

Communications Strategy and Action Plan 2012/13 to 2015/16

Purpose of report

To outline communications activity against targets in our three-year communications strategy and plan and to report on the period April 2015 to March 2016.

Summary

Since December 2012, and following the publication of our three-year communications strategy and plan, a monitoring and evaluation system has been developed to allow tracking and recording of key communications activity. This report sets out our performance against key metrics. The strategy and plan contains a series of key performance indicators, which together, contribute to influence perceptions and the reputation of the organisation.

Our strategy has a clear focus to support the organisation's strategic priorities and deliver improved outcomes through the full range of communications activities. The key measurement is our 'informed' rating which in the last year, against our key target of 'those who feel we keep them very or fairly well informed' has increased from 79 per cent to 83 per cent.

Over the period of the strategy, there has been a steady improvement against all of our key targets – contributing towards the overall satisfaction levels in our annual perceptions survey.

Recommendation

That the LGA Leadership Board is asked to note the communications performance against our three-year strategy and communications activity for the period April 2015 to March 2016.

Action

As directed by Members.

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Communications Strategy and Action Plan 2012/13 to 2015/16

Background

1. Effective communications contributes to enhancing our overall reputation with our member councils, Parliamentarians, the media and increasingly, residents. Our communications strategy has a clear objective - to position ourselves as the credible, national voice of local government. It sets out our strategy and key targets, aimed at further raising our profile and reputation, based on delivering high quality, proactive communications, with a clear focus on the priority areas for our member councils. To help us achieve this, we have positioned the Local Government Association as the 'come to' organisation on all matters which affect councils by ensuring we provide a strong voice for local government on the key issues they tell us are important for them. In addition, we work to promote improvement and good practice.
2. Campaigning and public affairs activity on behalf of local government remains a key priority for our member councils (90 per cent rate lobbying on behalf of local government as important). In our perceptions survey, **77 per cent** of member councils believe we effectively represent their views to central government.
3. Since the strategy was approved, we have also developed our communications support offer and we are currently supporting 52 councils with various elements of communications support. We have also developed our commercial offer and currently undertake paid communications work for four organisations. Both of these elements of our work will be further developed over the next year.
4. Over the period of the strategy we have developed our strategic approach to high-class communications ensuring all of our channels are fully integrated. As well as regular reviews, we also incorporated the findings of our corporate peer review into our overall approach
5. In addition, we have developed more sophisticated models to measure and evaluate our communications activity and impact. These will be further developed over the life of our next strategy.
6. Our strategy for 2012/13 to 2015/16 set out our key targets aimed at delivering a first class communications service. These covered the main drivers of reputation, engagement with members and influencing. It also included a target to deliver high quality communications activity which is 75 per cent proactive.
7. One of the key aims of the strategy is to position members at the heart of everything we do. The results of this year's perceptions survey, presented to members in April shows the overall progress the organisation has made over the last three years.
8. The table below sets out our performance over the period of our communications strategy and plan.

Measure	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Key drivers of reputation				
1 Member authority satisfaction (with the LGA)	63%	70%	75%	76%
2 Member authority advocacy rating (for LGA)	63%	73%	72%	75%
3 Member authority informed (LGA)	69%	77%	79%	83%
4 Value for money rating (of the LGA)	46%	53%	53%	56%
Media relations				
5 Episodes of media coverage (all)	20,603	29,765	27,568	32,091
6 Episodes of media coverage (national)	483	1,182	1,439	1,729
7 Proactive media coverage	58%	67%	79%	83%
Campaigns and public affairs				
8 Effectiveness rating with MPs	46%	61%	48 %	46%
9 Effectiveness rating with Peers	60%	60%	54%	58 %
10 Awareness recall of campaigns in Parliament (Average)	34%	38%	35%	82%

9. Work is now underway to develop our communications strategy and plan for 2016/17 to 2019/20, to be agreed by Leadership Board. This will build on our work over the last three years and further develop our approach to measurement and evaluation so that we present more integrated reports to Leadership Board.

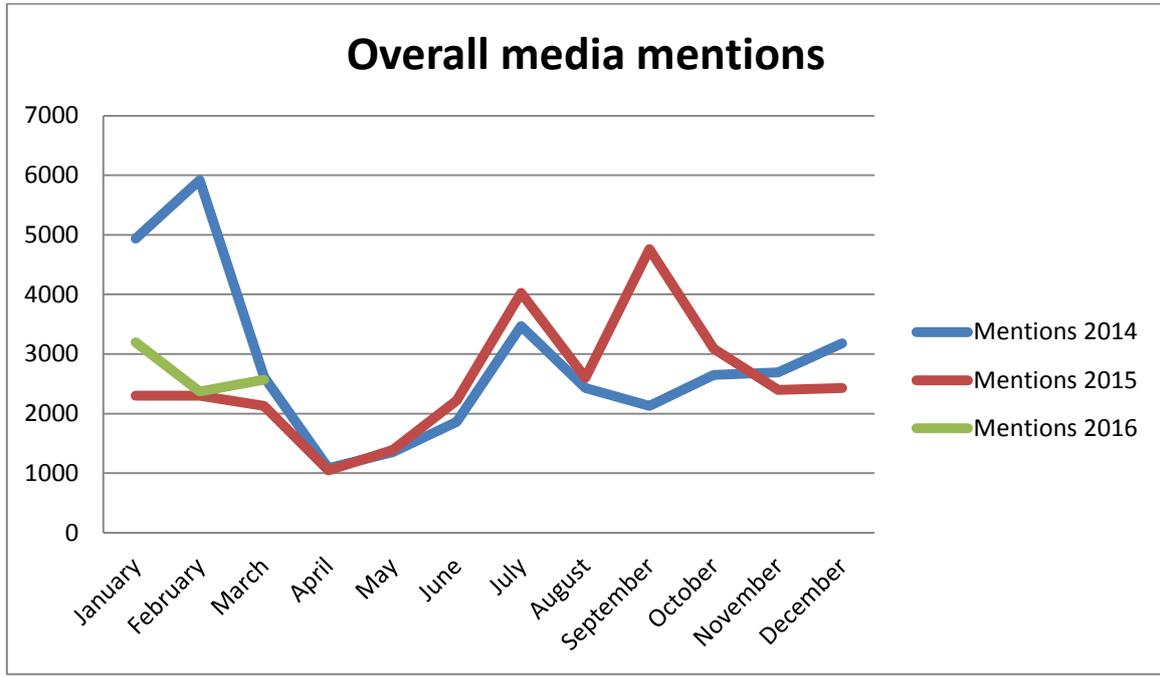
Summary of performance 2012/13 – 2015/16

10. In the last year, we have continued to represent local government strongly through our increased media coverage, priority campaigns, in Parliament and increasingly, through our growing digital offer. Through that work and our engagement with our members, our 'informed' rating amongst councillors and officers increased from 79 per cent to 83 per cent. This has continued the trend which has seen an increase from a base figure of 69 per cent in 2012/13.
11. The last 12 months has seen a continuation of the increase in national media coverage and volume of positive stories for local government as well as our parliamentary and digital activities which show improvements in both areas. The main results for the past 12 months are:
- 11.1. National media mentions up **20 per cent year-on-year** from **1,439** in the previous 12 months to **1,729** during this current period.
 - 11.2. The LGA was mentioned **578** times in the House of Commons and **314** times in the House of Lords in the 2015/16 parliamentary session. This means that on average the LGA was quoted **three times a day** when Parliament sat to debate policy and legislation.
 - 11.3. The @LGAComms twitter account had a potential reach of **53 million people** over the last year.
 - 11.4. Of the **60 events** delivered this financial year, **61 per cent** were free to attend for delegates attending from our member authorities and **26 per cent** were fully commercial.

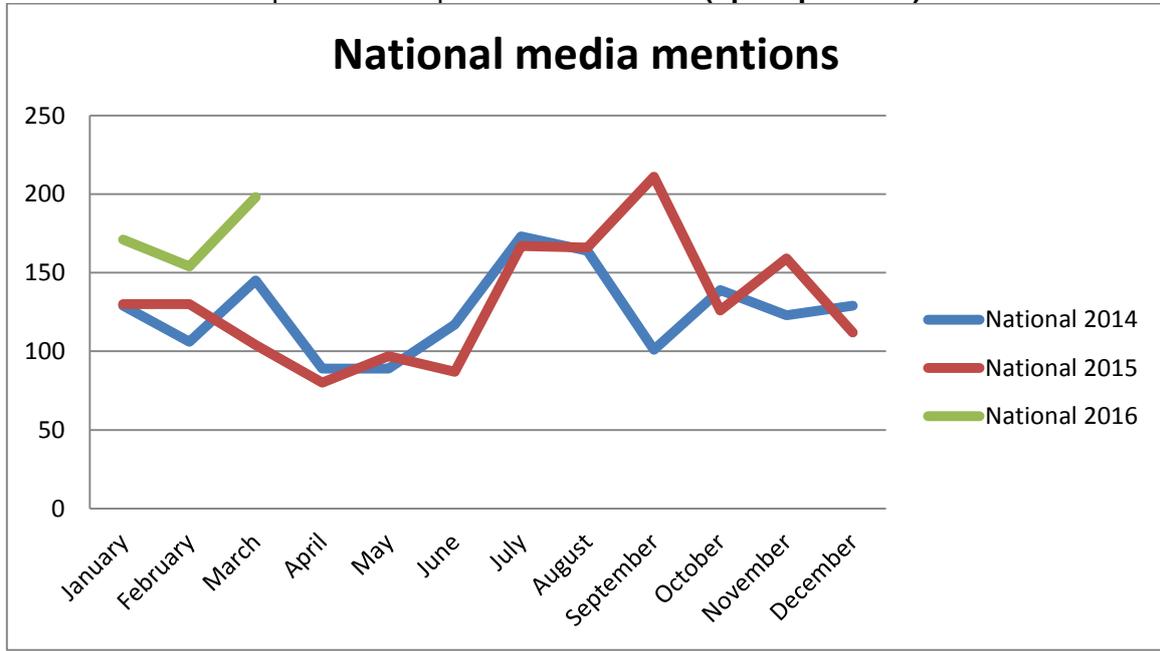
Media activity April 2015 to March 2016

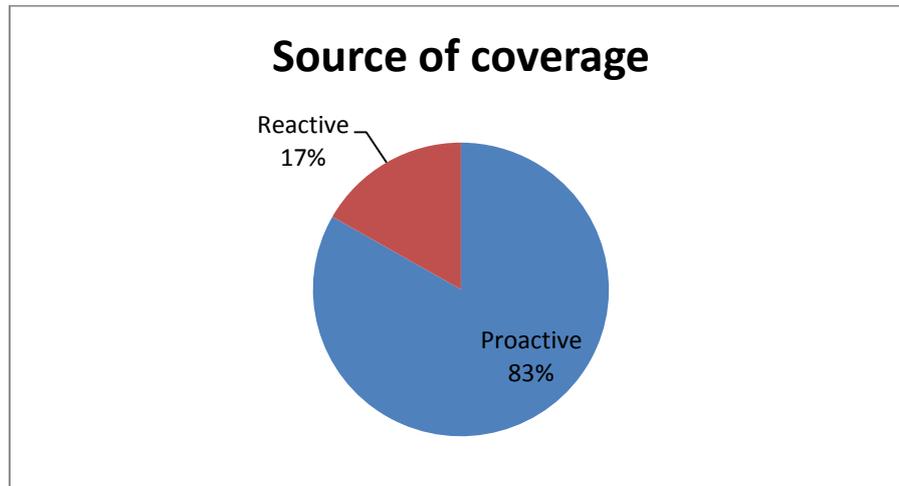
1. The following sets out all media coverage, including national media coverage, for the period April 2015 to March 2016 in comparison with the previous 12 month period.

	April 2015 – March 2016	April 2014 – March 2015
Mentions (all)	32,091	27,568
National (Print, online, broadcast)	1,729	1,439

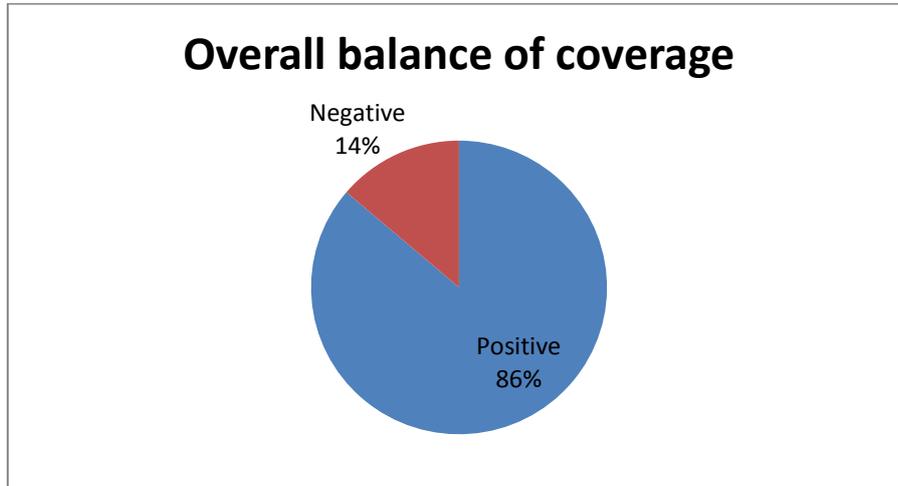


2. The last 12 months has seen national media coverage increase by **290** media mentions compared to the previous 12 months (**up 20 per cent**).





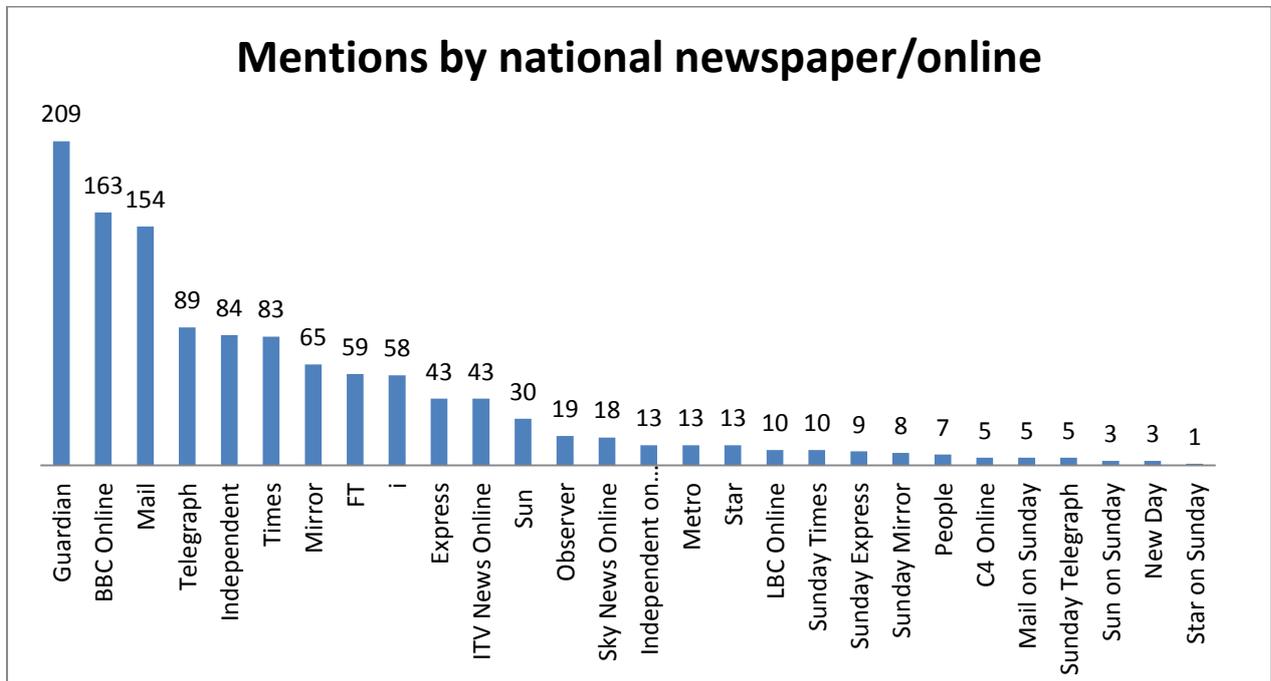
3. **83 per cent** of coverage in the past 12 months was through pro-active work. This is a **4 per cent** increase from **79 per cent** for the 12 months to March 2015. This was driven by our sustained work around our Annual Conference and the launch of our campaign document 'Spending Smarter: A Shared Commitment', the Spending Review, Local Government Finance Settlement and key legislation such as the Housing and Planning Bill.
4. Successful proactive releases throughout the year included:
 - 4.1 Refugee funding (**89 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.2 Spending Review/Local Government Finance Settlement (**49 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.3 Plans to convert all schools to academy status (**46 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.4 Schools facing places 'tipping point' (**40 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.5 Spending Review announcements on social care (**29 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.6 Schools (**25 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.7 LGA calls for updated laws to tackle 'legal highs'/Legal highs ban will enable closure of 'head shops' (**24 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.8 Cllr Izzi Seccombe writes to Jeremy Hunt MP on Phase 2 of the Care Act reforms/ Care Act delays (**24 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.9 475,000 homes with planning permission still waiting to be built (**23 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.10 Construction skills shortage threatens government housebuilding pledge (**20 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.11 Rogue landlords (**20 episodes of media coverage**)
 - 4.12 Finance - Council tax rises will not fix social care funding crisis (**19 episodes of media coverage**)



- 86 per cent** of our coverage this year was positive, an increase compared to **84 per cent** for the year to March 2015.

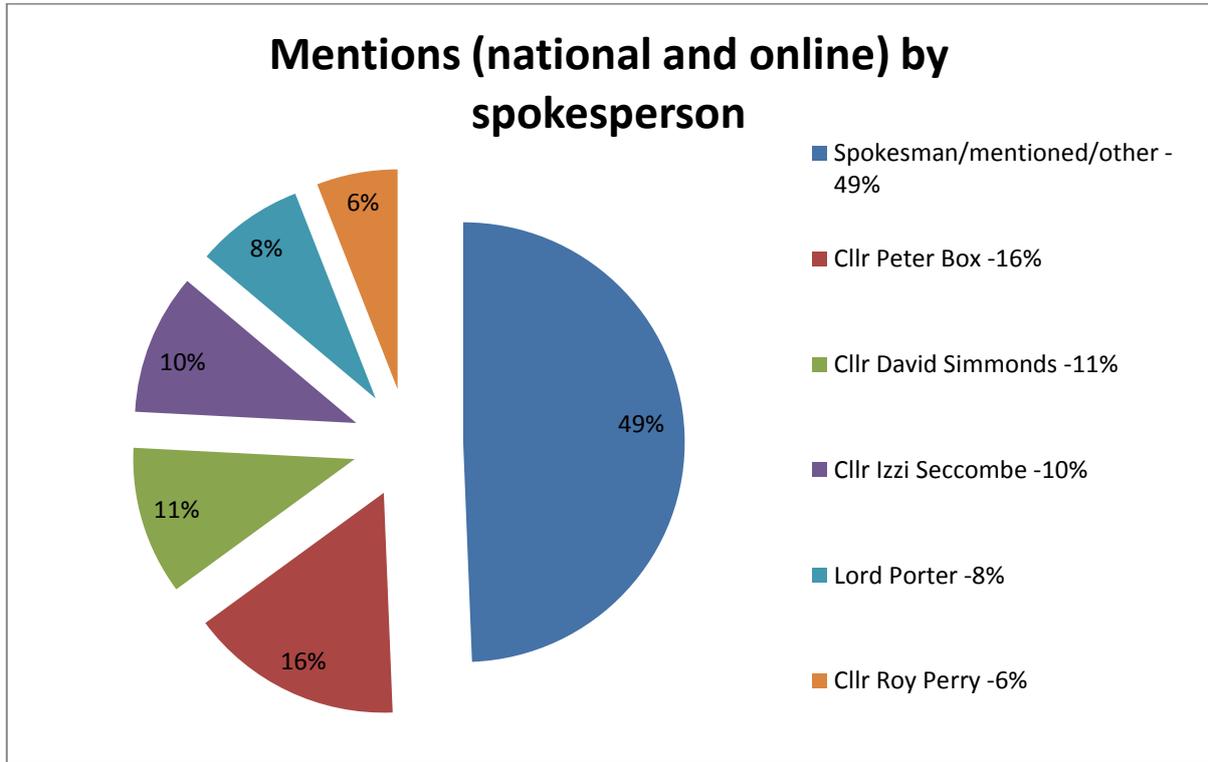
Print and online media

- The following sets out national newspaper and online coverage for the period April 2015 to March 2016.



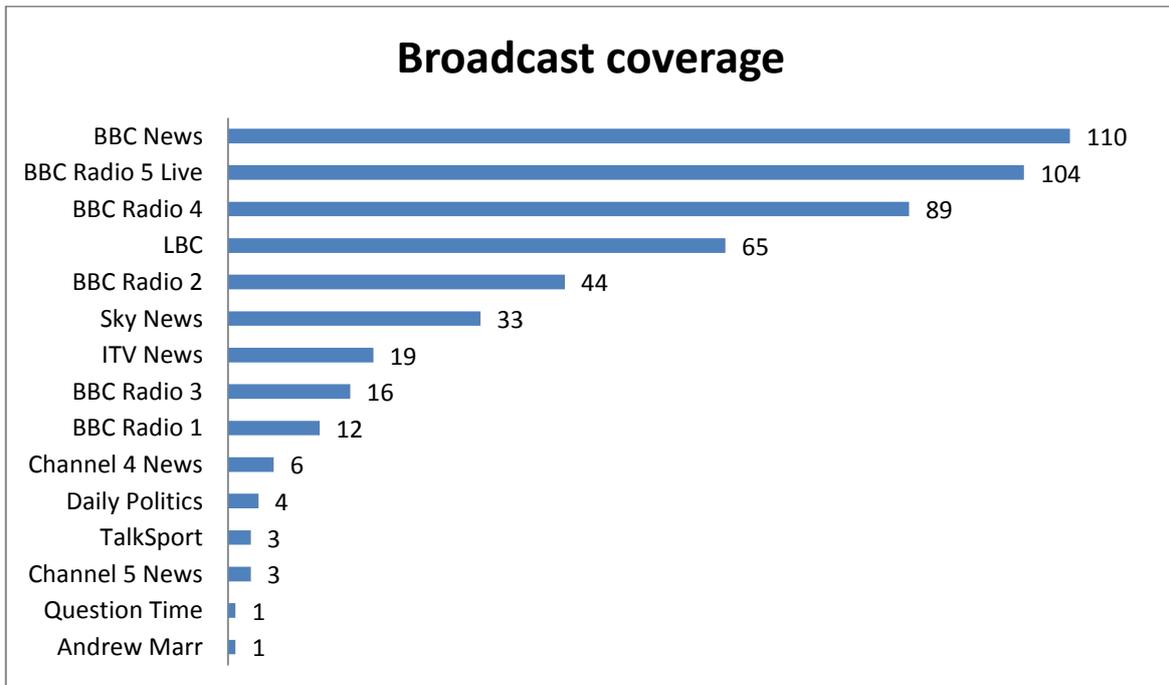
- The LGA appeared in **every** national daily and weekend newspaper and online broadcaster this year, featured most in the **Guardian** with **209** mentions. Our coverage was also reported widely by **BBC Online (163 times)** and the **Mail (154 mentions)**.

8. Key coverage throughout the year included set-piece interviews with Chairman Lord Porter running in the **Telegraph, Financial Times** and **Guardian** on the day of the Spending Review (SR). Our media lines in response to the SR were covered extensively in the national media including in three separate **Guardian** pieces, **BBC Online, Times, FT, Mirror, Mail** and **Independent**.
9. We worked closely with the **Press Association** looking at the impact of funding reductions over the last Parliament, which was reported by the **Times, Mirror** and **Mail**. This resulted in coverage of our key SR messages both ahead of the SR and on the day of the SR itself.
10. A media briefing was also held following the Spending Review to explain what it meant for local government. This was well attended and led to stories highlighting the LGA's analysis in the **Observer, Sun on Sunday, Sunday Express, Independent on Sunday, Sunday Times, BBC Online, BBC News, ITV News** and **Sky News**.
11. Our media work has been a central part of our lobbying around the Housing and Planning Bill. Our research on the number of unbuilt homes with planning permission was reported on the **BBC, FT, Guardian, Telegraph** and **Mail Online**. Housing spokesman Cllr Ed Turner also discussed the findings on **BBC Radio 4's Today Programme**. LGA-commissioned analysis from Savills on aspects of the Bill were used in press releases widely reported by the media. Our opposition to the forced sale of council homes to fund the Right to Buy extension was covered in the **Independent** and **i paper** and on **Guardian, Online, Mirror Online** and **BBC Online**.
12. Separate Savills research on the number of social housing tenants who would be affected by the new Pay to Stay policy made the front of the **Observer** and was followed up by the **BBC, Mirror, Sky News, Independent, Times** and **Sun**. Our report warning that starter homes will remain unaffordable for many was also covered widely in the **Mirror, Independent, FT, Guardian, Mail** and **ITV**. As the Bill arrived in the Lords, we placed a letter – signed by all four LGA group leader – in the **Observer** calling on peers to accept a number of key amendments.
13. We analysed how many councils would be using the 2 per cent social care council tax precept in 2016/17. We worked closely with the BBC to warn that the income would barely cover the cost of the National Living Wage, let alone ease the social care funding crisis. It was reported across **BBC News, Today** and **5 Live** and also in the **FT, Express, Times, Independent, Mirror, Mail** and **Independent**.



Broadcast media

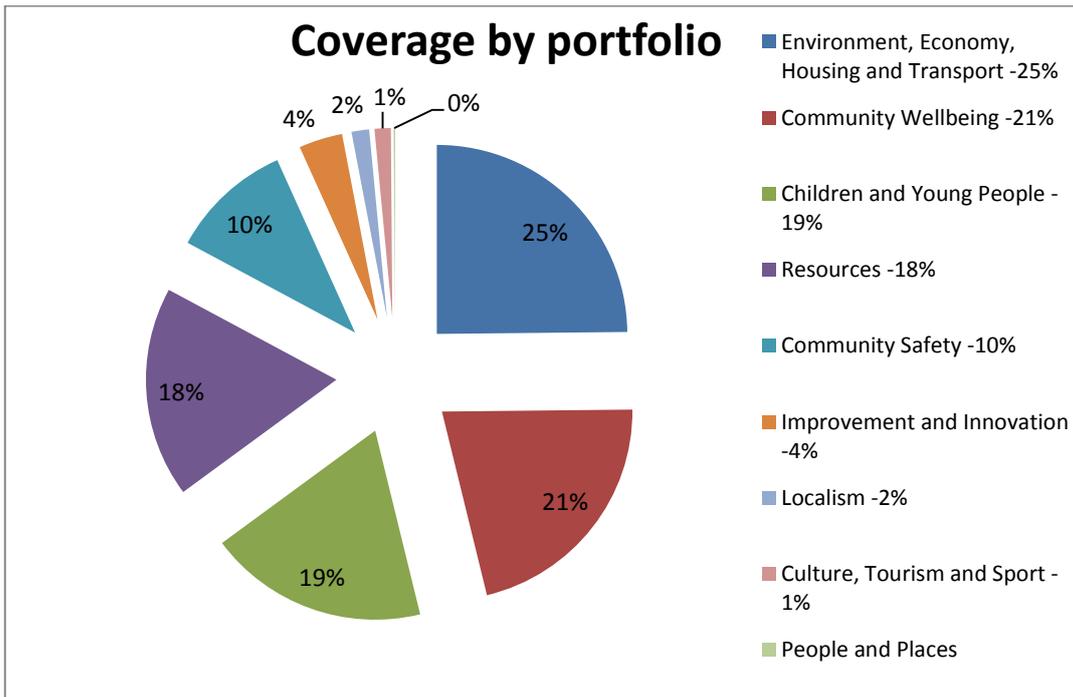
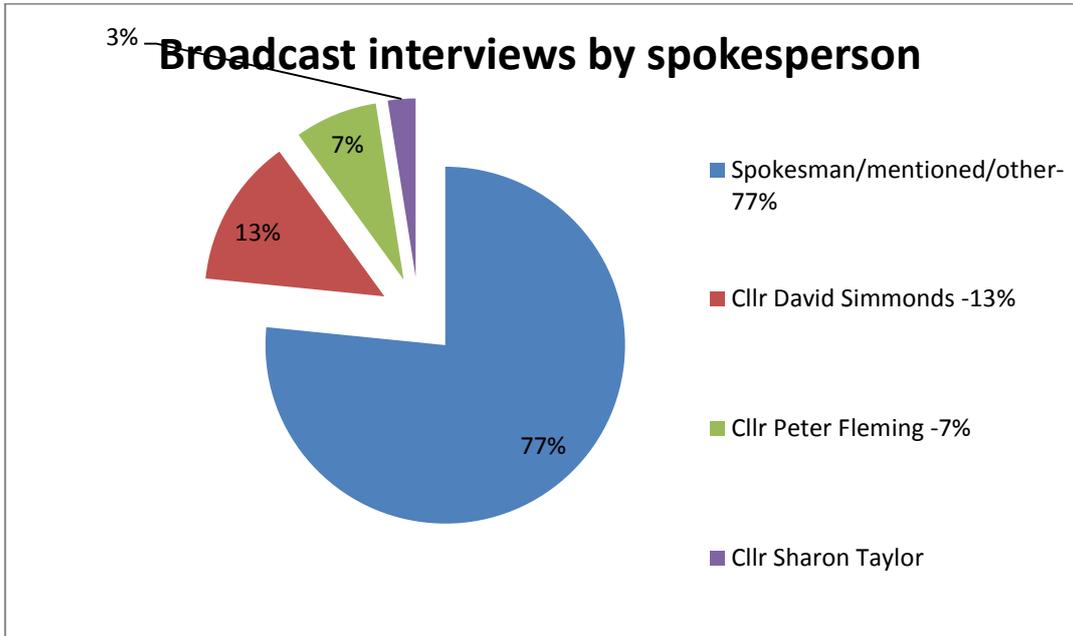
14. The following sets our broadcast activity for the period April 2015 to March 2016.



15. The LGA and our spokespeople were mentioned or interviewed **510** times on national TV and radio this year, compared to **434** times for the year to March

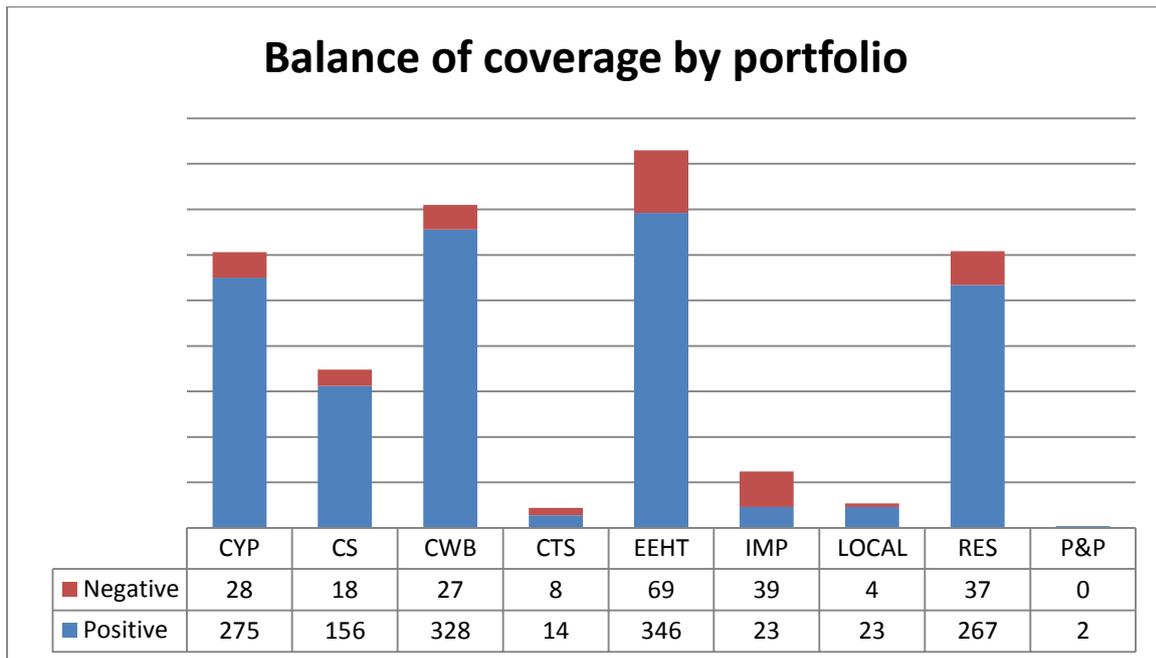
2015. August (62 mentions) and September (85 mentions) were our busiest broadcast months with stories over 12 different channels and programmes. This was dominated by our response to the unfolding refugee crisis and also included our lines on school truancy and our releases on rogue landlords and calls to government ahead of the Spending Review.

16. Asylum, Migration and Refugee Taskforce Chair Cllr David Simmonds was interviewed widely about councils' response to the refugee crisis throughout **September** on **BBC News, Sky News, Good Morning Britain, BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 4's Today programme, BBC Radio 5 Live** and **LBC**.
17. LGA Vice Chair Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson was also interviewed on **BBC Radio 5 Live** on **19 September** about our call for a crackdown on rogue landlords and Vice Chair Cllr Marianne Overton was interviewed on **BBC News** on **26 September** about our SR call for greater bus funding.
18. LGA Chairman Lord Porter was interviewed on **BBC News** and **Channel 5 News** with our reaction to the Chancellor's business rates retention announcement on **5 October**. Our warnings about further reductions in funding were also discussed by Lord Porter on **BBC Radio 4's PM** programme and **BBC Radio 5 Live**.
19. Vice Chair Cllr Sharon Taylor was interviewed by **BBC News, Channel 4 News, ITV News, BBC Radio 5 Live** and **LBC** with our reaction on the day of the Spending Review on **25 November** and also on **BBC Radio 5 Live** and **LBC** on **23 February** about how council tax rises will not be enough to fix the social care funding crisis.
20. Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder Cllr Izzi Seccombe was interviewed on **BBC Radio 4's Today programme** about the 2 per cent council tax precept to pay for adult social care, the day after it was announced in the SR on **26 November**. LGA Deputy Chair Cllr David Simmonds featured on **BBC Radio 4 Today** and **Sky News** on **21 October** about our calls for greater flexibility on term time holidays and also on **BBC News** on **29 November** on funding pressures following the SR.
21. Lord Porter featured live on the **BBC Daily Politics** with our response to the Local Government Finance Settlement on **17 December**, which was also reported on **BBC Radio 4** and **Radio 5 Live** news bulletins.
22. Children and Young People Board Vice Chair Cllr Richard Watts featured on **Channel 4 News** and **Channel 5 News** on **15 January** and also on **Good Morning Britain, Channel 4 News, Channel 5 News** and **LBC** on **29 February** with our calls for councils to be given back powers to open new maintained schools or compel academies to expand to help meet demand. LGA Deputy Chairman Cllr David Simmonds took part in a live discussion with **BBC Radio 5 Live** and also appeared on the **BBC News channel** and **BBC Radio 4's Today** on **15 January** about the issue.



23. The majority of our coverage this year was positive. The negative stories we have had to respond to and defend local government against included criticism of council help for homeless young people and on the Government's bid to speed up the adoption process in **Children and Young People**. For the **Community Wellbeing** portfolio, this included responding to complaints from the charity Mind on council mental health spending and the increased cost of paupers' funerals.

- 24. In **Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport**, negative coverage was received in relation to roads and council parking charges.
- 25. In **Resources**, negative stories included councils' financial reserves and pay guidelines for senior council staff.
- 26. In **Improvement and Innovation**, negative stories included calls for reform of Freedom of Information laws.



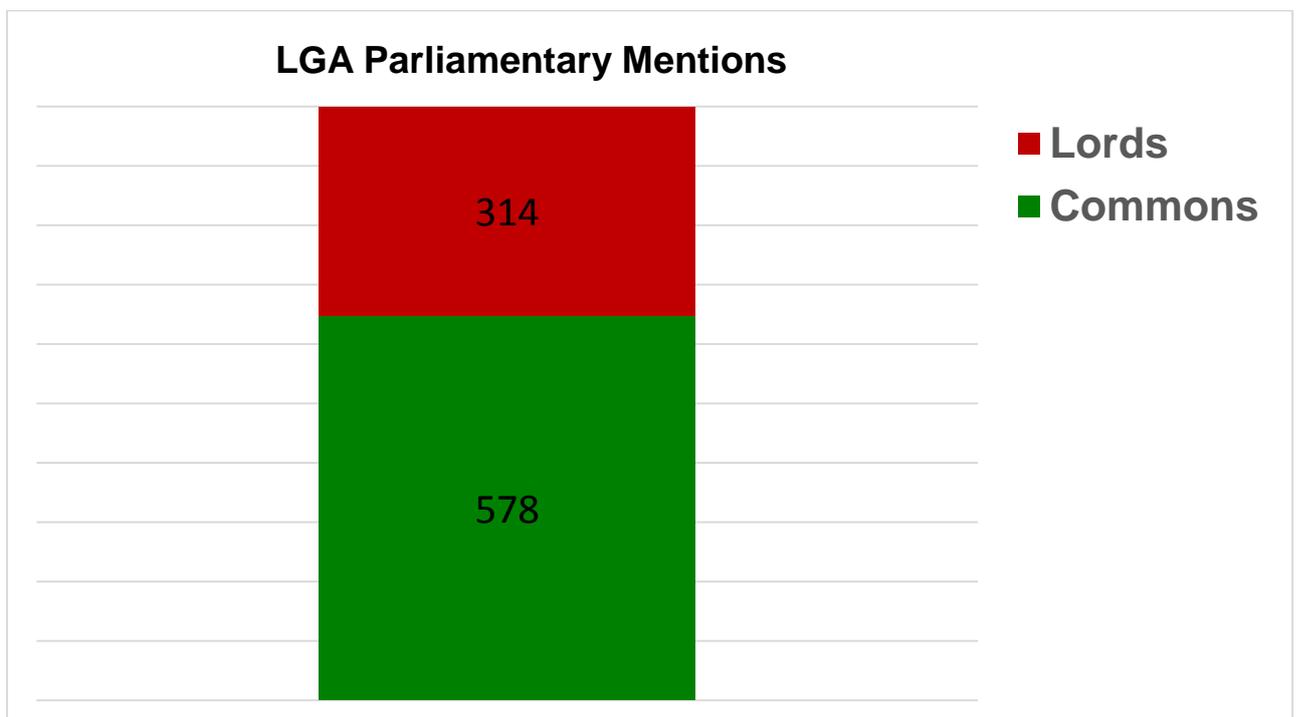
Campaigns and public affairs activity

Background

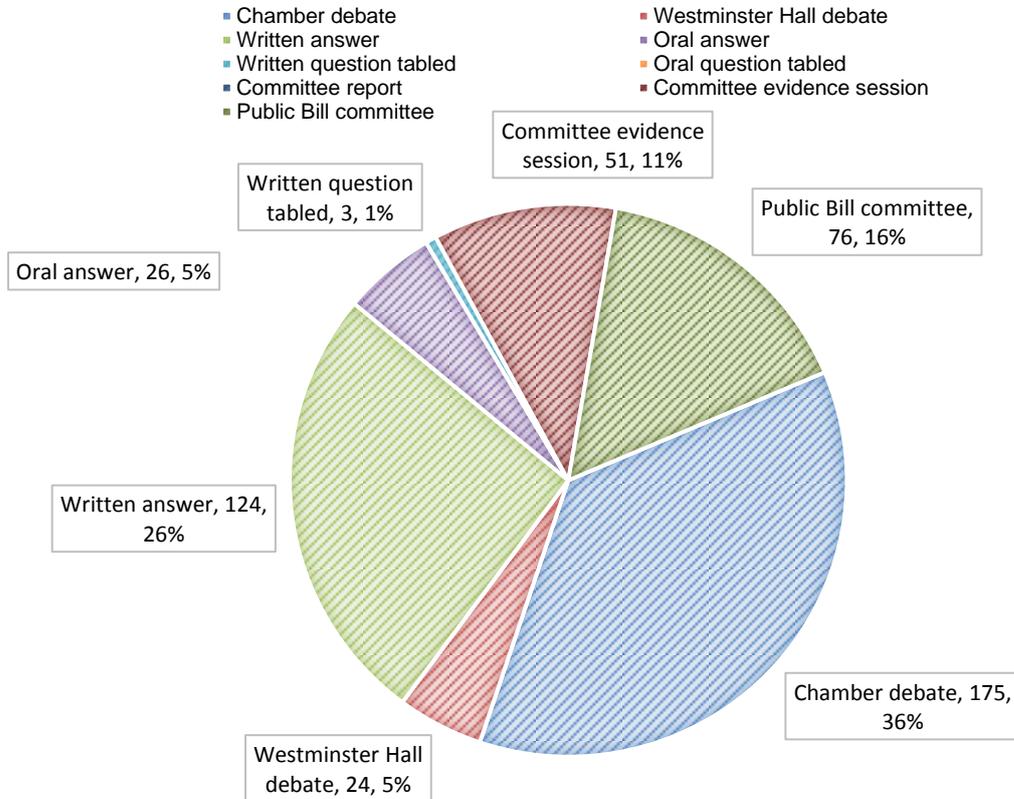
1. Campaigning and public affairs activity on behalf of local government remains a key priority for our member councils (90 per cent rate lobbying on behalf of local government as important). In our perceptions survey, **77 per cent** of member councils believe we effectively represent their views to central government.
2. 2015/16 was the first session of this Parliament with the Government bringing forward legislation across a range of policy areas, including housing, devolution, childcare, education, welfare, immigration and community safety.
3. The LGA was mentioned **578 times** in the House of Commons and **314 times** in the House of Lords in the 2015/16 parliamentary session. This means that on average the LGA was quoted three times a day when Parliament sat to debate policy and legislation.
4. Each week that Parliament sits, we monitor the forthcoming Westminster business, highlighting opportunities to raise our policy recommendations and campaigns to the House of Commons and House of Lords. In the last parliamentary session we issued

120 formal written briefings to MPs and Peers to complement the briefings provided in meetings. This includes circulating written briefings, and holding briefing roundtables in Parliament, on a range of government legislation including the Housing and Planning Act and the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act. We've also held briefings for parliamentarians on local government finance and the future of devolution.

5. The LGA gave evidence to **70 parliamentary inquiries** in 2015/16, including inquiries into the funding for health and social care, business rates and on the Right to Buy. We also provided secretarial support for the first time for the inquiry into Better Devolution for the UK Commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution.
6. In a ComRes poll of the LGA's reputation in Parliament, half of MPs would advocate for us and see our organisation as effective. **Nearly nine out of 10 MPs support our calls for councils to be given more financial freedoms** and control over local public services.
7. During September and October 2015 the LGA hosted debates and evening receptions at the autumn party conferences. The Chairman, Group Leaders and LGA Councillors also spoke at a range of debates and roundtables organised by more than 40 stakeholders, including the British Property Federation, the Care and Support Alliance, and the Enterprise Forum.

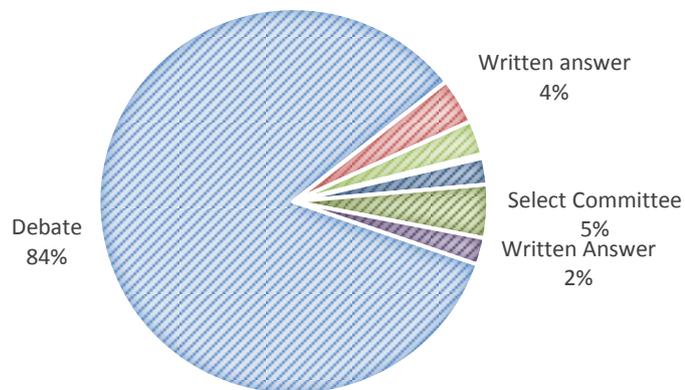


COMMONS MENTIONS, 2015- 2016



LORDS MENTIONS, 2015-2016

- Debate
- Written answer
- Oral answer
- Written question tabled
- Oral question tabled
- Committee report
- Committee evidence session
- Future business
- Select Committee
- Written Answer



Parliamentary reputation

8. To help monitor our reputation, we commissioned ComRes to poll parliamentarians. The results show, **47 per cent of MPs would 'advocate' for the LGA**, compared to only six per cent who would be critical of us. This compared favourably to the Confederation of British Industries (38 per cent), the National Housing Federation (23 per cent), the New Local Government Network (16 per cent) and the Care and Support Alliance (14 per cent).
9. MPs and Peers were also asked whether they viewed the LGA as 'effective'. Of those polled, **46 per cent of MPs believed the LGA is 'effective'**. Whilst our effectiveness rating has decreased, it still compares well to the Confederation of British Industries (48 per cent), the National Housing Federation (36 per cent), the New Local Government Network (19 per cent) and the Care and Support Alliance (11 per cent). To help improve our effectiveness rating the LGA will ensure that we are engaging closely with the new intake of MPs following the 2015 general election.
10. **A majority (58 per cent) of Peers regard the LGA as 'effective,'** therefore our effectiveness rating with Peers has remained consistent since 2012. As a comparison, the Confederation of British Industries scored 65 per cent, the National Housing Federation 44 per cent, the Care and Support Alliance 11 per cent, and the New Local Government Network six per cent.
11. MPs were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with three key campaign issues the LGA is promoting on behalf of local government. The response to each statement was positive and the key points are:

87 per cent of MPs polled support the call for councils to have more control over local public services in their areas.

86 per cent of MPs polled support the call for councils to have more financial powers and freedoms.

75 per cent of MPs polled support the call additional funding to go to councils social care budgets to tackle the funding challenge

Legislation

The LGA has influenced a wide range of legislation during the 2015/2016 Spending Review period:

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016

12. The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act provides the legal framework for the Government's devolution deals, including mayoral combined authorities.

13. The LGA worked with a cross-party group of peers to secure an amendment that requires the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to report annually on progress of devolution, which will bring greater transparency and accountability. We also tabled proposals that called for greater fiscal devolution to local government ahead of the announcement of full business rates retention and the option for multi-year settlements.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016

14. The Housing and Planning Act contains provisions on new homes, landlords and property agents, abandoned premises, social housing (including extending the Right to Buy to housing association tenants and the sale of local authority assets), planning, compulsory purchase and public land (duty to dispose).
15. The LGA worked closely with MPs and Peers across all political parties during the passage of the Act to provide background information and research on the proposals, support and table amendments to the legislation and influence government policy. Changes secured included giving councils the ability to grant secure tenancies to families with children, restrictions around the resale of starter homes, changes to the taper rate for 'pay to stay', and time-limited pilots on competition in processing planning applications.

The Childcare Act 2016

16. The Childcare Act extends free provision of childcare to thirty hours for working families.
17. The LGA worked with peers to table an amendment that led to the announcement of additional early years funding in the Spending Review 2015. Our engagement with the Department for Education also encouraged the Government to remove the powers for the Secretary of State to prescribe the type and timings of local childcare provision that councils provide.

The Education and Adoption Act 2016

18. The Education and Adoption Act makes it easier to convert schools causing concern to academies and provides a statutory footing for regional collaboration for adoption.
19. Following arguments made by the LGA, the Government amended the legislation to extend the 'coasting' definition to academies as well as council-maintained schools.

The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

20. The Welfare Reform and Work Act introduces a duty to report to Parliament on progress made towards achieving full employment and the three million apprenticeships target in England. The Act also introduces reporting obligations on the effect of certain support for troubled families and provision for social mobility, the benefit cap, social security and tax credits, loans for mortgage interest and social housing rents.

21. Chairman of the LGA, Lord Porter provided evidence to the Work and Welfare Reform Bill Committee session in September. He explained the LGA fully supported the Government's aims to drive down the cost of the housing benefit bill, and the only way to do this sustainably would be to build new affordable homes.
22. We successfully campaigned for the Government to conduct a review of supported accommodation and the Government has announced it will publish its findings in the spring 2016. The review is intended to find a workable and sustainable long-term solution for both the supported housing sector and the Government.

The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

23. On behalf of our member councils, we helped to influence legislation to tackle new psychoactive substances; Local government had called for a complete ban on the sale of all legal highs, and worked closely with the Home Office and parliamentarians to support the Bill through its passage in Parliament.
24. The Act makes it an offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, export or possess in a custodial institution psychoactive substances, which are defined in the legislation. The introduction of the ban should help to protect the public against anti-social behaviour and to also reduce councils' expenditure on drug and alcohol misuse from public health budgets.
25. The previous Office Minister of State, Lord Bates (Conservative), wrote an article for the LGA's 'first' magazine on the Bill in which he thanked councils and the LGA for their work on this area, and also said the Home Office would work with local authorities to ensure the successful implementation of the Act.

The Enterprise Act 2016

26. The Enterprise Act establishes a Small Business Commissioner to enable small businesses to resolve disputes with larger businesses; extends the Primary Authority Scheme to make it easier for more businesses to join; gives central government the power to set targets for apprentice numbers in the public sector; protects the term apprenticeship in law; reforms the business rates appeals system; and enables the Government to cap payments made to staff on leaving employment in the public sector.
27. During the Act's passage through Parliament we welcomed extending the Primary Authority Scheme to smaller businesses; opposed mandatory apprenticeship targets for public bodies and highlighted how councils can instead contribute to creating apprenticeships; supported proposals on non-domestic rates, including measures to allow the future reform of the business rates appeals process; and raised concerns and obtain information about the public sector exit payment cap.
28. Our engagement with the provisions in the Bill on apprenticeships supported a wider discussion with central government on the important role of councils in delivering apprenticeships.
29. On the public sector exit payment cap, we worked with a number of peers and MPs to press Ministers for information and to table amendments to address our concerns.

The Immigration Act 2016

30. The Immigration Act updates the legal framework on immigration and asylum, changing the law in relation to access to public services, facilities and licences to work in the UK. It also provides the Secretary of State with the powers to compel local authorities to take responsibility for unaccompanied minors who arrive elsewhere in the UK.
31. As the Act passed through Parliament, the LGA highlighted the important role councils have in protecting families, children and vulnerable adults who are seeking asylum. We sought to ensure local authorities are able to deliver their duties, keep children safe and prevent families from becoming homeless.
32. We also raised our concerns with the proposal to compel local authorities to take responsibility for unaccompanied minors who arrive elsewhere in the UK as there was no clarity on how their support needs will be funded. We argued in Parliament that no council should be made to choose between supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking or refugee children and providing vital services for their local community.

Parliamentary committees

33. In the last year, the LGA has submitted over **70 parliamentary inquiries** on a range of subjects including devolution, business rates, housing, health and social care funding, childcare, the Regional Schools Commissioners and air quality.
34. As well as responding to calls for evidence from select committees and All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs), the LGA for the first time provided secretarial support to the APPG on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution. The APPG commissioned an inquiry into Better Devolution for the Whole UK which was chaired by our President Lord Kerslake. The inquiry investigated how we can better achieve devolution across the whole UK, carefully considering how to bring long-lasting and coherent constitutional renewal.
35. LGA Chairman Lord Porter gave evidence to the inquiry, alongside Councillor Anne Western, Councillor John Pollard and Councillor Nick Forbes. The inquiry also heard from Rt Hon Gordon Brown, former Prime Minister of the UK, Rt Hon Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Jon Trickett, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Minister for the Constitutional Convention. The report launched its recommendations in Parliament, securing national media coverage and support from across the political divide.
36. The below table sets out the parliamentary inquiries to which the LGA has submitted evidence.

Committee	Inquiry
Communities and Local Government	Inquiry on planning and productivity
Work and Pensions	Inquiry on welfare to work

Communities and Local Government	Inquiry on the Housing Association sector and the Right to Buy
Work and Pensions	Inquiry on pension freedom guidance and advice
Education	Inquiry on the work of Ofsted
Communities and Local Government	Inquiry on the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill
Energy and Climate Change	Inquiry on DECC priorities 2015
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	EFRA topics
Home Affairs	Inquiry on psychoactive substances
Health	Inquiry on primary care
Work and Pensions	Inquiry on benefit delivery
Education	Inquiry on the work of Regional Schools Commissioners
Business, Innovation and Skills	Inquiry on the Government's Productivity Plan
Social Mobility (Lords)	Inquiry on how to prepare young people for the world of work
Public Accounts Committee	Care Act first-phase reforms inquiry
Culture, Media and Sport	Establishing world-class connectivity throughout the UK
Public Accounts Committee	Local Government new burdens
National Policy for the Built Environment (Lords)	Inquiry on how to create a better built environment
Transport	Road traffic law enforcement
Immigration Bill	Public Bill Committee evidence
Welfare Reform and Work Bill	Public Bill Committee evidence
Communities and Local Government	Cities Bill - Health Devolution
Communities and Local Government	Housing Associations and Right to Buy
Energy and Climate Change Committee	Energy Efficiency and Demand reduction
Bill Committee	Housing and Planning Bill
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's role in tackling air quality
APPG on Housing and Care	Impact of the Spending Review and Care and Housing
APPG on Devolution	Inquiry into Better Devolution
Public Accounts	Fire and Rescue Services
Work and Pensions	Local welfare safety nets

Health Committee	Public Health Post-2013
APPG on Primary Care and Public Health	Primary Care
APPG on Ageing	Ageing Agenda
ILC and Age UK SR event	Impact of the Spending Review on care
APPG on Primary Care and Public Health	Delivering the five year forward view
Childcare Bill Committee	Public Bill Committee evidence
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Air quality
Joint Committee Investigatory Powers	Investigatory Powers Bill
Kerslake Review	Function and Role of the Treasury
APPG on Students	Integrating students in communities
Work and Pensions	Bereavement Inquiry
Health	Comprehensive Spending Review inquiry
Education Committee	Purpose and Quality of Education
Independent Commission	Freedom of Information
Communities and Local Government	Business rates
Communities and Local Government	Homelessness
Health	Public Health Post 2013
Work and Pensions	Intergenerational Equality
APPG on Social Work	Mental Health Provision
Education Committee and Work and Pensions Committee	Life Chances strategy
Education	Children's social work reform
APPG on Runaway and Missing Children/Adults	Safeguarding missing/absent children
APPG for Children	Children social care
Communities and Local Government	Business rates
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Flooding
Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy	Apprenticeships
Health	Spending Review Inquiry
Education	Children's social work reform
APPG on Runaway and missing children/adults	Safeguarding missing/absent children
Scrutiny Unit	Policing and Crime Bill

Children APPG	Children's social care
Environmental Audit	Flooding Prevention
Work and Pensions	Future of Jobcentre Plus
Culture, Media and Sport	Countries of Culture
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Flooding Prevention
Business, Innovation and Skills	Powerhouses and engines
Work and Pensions	Disability Employment
APPG on Mental Health	The Mental Health Taskforce
Public Accounts	Lifetime ISAs
APPG on Ageing and Older People	Devolution and Integration
Environmental Audit	Sustainability and HM Treasury inquiry

Party conferences

37. As with previous years, we hosted a number of debates at the autumn party political conferences on our calls for further devolution and ensure fair funding. Our Spending Review submission, 'Spending Smarter: A shared commitment' and our 'English devolution: local solutions for a successful nation' report were shared at each conference in order to highlight local government's priorities for the forthcoming Parliament.
38. In addition to the events supported by the LGA corporately, the Political Group Offices organised a series of debates, training sessions for councillors and meetings across each of the conferences including those held by UKIP and the Green Party. These included debates, roundtables and Be a Councillor workshops. At the Liberal Democrat conference the Group office also worked with politicians to influence a key conference motion on social care.
39. We also worked closely with a range of stakeholders from across the private, public and voluntary sectors to secure speaking opportunities for our councillors at debates, policy seminars and private meetings such as evening dinners. As a result of this the Chairman, group leaders and LGA councillors spoke at events on devolution, housing, enterprise and growth, skills, social investment, health and social care, transport, licensing, public health, and young people and children services. These events were held with high profile stakeholders such as the Care and Support Alliance, the British Property Federation, Barnardo's, Ambition, the MS Society, the Charities Aid Foundation and the Enterprise Forum. Briefings were provided for each event and were a platform for members to highlight their messages on the Spending Review, devolution, housing, health and care, and many other policy areas. In total we secured **75 speaking opportunities at debates and roundtables with more than 40 stakeholders.**
40. For the conferences we produced guides that were emailed out from group leaders to all councillors and made available online showcasing our significant number of speakers and events over the season. These guides were **downloaded 971 times for Conservatives, 1,031 times for Labour and 255 times for Liberal Democrats.**

Support to our membership

41. In 2015/16 we continued to expand our support offer to those officers in local government working on public affairs and parliamentary engagement. Membership of our **Parliamentary Network has doubled to 200 officials**, including senior officers covering communications, policy and strategy, joining it. The LGA Parliamentary Network has supported councils in their parliamentary engagement by producing weekly summaries of parliamentary debates, a forward planning weekly email with key opportunities in Parliament, the sharing of LGA briefings and the hosting of a briefing event on the General Election in Local Government House. Ahead of the General Election we also produced briefing notes on key manifesto commitments which were shared widely across local government

Campaigns

DevoNext

1. 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.

We have made good progress in moving the Government to a position where devolution is now well underway and discussions on issues such as retention of business rates are well advanced.

2. As part of the campaign, a web hub was developed to support councils to scope their options and address some of the key considerations for successful devolution arrangements. Materials were developed to help councils communicate devolution messages to a range of audiences included publications and films as well as interactive information.
3. The DevoNext resource hub received **63,976 page views**, one of the most viewed parts of the website. The homepage received 15,521 page views from 11,056 users over the course of the year. The majority of these users were new visitors (74 per cent compared to 26 per cent returning visitors).
4. In addition, three publications focussing on different aspects of devolution and two 60 second films were published as part of the campaign. The two films, designed as 60 second 'explainer' style films are two of the best watched films on the website.
 - 4.1 English devolution – Local solutions for a successful nation (29,670 downloads)
 - 4.2 Charting progress on the health devolution journey – early lessons from Greater Manchester (1,969 downloads)
 - 4.3 English devolution – local solutions for a healthy nation (15,311 downloads)
 - 4.4 What are Combined authorities? (published six months ago – 2200 views)
 - 4.5 What is devolution? (published two months ago – 1060 views)

Future Funding

5. The latest phase of Future Funding campaign was launched in March 2015, focusing on the frontline impact of spending cuts for local communities following the Spending Review.
6. The campaign continued our calls for fairer funding for local government following a fall in core central government funding of 40 per cent over the past five years. Over the last year, as part of the campaign, we produced a number of resources to support councils, including:
 - 6.1 Case studies (520 page views)
 - 6.2 Online Interactive tool (2,097 page views with an average time on the page of just under 3 minutes)
 - 6.3 Council tax infographic (1,680 downloads)
 - 6.4 Spending review resource (5,609 page views and 4,430 unique views)
 - 6.5 Future funding film (1,604 views)
7. The 'Future Funding' campaign site received **9,018 page views and 7,005 unique page views**.
8. There were three related campaign publications created to reinforce the LGA's main funding calls to Government and which influenced a wide range of legislation during the 2015/2016 Spending Review period. These included 'A Shared Commitment: Local Government and the Spending review' (7,063 downloads) which was launched at the LGA annual conference outlining how local government could support the Government in tackling the national deficit over the period of the next parliament. Spending smarter: A shared commitment (14,844 downloads) was the LGA's official Spending Review submission to government.

#OurDay

9. For the fourth year running, we held #OurDay on 18 November 2015. The day is the opportunity to showcase the breadth of work that councils do throughout a typical day on Twitter and other social media platforms. To promote this year's #OurDay the marketing and campaigns team produced an online resources area to support councils to promote the day to their staff and residents, including posters and branding for use on websites.
10. The #OurDay branding featured on a number of council homepages in the lead up to the day. The resources area received **7,583 page views** with the #OurDay web stamp for councils to use on websites and in promotional materials was downloaded **11,516 times**.
11. A total of **18,754 tweets** were sent during the day (up from 16,564 last year) from council staff, members and chief executives. Over 8,541 twitter handles took part in the day and the tweets had a potential reach of **20 million users**. The hashtag #OurDay was the most popular topic in the UK for most of the 24 hours.

Show us you care

12. Our Show Us You Care campaign was re-launched in March 2015 and visitors to our website are still actively engaged in downloading our campaign publications:

- 12.1 Creating a better care system (5,014 downloads)
- 12.2 Ageing, the silver lining (8,144 downloads)
- 12.3 LGA and EY report – social care and health film (150 views)

Be a Councillor

13. Our refreshed Be a Councillor campaign was launched as a pilot campaign in Rotherham. The 'Be a Councillor' website promoting the campaign received **27,527 visits** and **69,381 page views** since the launch of the campaign. Most of the visitors to the site were new (88.4 per cent) in comparison to the returning visitors (11.6 per cent).

14. We also produced two publications to support the campaign:

- 14.1 Be a Councillor brochure: (79,082 downloads)
- 14.2 Be a Councillor: a guide for disabled people: (6,245 downloads)

15. Following its success, other councils have approached us to support them with similar, local bespoke campaigns, with one project just completing in Lancashire.

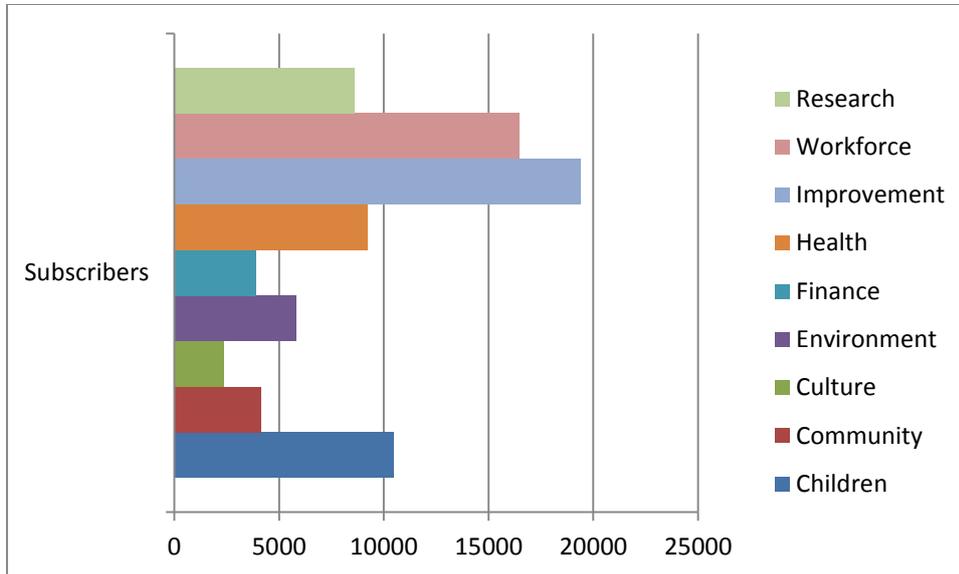
Digital

1. As our members are increasingly embracing digital communications, we have adapted to meet those requirements. We have also developed sophisticated measurement and evaluation techniques to ensure we maximise the benefits of digital technology.

E-bulletins

2. Our E-bulletins remain an important way for us to share the work of our boards. Programme bulletins now reach a **total audience of 80,462** a slight increase from last year's figure of 80,020. Improvement, Workforce and Children and Young People continue to retain the highest number of subscribers.
3. In addition to the programme bulletins, the Chief Executive's and the Chairman's weekly bulletins have continued to be a successful route to communicate information to targeted audiences. The Chief Executive's email goes to 395 addresses, an increase in membership from last year's figure of 362. The Chairman's bulletin is sent to **954 council leaders and group leaders across the country**.

Subscriber numbers by programme bulletin:

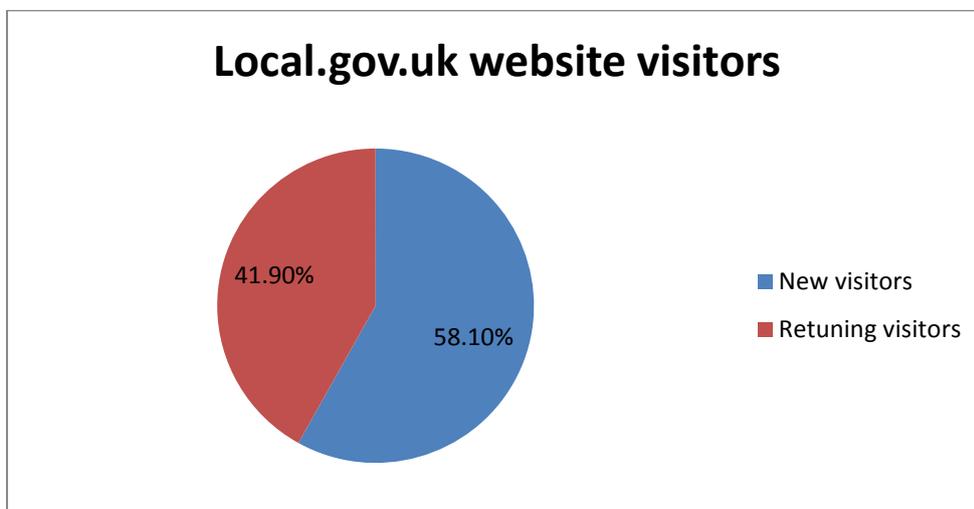


Website

- Our website saw a slight decrease in total page views **4.1 million** in 2015/16 compared to 4.5 million in 2014/15 (but an increase from the 3.7 million in 2013/14 – and a slight decrease in unique users with 770,626 this year compared to 790,779 the previous year.

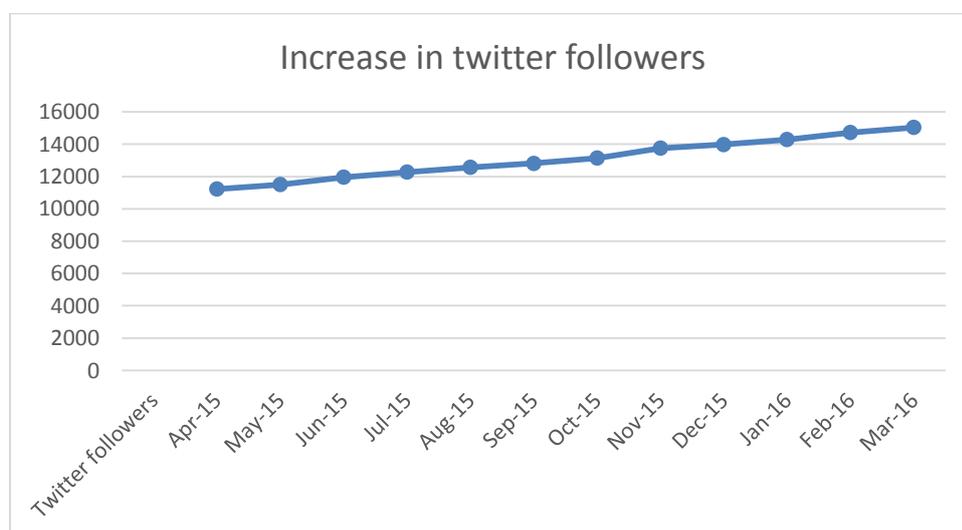
More new visitors used the website than returning visitors, meaning we were attracting new audiences. The proportion of new visitors using the website increased slightly (by 2.3%) in 2015/15 compared to 2014/15.

The average time spent on the website is two minutes 24 seconds and visitors look at an average of 3.3 pages per visit. This remains in line with site usage in the previous year.



Social media

5. The audience for the corporate twitter feed - @LGAComms - has increased significantly over 2015/16, followers **increased by 27 per cent to 15,038** on the 31 March 2016 compared to 10,922 followers on 31 March 2015. This number has now increased to 15,400. Followers of the account include members, council officers and stakeholders from across the sector as well as media and national politicians.
6. The @LGAComms twitter account had a potential reach of **53 million people** over the last year and 10,077 mentions.
7. The significant increase in Twitter followers has come through proactive development of the feed, planning and scheduling tweets in advance, actively promoting relevant content in a timely manner, effective use of hashtags and using and learning from analytics from past tweets.
8. Through Twitter, the digital team have promoted the LGA's parliamentary briefings, campaign launches and media releases, ensuring the LGA's policy lines reach a wide audience. LGA events are promoted through Twitter to increase bookings, attendance and awareness of these events (especially Annual Conference) and the digital team also promote new or updated sections on the website, alerting members of content that supports them in their work.



Conference and Events

1. We delivered **60 events this financial year**. Sixty-one per cent were free to attend for delegates attending from our member authorities.
2. A further **13 per cent were free to attend** but organised by the team on behalf of Public Health England, the Early Intervention Foundation and Locality in partnership with the LGA. We received event management fees to cover the organisation and costs associated with this jointly badged events activity.

3. **Twenty- six per cent of events were fully commercial basis** including the Annual Conference and Exhibition, the National Children and Adults Services Conference, the Annual Culture, Tourism and Sport and Annual Fire residential conferences. Thirty-one per cent of events were held in the regions.
4. Our commercial events made in excess of **£2 million gross income** and our new Eventsforce online delegate booking system has enabled us to recover 32 per cent of our delegate booking income via payment card at the time of booking, greatly assisting with the organisations credit control and again providing an added benefit to our member organisations who are able to select invoicing at the time of booking or the payment by card option, all non-member organisations now have to make all payments via payment card.

Communications improvement

1. Over the last year, our communications improvement offer (part of our wider sector-led improvement programme) has further developed. We undertook a range of activity including a number of full communications peer reviews, one-day communications 'health checks', support to three councils to recruit new heads of communication and we supported a number of councils on a range of reputation and other issues. In total, we supported **52 councils** to varying degrees with expert communications support.
2. We also held a number of best practice event on subject areas such as devolution and produced best practice guidance on issue such as communicating during purdah, which was downloaded more than **18,000 times**.