online publications;
 - 2.2 submitted evidence to nine parliamentary committee inquiries and briefed for 11 parliamentary debates, helping us achieve 81 mentions in Parliament - 2.5 times each day Parliament sat;
 - 2.3 submitted proposals setting out our key recommendations for the general election manifestos along with eight briefing documents on the key policy commitments made by the national political parties ahead of the General Election;
 - 2.4 we worked with colleagues from across the LGA to support our councillors at the Autumn party conferences to contribute to 65 debates, round tables and other events hosted by 50 stakeholders;
 - 2.5 drove 235,509 visitors to the LGA website and 1,004,353 page views; sent 502 bulletins to 2,330,101 recipients;
 - 2.6 produced 160 designed marketing documents, including major publications, posters, workbooks, summaries and social media content, providing strategic advice, copy-editing and design services;
 - 2.7 reached more than 20,230 followers on our Twitter channel @LGAComms; and
 - 2.8 organised and delivered 29 events attended by 3,439 delegates, generating £656,000 net income so far this financial year.

Reputation of local government

3. Following the tragedy at Grenfell and, more widely, as local authorities are increasingly having to deliver more with less, the reputation of local government has never been more important and supporting local government underpins all of our communications activity. In the last six months our campaigns have focused on making the case for local government in Parliament and creating awareness of the LGA's key asks through our media engagement, digital channels and events.

4. In the last six months we have worked to promote and protect the reputation of local government by:
 - 4.1 producing our flagship publication about the role local government can play in the future of the country – Growing Places – launched at Annual Conference and downloaded 1,600 times;
 - 4.2 achieving 117 episodes of national coverage for issues relating to council reputation, plus 1481 media mentions during conference;
 - 4.3 bringing council officers together at our Parliamentary Network event to share best practice and update members on our political priorities;
 - 4.4 producing nine ‘what the Manifestos say’ guides, reaching 4,920 downloads and 2,838 summary page views;
 - 4.5 achieving over 2.9 million impressions (2,986,000) for 1,000 tweets relating to councils during this report period;
 - 4.6 sending our CommsNet bulletin to a total of 1,816 subscribers every week, an increase of 249 (15 per cent) new subscribers since the same report period last year;
 - 4.7 2,273 people attended Annual Conference; this was an increase of 72 delegates from 2016;
 - 4.8 ensuring 87 per cent of those attending conference were ‘very’ or ‘fairly satisfied’;
 - 4.9 publishing 214 Annual conference tweets reaching 535,000 people; and
 - 4.10 increasing traffic to the ‘Be a Councillor’ website, with 62,289 unique page views (77,204 total page views); unique page views increased by 7,020 views in comparison to the same timeline last year.

Media

5. Across Annual Conference week, we generated 13 news stories, delivering 1,481 episodes of media coverage in national, regional, trade, broadcast and online publications. Our media activity supported the launch of our main conference publications and included ‘Councils face £5.8 billion funding black hole’ (4 and 5 July 2017), achieving 12 episodes of national coverage. LGA Chairman Lord Porter was interviewed on Channel 4 News calling for local government funding to be put on a sustainable footing, while Deputy Chairman Councillor Peter Fleming also discussed the issue on Good Morning Britain. The story was also reported across BBC News, Sky News and BBC Daily Politics programme.
6. In this six month period we issued 27 press releases relating to other areas impacting council reputation. Our most popular story was ‘Irresponsible knife retailers putting

lives at risk' (27 July 2017) generating 23 episodes of national coverage including Sky News and BBC News bulletins, BBC radio channels, The Times and Guardian.

Campaigns and digital

7. Over the last six months, we highlighted the wide range of work councils do through all LGA channels, including Twitter and CommsHub – our digital resource for local government communications teams. Our guidance for the pre-election period – Purdah – was particularly successful (2,543 downloads).
8. In the last six months we have also worked with the Political Groups to continue to promote the 'Be a Councillor' campaign. The campaign's website is well visited with 62,289 unique views, a 13 per cent increase year on year.
9. In April 2017, the LGA migrated to a new, improved website, which is accessible and responsive across all devices including mobile. This followed an extensive review, evaluation and redesign involving our member councils, with the aim of improving access for members and other stakeholders.
10. Since launching the website, the most notable change has been a significant reduction in bounce rate (the percentage of visitors who leave without viewing another page). Website migration affected figures for April and May this year, which is likely to have contributed to a slight year-on-year fall in visitor numbers.
11. We further developed our video output during this period, creating custom content for campaigns including gifs and short videos.
12. Key outputs:
 - 12.1 1,004,353 webpage views between April to September 2017;
 - 12.2 5,156 downloads of 12 publications relating specifically to issues of reputation and governance;
 - 12.3 seven short explainer videos supporting our conference, new publications and media releases with 17,000 combined views across Twitter and Facebook;
 - 12.4 tweets sent from @LGAComms during conference received 1,500 retweets, almost 100 per cent increase on last year; and
 - 12.5 our leading annual conference publication 'Growing places: building local public services for the future' has been downloaded over 1,600 times and 860 printed copies distributed.

Public affairs

13. We produced nine briefing papers on the key commitments the political parties made in their General Election manifestos. These were shared widely across local government to provide a reference point on the key commitments that affect the work of councils and covered issues including local government finance, housing and the environment, infrastructure and skills, and devolution.

14. As a result of our parliamentary work, our parliamentary polling undertaken after the General Election in June 2017 shows that:
 - 14.1 Of those MPs polled, 90 per cent agree that additional funding should go to councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis; 83 per cent agree that councils should have greater control over local public services; and 83 per cent agree that councils should have more financial powers and freedoms.
 - 14.2 Of those Peers polled, 80 per cent agree that additional funding should go to councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis; 90 per cent agree that councils should have greater control over local public services in their areas; and 83 per cent agree that councils should have more financial powers and freedoms.
15. LGA Chairman Lord Porter hosted our annual Parliamentary Reception in June 2017 for more than 100 council leaders, councillors, MPs and Peers, who joined us to launch our 'LGA in Parliament' report and celebrate the work of local government. We have also hosted roundtable briefings in Parliament.
16. The LGA had a strong presence across the party conferences, as our councillors contributed to a large number of debates and roundtables. We provided a briefing for each of these and promoted the events extensively across local government and with our network of stakeholders. Our councillors spoke at 65 events hosted by 50 stakeholders.

Events

17. Our leading event for local government, the LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition attracted more than 2,200 attendees. The political plenaries featured representatives from three of the main political parties including the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Andrew Gwynne MP, Shadow Communities Secretary and Leanne Wood, Leader, Plaid Cymru.
18. In a post-conference online survey sent to all delegates, 87 per cent of those who responded to the survey were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with the conference overall.
19. Ninety per cent of those who responded said they would attend another LGA annual conference and exhibition. Through Twitter our #LGA Conf17 trended on Tuesday 4 July 2017 and by close of play we reached third nationwide. Lord Porter's opening address and the Secretary of State Sajid Javid MP's speech increased Twitter conversations.

Funding for local government and fair funding

20. During this report period, our campaign has focused on creating awareness of our calls to address the £5.8 billion funding gap faced by local government by 2020 and allowing local government to keep all of the £26 billion in business rates it collects each year.

21. Following our campaigning highlighting the need for councils to be made financially sustainable, our analysis was quoted extensively during a parliamentary debate on local government finance and arrangements beyond 2020. The estimated £5.8 billion funding gap facing councils by 2020 was highlighted and Peers were unanimous in calling for urgent funding to protect local services.
22. We supported this work by:
 - 22.1 generating 98 per cent positive media coverage on council funding through proactive media work;
 - 22.2 producing (with finance colleagues) and promoting our budget submission for the Autumn 2017 budget;
 - 22.3 producing two briefings addressing the overall £5.8 billion funding gap and our call for full retention of business rates;
 - 22.4 highlighting through our consultation response briefing on business rates retention that it is imperative that local authorities are able to use the additional income from business rates to address existing funding pressures;
 - 22.5 working with colleagues, delivering three local business rates retention events, reaching 136 people; and
 - 22.6 driving 6,190 unique page views (8,634 total views) to the finance and business rates hub. The unique page views up by four per cent compared to the previous year.

Media

23. We issued a total of six media releases related to Fair Funding throughout this period achieving 39 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months our most popular story was '75p in every £1 of core government funding to councils cut by 2020' (4 July 2017), generating 28 episodes of national coverage including BBC News, Sky News, BBC Daily Politics, Good Morning Britain, Daily Mail and ITV News.
24. 85 per cent of our coverage was proactive for this area in the past six months and 98 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

25. Over the last six months we designed and produced promotional content, videos and social media content to drive downloads of our Autumn 2017 Budget submission.
26. Key outputs:
 - 26.1 6,190 visits to the finance and business rates webpages (8,634 total page views) in the last six months; and
 - 26.2 More than 1,500 views of our Autumn Budget submission film viewed through our digital channels.

Public affairs

27. We continue to make the case for councils to be adequately funded. In Parliament our Growing Places report with its calls for fair and sustainable funding was cited extensively in a debate on council finances. This included Peers quoting our analysis on the funding gap, the loss of central government grant and our position on council tax referendum limits. The briefing for the debate was downloaded 95 times.
28. Our formal response to the 2017 Autumn Budget has been downloaded 606 times. Our Budget submission supported our engagement with party conferences as our councillors spoke at key debates and roundtables on a range of issues we are working on as part of the Fair Funding campaign. The Budget submission also will now form a platform for our parliamentary engagement in the autumn.

Events

29. We held four events related to business rates in the last six months attended by 164 people:
 - 29.1 Supporting financial resilience - case studies of best practice; and
 - 29.2 Business rates retention consultation events (three free regional events around the country).

Adult social care

30. 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.
31. As part of our wider campaigning around health and care services, our Growing Places report calls on the Government to reverse the £200 million cut to the public health grant and invest in a 'Prevention Transformation Fund' worth at least £2 billion annually.
32. As a result of our work and that of representatives of the social care sector, the Government has agreed to waive any financial penalties, preceding 26 July 2017, faced by social care employers who are found to have underpaid their workers for sleep-in shifts.
33. We helped deliver this and other campaigning on adult social care by:
 - 33.1 issuing 41 proactive media releases, achieving a total of 95 per cent positive coverage;
 - 33.2 achieving a total of 30 episodes of media coverage with our key lines on sexual health and the obesity crisis;
 - 33.3 4,526 downloads of 19 health and social care publications; and
 - 33.4 90 printed copies of our mental health publication shared at LGA Annual

Conference 2017 and 453 online downloads.

Media

34. We achieved 56 episodes of national coverage for this area. 'LGA responds to Lancet study on care home places' (15 August 2017) was covered five times in national media including the Financial Times, Daily Mail and BBC Radio 5 Live, and 'Obesity crisis: more than 600 young people have type 2 diabetes' (11 August 2017) achieved 15 episodes of national coverage, including the Times, Telegraph. Deputy Chairman Cllr Peter Fleming interviewed by Sky News, ITV News and LBC Radio.
35. Cllr Izzi Seccombe was interviewed as part of our release 'Sexual health services at tipping point' (2 August 2017) on BBC Radio 5 Live and Sky News Radio. Cllr Seccombe was also interviewed across the media on the lack of funding for councils to tackle childhood obesity.
36. 95 per cent of our coverage was proactive for this area in the past six months and 95 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

37. We supported our work on social care and public health using digital and online channels. Over the last six months we promoted our work on public health through 11 publications, downloaded 3,211 times. These included 'Preventing drug related deaths' and 'Being mindful of mental health', launched at the Annual Conference in July 2017 with around 90 printed copies shared at conference. There have also been 15 items in First magazine.
38. Key outputs:
 - 38.1 since 1 April 2017 our social care and health home page viewed over 16,000 times; and
 - 38.2 19 health and social care publications published achieving in total 4,526 total downloads.

Public affairs

39. We briefed for the Queen's Speech debate, highlighting our calls for the cross-party review of social care to be brought forward urgently. We also briefed for a debate on the deferred payment scheme for elderly people in need of social care. The briefing was downloaded 48 times and received 120 summary page views.
40. We continue to engage with the parliamentary select committees and in this period have set out our social care policy positions for inquiries on health integration and housing for older people.

Events

41. We held two events related to health in the last six months, reaching 162 people. These were:
- 41.1 Sexual and reproductive health: building strong relationships; and
 - 41.2 Are you disability/flexibility confident?

Housing

42. During this report period we have continued to highlight how councils can do more if given further 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 high quality, affordable homes.
43. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published its report 'Housing State of the Nation' at the end of April 2017. Our Chairman Lord Porter gave evidence to the Committee's inquiry where he spoke about how councils want to build more affordable housing, but need the borrowing flexibilities to allow them to do so. The Committee referenced this point in its report and recommended that the next Government provides estimates as to how many homes councils will be able to build up to 2020 under the current financial arrangements. We also submitted to the Communities and Local Government Committee (CLG) inquiry into housing and the Committee published a report recommending that all Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing caps should be raised.
44. The Homelessness Reduction Act and Neighbourhood Planning Act received Royal assent in this review period. We campaigned to secure positive changes to both and produced Get in on the Act guides to each piece of legislation. These guides were downloaded 667 times.
45. We also launched the LGA's Housing Advisers programme which funds an independent expert for up to 20 days. We promoted the programme through all LGA channels and targeted, paid for social media. This drove 73 applications for 25 available places.
46. We helped deliver this by:
- 46.1 generating 14 proactive media releases resulting in 89 per cent positive media coverage;
 - 46.2 producing two publications and additional content promoting One Public Estate (OPE) and the Housing Advisers Programme, downloaded a total of 2,520 times;
 - 46.3 launching our 'Housing Our Homeless Households' report responding to rising concerns about homelessness pressures, which received 816 downloads; and
 - 46.4 delivering two LGA Homelessness events attended by 173 delegates.

Media

47. We issued a total of 15 media releases related to the housing campaign throughout this period, achieving 58 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months, our most popular story was 'Councils house extra secondary school's worth of homeless children each month' (22 July 2017), which achieved 25 episodes of national coverage including on BBC Breakfast, ITV News, Sky News, Channel 5 News and in the Guardian Online.
48. 82 per cent of our coverage was proactive for housing in the past six months and 89 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

49. We promoted our Housing Advisors Programme and One Public Estate by producing two publications, 'One Public Estate: invitation to apply' and 'Housing Advisers Programme prospectus'. We produced and promoted a range of publications, including on temporary accommodation, housing an ageing population, and the link between health and homelessness. There have also been 20 housing related items in First magazine.
50. Key outputs:
 - 50.1 4,540 total downloads of eight publications;
 - 50.2 23 tweets reaching more than 60,300 people promoting our Housing Advisers Programme;
 - 50.3 special Housing Advisors Programme bulletin sent to 6,181 recipients;
 - 50.4 paid digital campaign to promote the Housing Advisors Programme, achieving an engagement rate of 277 per cent; and
 - 50.5 three videos attracting 2,940 views on Twitter.

Public affairs

51. To support our housing campaign, we worked with parliamentarians to brief them for debates and parliamentary inquiries. Particular highlights include briefing for a House of Commons debate on the 'Supply of homes to buy' which was downloaded 45 times and received 111 summary page views.
52. We also provided evidence to the Public Accounts Committee and Communities and Local Government Select Committee, which both published reports on housing. This helped us secure positive recommendations from both committees. In its 'Housing: State of the Nation' report, the Public Accounts Committee recommended that DCLG provide estimates of how many homes councils will be able to build up to 2020 under current financing arrangements. In their 'Capacity in the homebuilding industry' report, the Communities and Local Government Committee recommended that the

borrowing caps in councils' Housing Revenue Accounts should be raised and in some cases removed, where housing affordability is at its worst.

53. We produced two 'Get in on the Act' publications downloaded 667 times. The summaries in total have been viewed 1,143 times.
54. During the Autumn party conferences we secured speaking slots for our councillors for a number of debates and roundtables on housing the housing crisis. This included discussions on how to build more homes, the role of rural areas in tackling the crisis and the challenges of protecting the countryside whilst also building the houses the nation needed. We provided a briefing for each of these and promoted the events extensively across local government and with our network of stakeholders.

Events

55. We held two events related to housing in the last six months reaching 173 people in total:
- 55.1 Homelessness and temporary accommodation - lessons from local government innovations; and
- 55.2 Housing, health and an ageing population - innovations in local government.

Employment and skills

56. We consulted on a practical plan to integrate and devolve employment and skills services to close the widening skills gap, and deliver better outcomes at lower cost by taking into account local circumstances, Work Local. This formed the central part of our campaigning on skills and employment in the last six months.
57. The LGA's Work Local was mentioned by Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab) and Lord Ouseley (Crossbench) and Lord Fox, Liberal Democrat spokesperson on the Industrial Strategy, met with us to discuss our position on it.
58. As a result of our work, the Government recognised the importance of supporting the return of good experienced social workers back into the profession and announced funding for us to run a campaign to build on the success of the LGA's Come Back to Social Work pilot by offering tailored training and development placements to 100 social work returners.
59. We helped support this by:
- 59.1 generating 17 proactive media releases resulting in 89 per cent positive media coverage;
- 59.2 publishing 22 tweets promoting our Work Local publications read by over 55,945 people;
- 59.3 securing positive promotion of our Work Local proposals in the House of Commons;

- 59.4 delivering three events attended by 215 delegates; and
- 59.5 holding debates on our Work Local Proposals at the party conferences, allowing us to test out our ideas and build support for them.

Media

- 60. Throughout this period we achieved 45 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months our most popular story in this policy area was 'Local solution to 12 million caught in skills gap by 2024' generating two episodes of national coverage in the Independent Online and City AM.

Campaigns and digital

- 61. Over the past six months we have championed our work on employment and skills using digital and online channels, including our high profile publication 'Work Local - Our vision for Employment and Skills' summary and full report. Work Local publications achieved a total of 1,290 downloads, with an additional 534 printed copies distributed at LGA Annual Conference 2017.

Public affairs

- 62. We briefed MPs and Peers on our Work Local proposals for the future of our skills services. A highlight during this period has been briefing for a debate on 16-to-19 education funding led Mike Kane MP (Labour, Wythenshawe and Sale East). During this debate he highlighted our Work Local report, citing our estimate that by 2024 there will be a lack of more than four million highly skilled people to meet the demand for jobs.
- 63. At the Autumn party conferences we 'road tested' our Work Local proposals by holding debates on the future of our skills services. These debates have allowed senior national and local politicians to discuss our proposals with councillors, think tanks and third sector organisations. The marketing material promoting these debates was accessed 84 times from our website.

Events

- 64. We held three events focused on employment and skills in the last six months, reaching 215 people:
 - 64.1 Are you disability/flexibility confident?;
 - 64.2 Schools' workforce policy and employment law conference; and
 - 64.3 Schools' workforce policy and employment law conference

Leaving the European Union

65. Our key ask is for Government to hand local government a central role in deciding whether to keep, amend or scrap EU laws once they are converted into domestic law. Secondly local areas need £8.4 billion of EU funding replaced after Brexit.
66. 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.

Media

67. We issued three media releases related to Brexit throughout this period, achieving 12 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months, our top story was 'Local areas need £8.4 billion of EU funding replaced after Brexit' (28 July 2017), which achieved eight episodes of national coverage including the Financial Times, Times, LGA Vice Chairman Cllr David Simmonds was also interviewed on Sky News and Good Morning Britain about the issue.
68. 100 per cent of our coverage was proactive and 100 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

69. Over the last six months, we have promoted our messages on Brexit through the website, social media channels and in our ebulletins.
70. Key outputs:
 - 70.1 1,022 visits to the Brexit website pages (1,420 total page views); and
 - 70.2 a discussion document 'Beyond Brexit: Future of funding currently sourced from the EU - July 2017' downloaded 503 times and 1,115 summary page views.

Public affairs

71. Since the return of Parliament and the announcement of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, we have been working closely with Ministers, government officials, the four local government associations and parliamentarians to promote our arguments on Brexit. This includes briefing for the Second Reading of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill and briefing for a range of other debates that were opportunities to push our lines on Brexit and devolution. These briefings were downloaded 308 times and received 623 summary page views.
72. Our briefings highlighted the need to maintain local government's formal advisory role in law-making in matters currently covered by the EU which will be transferred to the UK. We also outlined why withdrawal from the EU matters to local government, highlighting issues around workforce, funding and procurement.

73. We also helped explain some of the key Brexit and devolution commitments in our publication: 'What the manifestos say 2017 - Brexit, devolution and constitutional reform.' This achieved 544 downloads.

Children's social care

74. Growing demand for support has led to 75 per cent of councils in England overspending on their children's services budgets by more than half a billion pounds. Through our campaign we are highlighting that the pressures facing children's services are rapidly becoming unsustainable, with a £2 billion funding gap expected by 2020.
75. In a debate on 'Children in Need in the House of Lords, Lord Watson spoke about the shortfall in funding for children's services.
76. Shadow Communities Secretary, Andrew Gwynne MP repeated our warning of a £2.6 billion gap in social care by 2020 in a debate on education and local government.
77. During an adjournment debate on schools funding Vince Cable MP reflected our concerns about the centralisation of decision-making under the new formula, warning against a system of financial allocation that did not allow councils to take account of local circumstances. Schools Minister Nick Gibb MP said that the Government would ensure that no school loses funding as a result of the formula.
78. During a debate on school funding formula the Secretary of State for Education Justine Greening MP announced £1.3 billion extra in funding for schools.
79. We helped support this work and the wider campaigning by:
- 79.1 generating 58 episodes of national media coverage;
 - 79.2 seeking agreement for our asks in Parliamentary debates on Education and Children's Services funding;
 - 79.3 producing a 'Get in on the Act for the Childcare and Social Work Act 2017' downloaded 506 times and 914 summary page views; and
 - 79.4 producing extremely popular video content (7,500 views) explaining the current pressures faced by schools and children's services, along with our asks.

Media

80. We issued 18 media release related to children and young people throughout this period.
81. In the last six months our most popular story was 'Children's social care at 'breaking point' (9 and 11 August 2017) which achieved 12 episodes of national coverage, including BBC Breakfast, BBC News, Guardian and Cllr Watts on Channel 4 News.

82. 85 per cent of our coverage was proactive for children's social care in the past six months and 90 per cent of the coverage was positive.

Campaigns and digital

83. We published a 'Get in on the Act for the Childcare and Social Work Act 2017', highlighting our work influencing legislation and explaining the key tenets in the Act, downloaded 506 times and receiving 914 summary page views.

84. Key outputs:

84.1 our children's social care video received 7,500 views across Twitter and Facebook, making it the most popular video we produced in this period;

84.2 our video on schools was viewed 480 times; and

84.3 one tweet promoting our children's services work reached over 32,000 people.

Public affairs

85. Throughout this period we continued our work promoting the role of councils in improving children's life chances. We published a 'Get in on the Act' guide for the Childcare and Social Work Act which set out our work in the previous Parliament influencing the legislation and updated councils on how the legislation could impact on them. This guide was downloaded 506 times.

86. With Parliament returning, we have led a programme of engagement with a range of parliamentarians. A particular highlight has been our work briefing for a debate on the school funding formula. This made the point that the Queen's Speech did not give schools and councils any detail about how much additional funding will be committed to education or how the Government's school funding reforms will be implemented. Our briefings on this campaign have been downloaded 82 times in this review period.

87. As part of our Autumn party conference engagement we worked with the 'Youth Zone' to promote local government's role in improving the life chances of children and young people. This included securing speaking opportunities for our councillors at events on children's services, youth custody, and addressing poverty and inequality in schools.

Events

88. We held two events across the country related to children and young people in the last six months, reaching 157 people in total. In the last six months these have included:

88.1 Schools' workforce policy and employment law conference (York); and

88.2 Schools' workforce policy and employment law conference (London).

Supporting and engaging with our member councils

89. Effective communications is integral to the success of sector-led improvement, with an element of sharing and promoting best-practice woven into all our campaigns.
90. 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.
91. Following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017, the LGA has worked closely with local government, the Government and fire chiefs to coordinate national efforts, support councils and undertake urgent reviews of high-rise buildings. The LGA has also called for the Government to meet the exceptional cost to councils of removing and replacing cladding and insulation.
92. We helped support and engage our member councils by:
 - 92.1 issuing six proactive media releases, achieving a total of 75 per cent positive coverage;
 - 92.2 publishing 108 tweets celebrating #InnovateTuesday, reaching 254,000 people, engaging over 49,000 more people compared to the same period last year;
 - 92.3 working with colleagues, delivered the Innovation Zone at Annual Conference, bringing together councils to showcase their innovations to hundreds of delegates;
 - 92.4 developing 49 best practice case studies; and
 - 92.5 publishing 78 best practice recommendations to all councils who received health checks or communications peer reviews during this period.

Media

93. Our media work achieved four episodes of national coverage. Following feedback from member councils that taxi legislation was an issue of importance to them, our most popular story was 'Taxi legislation needs updating to safeguard passengers (25 August 2017)', covered in the Mail, Telegraph, Guardian Online and BBC Radio 5 Live.
94. During this period, we also did intensive work to support the sector following the tragic incident at Grenfell Tower. Lord Porter spoke for the sector calling for an urgent review of building regulations, which the Government has subsequently announced, and for private companies to release the results of their confidential fire test data. There was also significant activity on local government's continued call for government to meet the full costs of any remedial work needed on high-rise blocks.

Campaigns and digital

95. We produced 32 supporting documents for councils in the last six months. The most popular publication 'Councillors' Guide 2017' – produced every year for newly elected councillors – achieved 1,357 total downloads.
96. We supported our work with the Government on Grenfell through our digital channels. The LGA website page 'Grenfell Tower: information for local authorities' provides a hub of information including media release, frequently asked questions and the sector-led guidance on fire safety in purpose built blocks of flats.
97. Key outputs:
 - 97.1 32,873 visits to the improvement webpage and subpages (45,425 total page views);
 - 97.2 visitors spent an average of one minute 50 seconds on the page (in the top 10 for LGA web pages); and
 - 97.3 32 publications produced, including the Councillors' Guide 2017, downloaded a total of 6,922 times.

Public Affairs

98. In this period we held two Communications and Parliamentary Network briefings. These events are designed to help those working in local government understand the key legislation and policy being agreed nationally that affects councils. The Network also helps disseminate best practice and learning across the sector.
99. In Parliament we continue to promote our calls for taxi licensing to be reformed and we are working with Daniel Zeichner MP (Cambridge) as he brings forward a Private Members Bill that will help deliver our policy objectives.
100. We also helped promote our lines by briefing for a debate on the future of the taxi trade. In this debate LGA Vice-President Wes Streeting MP (Ilford North) gave his personal support to our call for a new taxi licensing reform bill. The Government has now set up a working group to look at the issues. Our briefing on the future of Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles (PHV) was downloaded 93 times.

Events

101. We hosted four events related to sector-led improvement in the last six months, reaching 193 people:
 - 101.1 Member Peer conference 2017;
 - 101.2 New conversations: engaging with communities;
 - 101.3 Hitting the ground running: A session for newly elected councillors; and
 - 101.4 The use of CCTV in taxis and private hire vehicles.

Communications improvement and support team

102. We have continued to develop our sector-led improvement offer over the most recent quarter. 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 also provided bespoke strategic communications support to eight local authorities, particularly in the areas of 'new councils' or council mergers, mayoralities and combined authorities, corporate narrative and place branding.
103. We have continued our focus on developing accessible online resources to assist local government communications teams during this period. In April, we launched an internal communications resource in our CommsHub pages while in May we also developed a page to advise teams on how to handle a cyberattack following an attack on the National Health Service.
104. There has also been a continued emphasis on supporting professional development across the sector through a number of key learning events and providing opportunities for staff across local government to take part in communication reviews and health checks. During this period, seven external communicators have taken part in health checks, communications reviews and bespoke support; four internal LGA staff members outside of the communications improvement and support team have also taken part.

Reviews and health checks

105. We delivered one in-depth communications review during this period. Eight rapid assessment communications health checks were delivered across the East Midlands, East of England, South East and North West regions.
106. A total of 102 best practice recommendations were made across all councils who have received health checks or communications peer reviews during this period.

Strategic support

107. 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, 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. Eight local authorities have received some form of support.

Resources and case studies

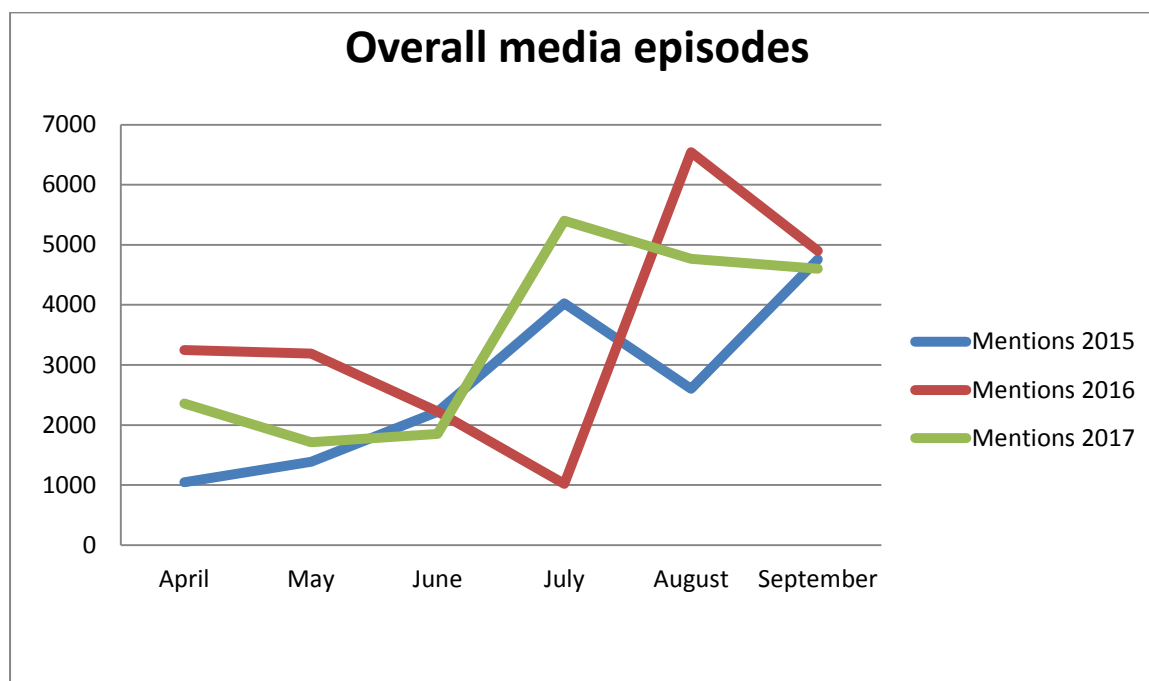
108. We have significantly increased the number of best practice case studies in our dedicated communications support library, delivering 49 case studies for councils to use as references.

109. In April, our internal communications resource was launched. Since then it has had 609 unique visitors and 884 page views. In May, we added a guide to dealing with crisis communications (246 unique visitors; 313 page views).
110. We published a quarterly resident satisfaction national polling survey undertaken during the period June 2017, showing that satisfaction with the way councils run things is at 66 per cent (very or fairly satisfied), but that value for money is at 47 per cent and well-informed rating is at 58 per cent.
111. Finally, in September 2017 we launched 'Understanding the views of residents: An introduction to surveys and consultation' in partnership with the LGA's Research and Information Team to encourage greater knowledge of working with surveys and the ways in which this can enlighten councils' communications work. Since publication on 13 September, this has had 552 page views and 112 downloads.

Appendix 1: Analysis of media coverage

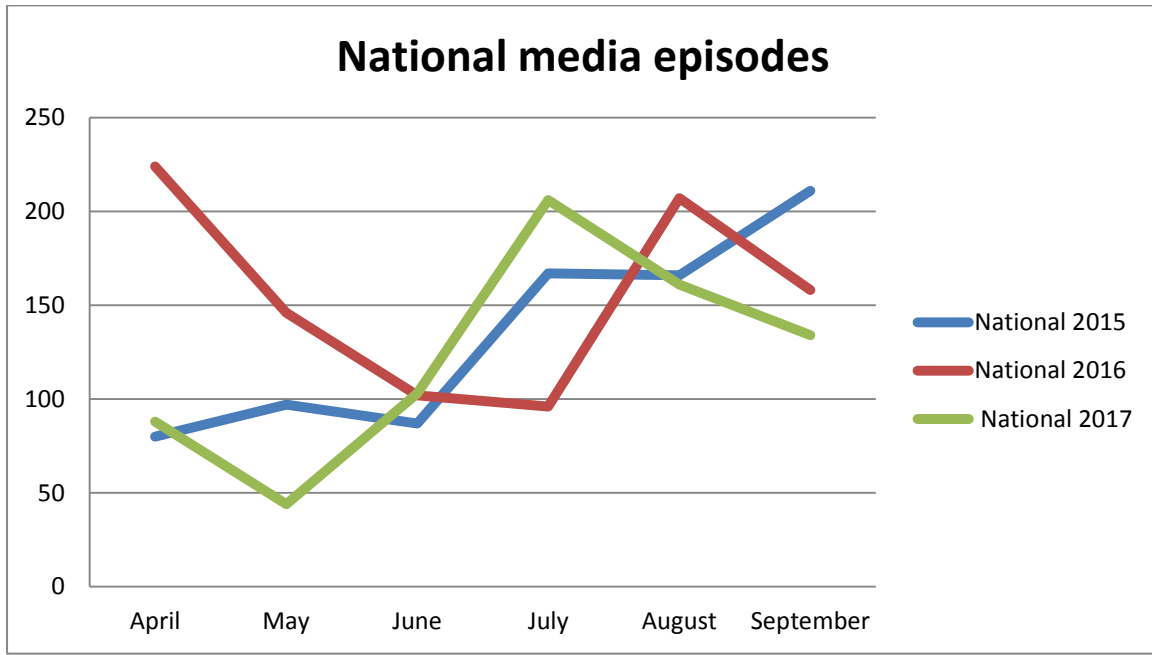
Overall media coverage (April-September 2017)

	Episodes 2015	Episodes 2016	Episodes 2017
April	1048	3249	2358
May	1387	3191	1714
June	2218	2226	1849
July	4028	1020	5399
August	2602	6542	4766
September	4759	4900	4602

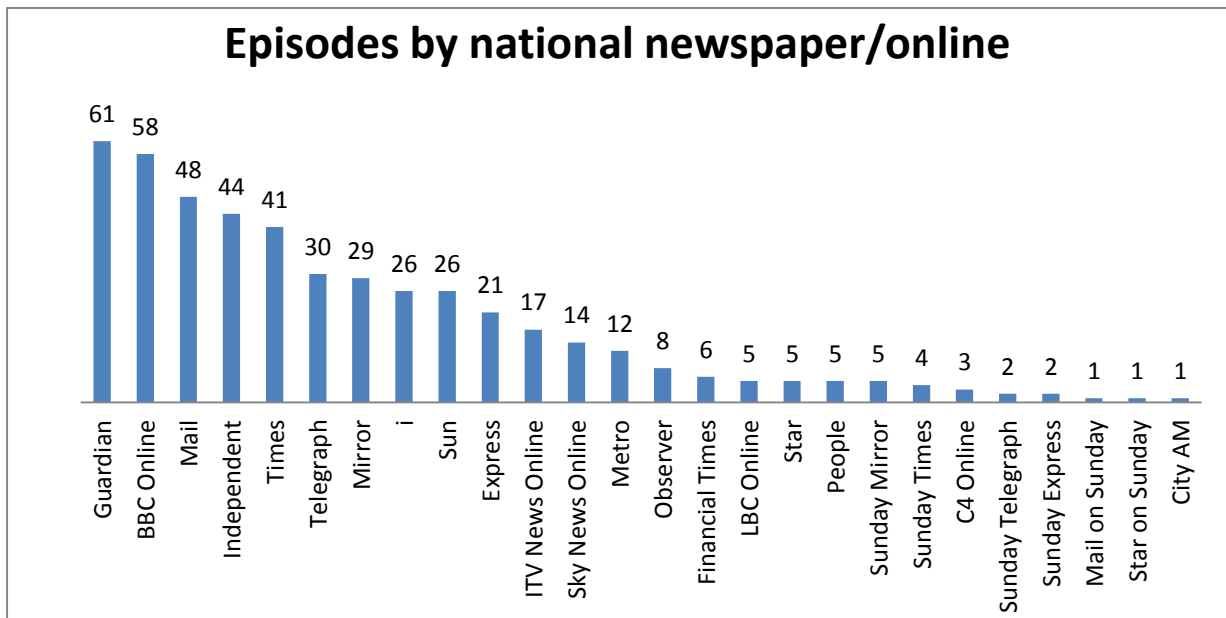


National media coverage (April-September 2017)

	National 2015	National 2016	National 2017
April	80	224	88
May	97	146	44
June	87	102	103
July	167	96	206
August	166	207	161
September	211	158	134

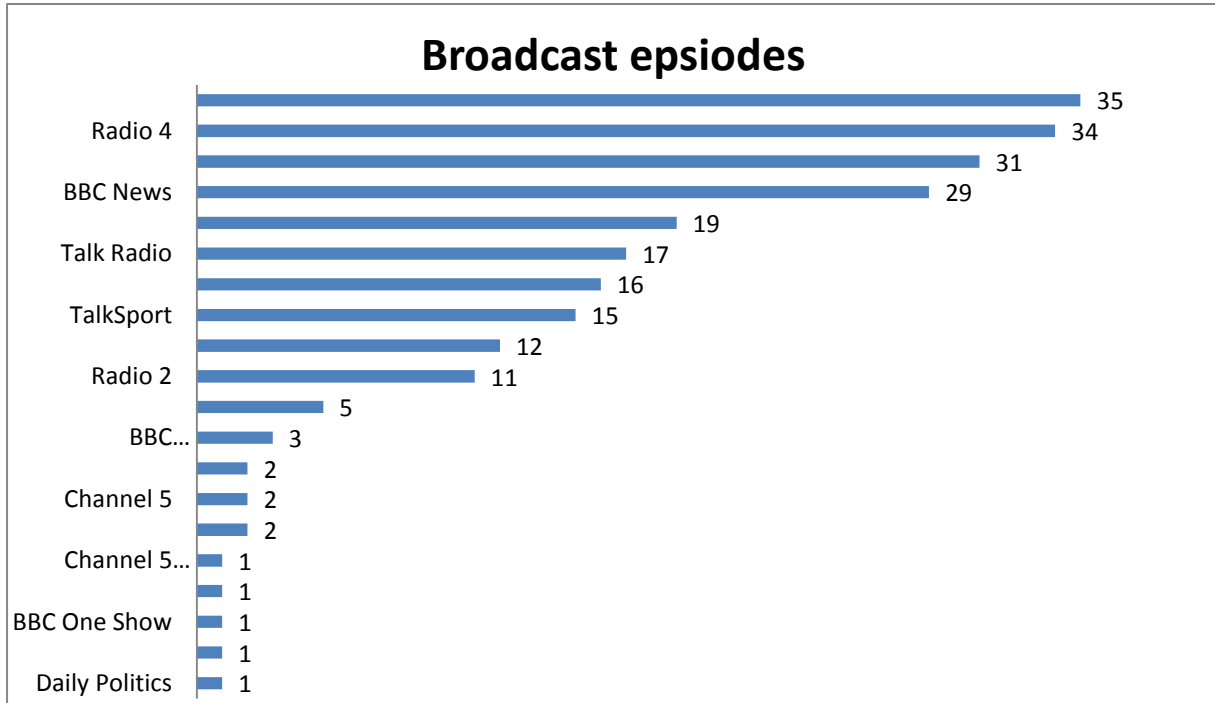


April 2017-September 2017
National newspaper/online episodes



The LGA appeared in **26** national newspaper or online outlets during this period, including 21 daily and Sunday newspaper titles. We featured in the **Guardian** the most with 61 episodes, followed by **BBC Online** (58 episodes) and the **Mail** (48 episodes).

Broadcast episodes (April-September 2017)



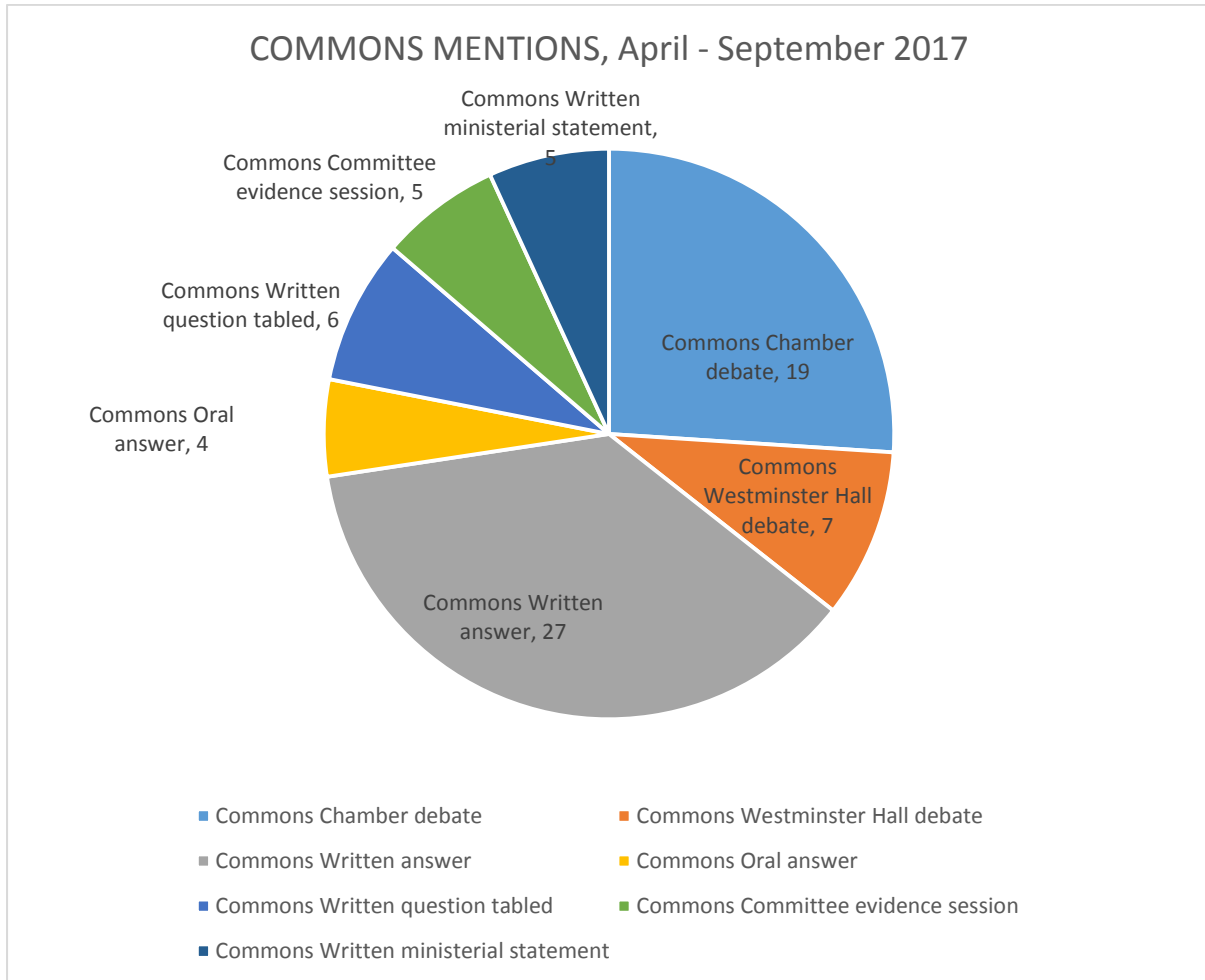
Our media work saw **239** episodes of media coverage on national TV and radio during this period, with 35 mentions on **BBC Radio 5 Live** followed by **BBC Radio 4** with 31 mentions and then **LBC** with 30 mentions.

Appendix 2: Analysis of parliamentary activity

House of Commons/House of Lords mentions

Source	Type	Total for Session
Commons	Chamber debate	19
Commons	Westminster Hall debate	7
Commons	Written answer	27
Commons	Oral answer	4
Commons	Written question tabled	6
Commons	Oral question tabled	0
Commons	Committee evidence session	5
Commons	Public Bill committee	0
Commons	Written ministerial statement	5
Commons	Early day motion	0
Commons	General committee session	0
Commons	Joint committee evidence	0
Lords	Debate	59
Lords	Written answer	10
Lords	Oral answer	4
Lords	Written question tabled	1
Lords	Oral question tabled	0
Lords	Committee evidence session	0

Commons mentions by type



Lords mentions by type

