

2014/15 Performance Report

Twelve months: April 2014 - March 2015

Chief Executive's Report

Year ended 31 March 2015

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We work with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

We are a politically-led, cross party organisation which works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

Supporting local government as the most efficient and accountable part of the public sector, the LGA plays a leading role in improvement and innovation so that councils can continue to make a difference in their local areas and to the lives of their residents. We fight local government's corner, supporting councils through challenging times and focusing our efforts where we can have real impact.

We cover every part of England and Wales, including county and district councils, metropolitan and unitary councils, London boroughs, Welsh unitary councils, fire and rescue and national park authorities. In 2014/15 we had 415 member authorities in England and Wales. The 22 Welsh authorities are in corporate membership through the Welsh Local Government Association.

A year in focus

Over the last few years, local government has had to deal with a greater reduction in funding than any other part of the public sector. Councils have worked hard to shield residents from the impact of funding cuts but efficiencies cannot be re-made.

The LGA has championed the work that local government does to keep vital services running but we've also raised the need for a radical reform of public services and what councils should continue to provide. As a sector, we're trusted over national government to lead these changes to the services we deliver and, as an organisation, speaking with one voice we are in the best possible position to represent local government's voice at a national level.

In 2014/15 we focused on making a powerful case for greater independence for local government, campaigning for more financial and decision-making autonomy for democratically elected councils while supporting them in driving innovation and

improvement. The launch of our 'Investing in the nation's future: The first 100 days of the next government' campaign at our annual conference in July offered the new government a ready-made, fully-costed, long-term answer to the hard questions they will have to face after the election.

We also launched campaigns focused on two issues facing local government: Future Funding, a campaign for fairer funding; and DevoNext which calls for more devolution to local areas.

Our improvement work has been widely used by councils, helping to share innovation and best practice across local government. The LGA plays a critical role 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. This approach, helping to co-ordinate improvement work on behalf of councils, has enabled them to deliver millions of pounds of savings.

Our annual survey of members showed we have maintained satisfaction over the last 12 months in most areas and increased satisfaction in others. Seventy seven per cent of members say we effectively represent their views to central government – the same as in 2013 – and 73 per cent say we are influential in shaping the agenda for local government – compared to 68 per cent in 2013. Members' satisfaction with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector increased from 70 percent in 2013 to 74 per cent in 2014.

Our priorities

The LGA's priorities, laid out each year by the LGA Executive, are the ones that matter most to our membership.

In 2014/15, our top priorities for local government were:

- Funding for local government
- Economic growth, jobs and prosperity
- Public service reform.

Funding for local government

We have been lobbying for a reform of the finance system so councils have the confidence that their financing is sustainable and fair, the opportunities to raise more funds locally, and greater ability to promote collective working across local public services.

Together with CIPFA, we set up the Independent Commission On Local Government Finance, to review and find better ways to fund local services and promote economic growth locally. The Commission reported in February and was welcomed across local government.

Over the course of the year, we also secured a number of significant wins for councils.

These included:

- Ensuring that the draft allocations of funding for 0-5s public health commissioning responsibilities reflect the costs of projected expenditure for each local authority area, securing an extra £2 million.
- Jointly lobbying with ADASS, securing £37 million for councils to help tackle winter pressures for 2014/15, and a further £12 million for 2015/16.
- Securing an extra £25 million for new duties in adult social care regarding Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.
- Highlighting the challenges councils face in delivering more than 900,000 extra school places that will be needed by 2023. This won an additional £2.35bn in capital funding for new schools places which has provided councils with three-year capital budgets to allow them to plan ahead.
- Working with DWP to identify seven local partnerships testing out a range of Universal Support services including co-location, data sharing and complex claimants, delivering £680,000 to fund these trials.
- Almost 60 councils joining with the LGA as investors in the Municipal Bonds Agency.

LGA in the media

In the last year, through our proactive media work, we generated nearly 30,000 media hits for local government – that's 76 a day.

29% increase in national coverage year-on-year from **1,182** media hits in 2013/14 to **1,529** in 2014/15

85% of coverage was positive about local government

81% of coverage was through pro-active media work by the LGA, often working with member councils.

LGA in Parliament

Promoting and defending the reputation of local government and representing councils' interests in Parliament are key areas of work that matter most to our member councils.

1,429 mentions of the in Parliament over the course of 2014/2015 - on average we were quoted seven times each day Parliament was sitting to debate policy and legislation.

The LGA has secured positive change to the following legislation that passed through Parliament:

- The Deregulation Act
- The Serious Crime Act
- The Infrastructure Act
- The Small Business Enterprise and Employment Act
- The Care Act.

Economic growth, jobs and prosperity

Over the course of the year, we've been working on behalf of our members to ensure that local government is recognised as being central to economic growth. This includes setting up the Independent Commission on Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England, which reported in March laying out seven steps to growth and prosperity.

The LGA has worked in and around Parliament and in the media to represent local government's position in these areas, with positive results. These include:

- Developing amendments to the Small Business and Enterprise Bill to avoid a one-size fits all approach.
- Producing analysis showing that councils in England face a funding gap of £5.8 billion, due to reduced government funding and rising demand on services, in particular for older people.

Public service reform

In order to achieve economic and social benefits as well as short- and long-term savings, there needs to be a fundamental and ambitious rethink to the way local services are funded and organised.

We have pushed to ensure that independent councils are at the centre, and are seen to be at the centre, of this public service reform, delivering more effective services for local

people and holding providers to account.

Over the last 12 months, our work in this area has seen a number of significant improvements for the sector. We:

- secured over £2 million from the Social Care Innovation Fund to establish a centre of excellence to help end the practice of FGM, through a joint bid with Barnardo's.
- hosted three LGA Vice-President briefings in Parliament. The sessions were an opportunity to update on our work influencing party manifestos and to secure ideas and feedback on the devolution, future funding and social care campaigns.
- hosted a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on devolution, decentralisation and reform at which the Leader of the House of Commons, William Hague MP, spoke about the government's approach to devolution.
- launched a new 'devolution hub' to help councils find out what has been achieved in different areas of England, what is possible and a toolkit to assist in planning for future devolution.
- launched the first report of the Learning Disability Services Efficiency Project, supporting five councils to develop new and innovative approaches to savings in learning disability services.
- successfully lobbied Government to remove a clause in the Deregulation Bill that would have allowed anyone to drive a vehicle marked as a minicab without a criminal records check
- secured an amendment to the Serious Crime Bill at Report Stage to the offence of participating in an organised crime group, so that unwitting activity by local authorities is no longer caught by this offence.

Sector-led support

This year has also seen the LGA's continued support for councils to improve performance, effectiveness and efficiency. Our approach is based on four key principles:

- councils are responsible for their own performance
- councils are primarily accountable to their local communities
- stronger local accountability and increased transparency drive improvement

10 June 2015

- councils have collective responsibility for the performance of local government as a whole.

Over the last year, the LGA has supported local authorities by:

- delivering over 130 peer challenges
- launching a consultation paper 'Taking stock: where next with sector-led improvement'
- launching the Highlighting Leadership programme for both councillors and officers
- working with over 250 councils in relation to our various improvement support offers
- continuing to recruit graduates to the National Graduate Development Programme
- establishing the Local Government Public Services Network Programme Board, to enable different parts of government to share information securely.

Looking ahead

This year local government has made great strides but fundamental changes to how we deliver services and how they are funded are long overdue. We have a once in a generation change to get it right and through devolution and radical public sector reform, we will continue to play our part.



Carolyn Downs
Chief Executive

At a glance: A year in the LGA

More than 7,000 delegates attended over 90 LGA events with 67% of events free to attend.

We had 4.5 million website views with 783,000 unique users of the website. Our corporate twitter account gained over 3,000 new followers and received 9,052 mentions.

April

Published 'Get in on the Act: The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014' summarising the work the LGA undertook to influence the legislation.

May

Released our 'Making a difference for those living with dementia' film

June

Published 'Get in on the Act, The Care Act 2014' and the LGA's work making the case for a reformed and fairly funded care system.

July

Launched 'Investing in our nation's future: The first 100 days of the next government' campaign at our annual conference which attracted over 1,000 delegates.

August

Launched our 100 days interactive tool which allowed councils to create their own infographics laying out the issues facing the next government.

September

Hosted debates at the autumn party political conferences and secured 141 opportunities for our councillors to contribute to stakeholder events, including debates and roundtables.

October

Submitted evidence to the Autumn Statement process, followed up by letters to ministers.

November

#OurDay took place with over 16,000 tweets and 8,079 twitter handles from across local government taking part.

December

LGA Chief Executive Carolyn Downs gave evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into planning for the Better Care Fund.

January

Hosted the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution in the United Kingdom hearing from the then Leader of the House of Commons, William Hague MP, on the subject of devolution.

February

The Independent Commission on Local Government Finance published its final report – ‘Financing English Devolution’.

March

The Independent Commission on Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England published its final report: ‘Seven Steps to Growth and Prosperity’.

Support for the sector

- 132 peer challenges
- 111 graduates placed in 53 councils across England and Wales through the National Graduate Development Programme
- 577 councillors and 27 officers took part in our Highlighting Leadership programmes
- £22 million of savings/income generation for 16 councils from LGA productivity experts