

Communications Report: April – September 2016

Purpose

For information and direction.

Summary

Our strategy as a communications team had a clear focus to support the organisation's strategic priorities and deliver improved outcomes through the full range of communications activities. The following report sets out our performance against these priorities identified by the Leadership Board for 2016/2017.

Highlight results for April to September 2016 are:

- National media mentions have **increased year-on-year** from 808 in the same period for 2015 to 933 in 2016.
- In Parliament, **we submitted evidence to 40 Committee inquiries** and briefed on 33 Parliamentary debates, including on key legislation such as the Housing and Planning Bill, where we worked with MPs and Peers to secure requirements for providing affordable homes.
- The LGA website has had 374,476 unique visitors, **up two per cent** from the same period last year, and with 1,089,376 unique page views. There have been 3,147 new subscribers to the LGA's ebulletins since 1 April. On Twitter, the number of followers of @LGAcomms has increased by a third to over 16,000 followers since the same time last year.
- Over **15,000 attendees** of the LGA annual conference and exhibition, 30 per cent was new business / first time exhibitors with 10 per cent extra exhibition space sold in 2016 compared to the last time we used the Bournemouth International Centre.

Further background information is available at **Appendix A**.

Recommendation

That the LGA Leadership Board note the communications activity for the period April to September 2016.

Action

As directed by Members.

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1. Future Funding (business rates)

- 1.1. In autumn 2015, the Government announced that local government as a whole would be able to retain all business rates raised locally by 2020. The latest phase of the Future Funding campaign focuses on business rate retention for local government and concerns about new burdens.
- 1.2. The LGA has been working with councils and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to ensure that local government is vocal in shaping the way that this new system will work and to ensure the views from across the sector are represented in the development of a new system.

The main highlights for the Future Funding campaign include:

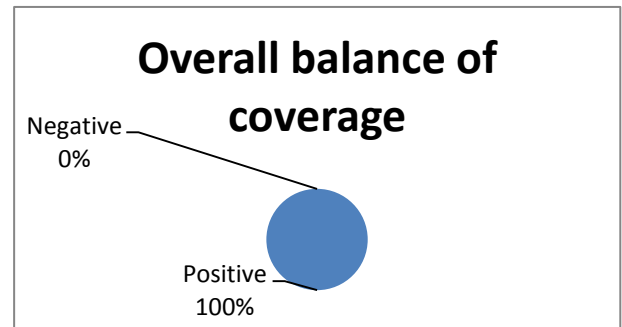
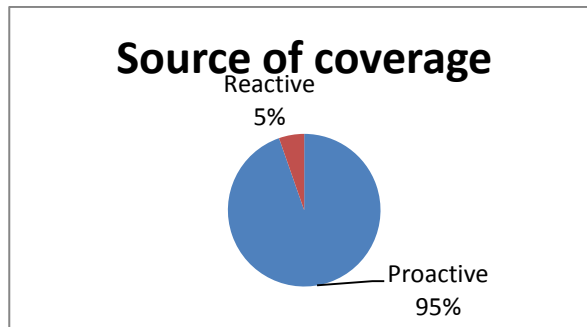
- ninety-five per cent of media coverage was proactive and 100 per cent was positive
- we produced a briefing on the Government's consultation on business rates retention, highlighting our calls for powers to be extended to all areas, not just those with elected mayors
- seven local business rates retention events took place, reaching more than 300 people, and
- since its launch in mid-April, the business rates hub has become one of the most viewed pages on the LGA website, with almost 6,000 unique page views (more than 12,000 in total) to date.

1.3. Media:

- 1.3.1. We issued a total of 12 media releases related to the Future Funding campaign throughout this period, including:

- 1.3.1.1. LGA responds to government funding announcement about potholes (7 April) (23 episodes of national coverage)
- 1.3.1.2. Obesity to cost councils half a billion (18 July) (seven episodes of national coverage)
- 1.3.1.3. LGA responds to Government EU funding announcement (13 August) (seven episodes of national coverage)
- 1.3.1.4. Councils call for oversight of academy finance (26 August) (seven episodes of national coverage)
- 1.3.1.5. Growing risk to EU funding billions and Brexit uncertainty, councils warn (29 July) (five episodes of national coverage).

- 1.3.2. Ninety-five per cent of our coverage was proactive and 100 per cent of our coverage was positive.



1.4. Public Affairs:

- 1.4.1. Our parliamentary briefing on the Government's consultation into business rate retention was downloaded 33 times and we continue to reflect the financial challenges facing councils in a range of other briefings. This includes highlighting the need for a long term financial settlement to support councils in their work providing care and support to refugees and highlighting the challenging financial climate in health and care services as part of a briefing on Sustainable Transformation Plans (STPs).
- 1.4.2. Our evidence to a variety of parliamentary committee inquiries, including those on adult social care and unsafe discharges, have highlighted the challenging financial context within which councils are operating and have made recommendations to help alleviate some of the pressures.
- 1.4.3. At the party conferences, we hosted a debate at the Conservative Party Conference on local government's priorities for the new Prime Minister Theresa May MP. This was an opportunity to promote the LGA's recommendations in our Autumn Statement submission and our business rates consultation response. At the Liberal Democrat Party Conference, the LGA led a discussion on the impact of the UK leaving the European Union which was a further opportunity to highlight the financial issues such as the future of structural funding.

1.4.4. The Local Growth and Jobs Bill

In our Queen's Speech briefing on the Local Growth and Jobs Bill, we highlighted how this legislation will provide the framework to underpin the move to full collective retention of business rates by English local government. The Bill will also legislate for the set of responsibilities that will be devolved to local authorities as a result of the reforms. It is anticipated the legislation will enter Parliament by January 2017 and we will be working to ensure that the concerns we raised in our consultation on business rates retention are addressed in this legislation.

1.5. Campaigns and digital:

- 1.5.1. Following the work on Future Funding that was developed in the run up to last year's Spending Review, a new business rates "hub" (<http://www.local.gov.uk/business-rates>) was set up.
- 1.5.2. Since launch, the hub has received 11,769 total page views (unique page views 5,915) with people spending an average of 2 minutes 43 seconds on the page. The hub is one of the most popular pages on the website (among the top 20) and also the time spent on the page is over twice that of the average time spent on individual pages on the site.
- 1.5.3. An explainer document 'Don't be left in the dark: what localised business rates mean for your council, a guide to business rates retention' was published online on 4 July 2016 to coincide with the LGA Annual Conference. There have been 452 downloads, with 402 unique downloads of the publication and 480 hard copies given out at conference.

1.6. Events:

- 1.6.1. We held six regional business rates retention events, providing an opportunity for chief executives, senior finance officers and senior councillors to hear about and comment on the Government's consultation and helped us to engage with more than 300 people on business rates retention. A Member Peer conference was also held, attended by 125 delegates.

1.7. first magazine:

- 1.7.1. first has been providing regular, feature-length updates on work towards local retention of business rates since April 2016, with contributions drafted by the media team based on materials submitted by the finance team.

1.7.2. Highlights include:

- 1.7.2.1. Self-sufficient local government – p14 feature on balancing needs and growth, and resets (first 604, October 2016)
- 1.7.2.2. Reforming business rates – p16-17 feature on the DLCCG's consultation on business rates retention (first 602, August 2016)
- 1.7.2.3. Business rates and fiscal devolution – p26 comment from Ed Cox, Director of IPPR North (first 602, August 2016)
- 1.7.2.4. Business rates retention – devil in the detail – p30 parliament feature (first 598, April 2016).

2. Social care

- 2.1. Following the success of the Show Us You Care campaign, a focus on social work was re-launched in March 2015.
- 2.2. Our campaign is calling for the Government to commit to protecting social care funding in councils, which will ease financial pressures in other areas of council budgets.

The main highlights include:

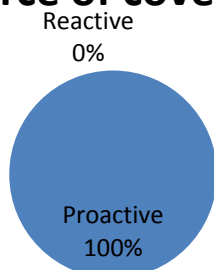
- a total of 11 proactive media releases with 89 per cent positive coverage
- we have given written and oral evidence to several important committee inquiries, including a Communities and Local Government inquiry into the financial sustainability of social care,
- an STP bulletin webpage (http://www.local.gov.uk/adult-social-care/-/journal_content/56/10180/7949556) was set up and promoted through the Chief Executive's bulletin on 9 September. The page has had 119 unique page views to date (160 total page views).

2.3. Media:

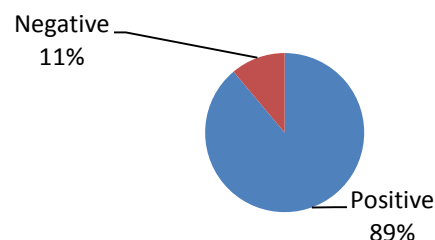
2.3.1. We issued 11 media releases related to the social care campaign throughout this period, including:

- 2.3.1.1. LGA: Response to the National Audit (NAO) report on delayed discharges (26 May) (five episodes of national coverage)
- 2.3.1.2. Councils respond to launch of adult social care inquiry (7 June) (three episodes of national coverage), and
- 2.3.1.3. 100 per cent of our coverage was proactive for our social care campaign in the past six months and 89 per cent of our coverage was positive.

Source of coverage



Overall balance of coverage



2.4. Public Affairs:

- 2.4.1. Since April 2016, we've briefed parliamentarians on the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) in the NHS, social fund funeral payments and local government's role in the elimination of HIV infection in the UK. These briefings have highlighted the importance of integrating services, adequately funding social care and the need to focus on prevention as well as treatments.
- 2.4.2. In the last six months, we have responded to a number of high-profile committee inquiries investigating health and social care. In our response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into adult social care, we have set out in detail the financial crisis, the work are doing to support the sector in implementing the Care Act 2014 and the innovative ways councils are using technology to improve services.
- 2.4.3. We also engaged with two inquiries into discharges from hospitals for older people which were held by the Public Accounts Committee and Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee respectively, and an inquiry on devolution and health integration held by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ageing and Older People.
- 2.4.4. We provided one Parliamentary briefing for the [Debate on the Sustainability and Transformation Plans in the NHS](#) (Total opens 13, unique opens 13).
- 2.4.5. Health and social care was a key subject of debate at this year's party conferences. LGA councillors contributed to debates on sustainability and transformation in the NHS, dementia, preventing HIV infection, community pharmacists and new ways of working in the NHS. Our own debate on the priorities for the Government also featured a conversation on the need to fund social care adequately.

2.5. Campaigns and digital:

- 2.5.1. A number of publications were launched throughout this period focusing on social care and health.
- 2.5.2. Visitors to our website are still actively engaged in downloading our existing campaign publications. Further recent media work has been supported by additional digital work. This included:
 - 2.5.2.1. Transforming Care (must knows) (22 July 2016) – 218 unique downloads, 255 total downloads
 - 2.5.2.2. Integration: delivering better outcomes for citizens and communities; the 2016/17 Care and Health Improvement (CHIP) offer (5 July 2016) – 91 unique downloads, 93 total downloads

- 2.5.2.3. The journey to integration: learning from the seven leading localities (26 April 2016) – 131 unique downloads, 148 total downloads (NB these figures are from 26 June onwards when a more accurate method of recording document downloads was implemented)
- 2.5.2.4. Efficiency opportunities through health and social care integration (26 June 2016) 203 unique downloads, 228 total downloads
- 2.5.2.5. Public health's role in local government and NHS integration (5 July 2016) 240 unique downloads, 256 total downloads
- 2.5.2.6. Social prescribing (18 May 2016) 6647 downloads, and
- 2.5.2.7. Integration self-assessment toolkit (6 July 2016) 621 unique downloads, 694 total downloads.

2.6. first magazine:

- 2.6.1. Health and social care issues are referenced frequently in first, with six features, three interviews, seven news stories and four comment articles over the last six months. We have also published a number of good practice case studies, including Southwark's SH:24 sexual health services, which featured at the Innovation Zone at the LGA's annual conference.

2.6.2. Highlights include:

- 2.6.2.1. Bringing health and care together – p22-25 interview with Stephen Dorrell, Chair of the NHS Confederation (first 603, September 2016)
- 2.6.2.2. Councils' greater role in integrated health and care – p27 comment from South East England Councils (first 603, September 2016)
- 2.6.2.3. Social care funding crisis continues – p4 news story based on media team press release (first 602, August 2016)
- 2.6.2.4. Integration 'could save millions' – p15 feature based on LGA-commissioned research (first 602, August 2016)
- 2.6.2.5. Shared vision for integration – p10-11 feature on joint LGA/NHS vision for integration (first 601, July 2016)
- 2.6.2.6. Living wage threat to care services – p4 news story based on LGA media release (first 599, May 2016)

3. Housing

- 3.1. Housing is a key priority for local government and the LGA. We launched our Housing Commission to set out a forward-looking vision for the future of housing and the relationship between councils and communities as part of our campaign to influence the key legislation and place councils at the forefront of driving housing growth.
- 3.2. The LGA's Housing Commission findings will play a key role in the campaign, focusing on building more homes, looking at the role of councils in shaping homes within prosperous places and communities, housing and employment and housing an ageing population.

The main highlights include:

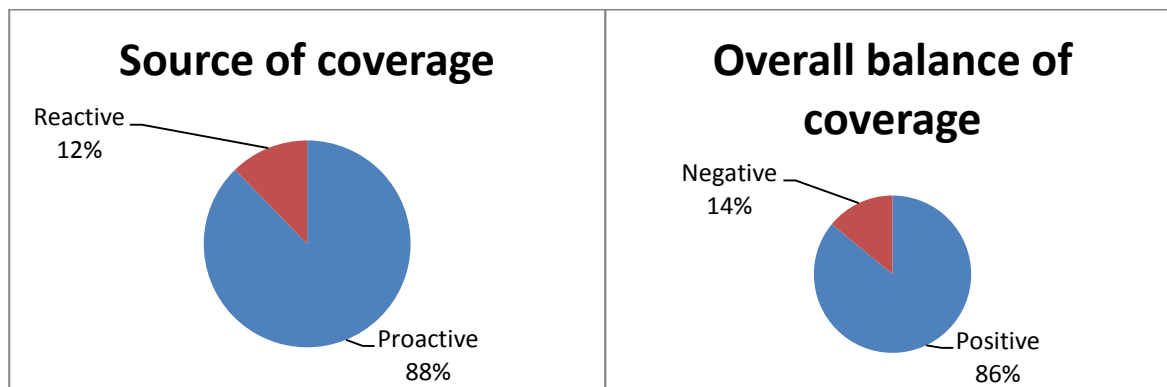
- nine Parliamentary briefings on the Housing and Planning Bill, downloaded a total of 11,688 times
- eleven proactive media releases resulting in 86 per cent of positive media coverage, and
- two housing publications, the Housing Commission report and the Housing and Planning Get in on the Act published.

3.3. Media:

3.3.1. We issued 11 media releases related to the housing campaign, including:

- 3.3.1.1. Councils respond to PAC committee report on extending right to buy (29 April) (17 episodes of national coverage)
- 3.3.1.2. LGA calls on government to rethink pay to stay policy (29 August) (15 episodes of national coverage)
- 3.3.1.3. Right to buy replacements in England falling sharply, councils warn (11 August) (10 episodes of national coverage)
- 3.3.1.4. Councils respond to CLG Committee report on homelessness (18 August) (seven episodes of national coverage)
- 3.3.1.5. Four million working people to face affordable housing crisis by 2024 (28 July) (five episodes of national coverage)

3.3.2. Eighty-eight per cent of our coverage was proactive for housing in the past six months and 86 per cent of our coverage was positive.



3.4. Public affairs:

3.4.1. In Parliament we briefed MPs and Peers on the Housing and Planning Act, the privatisation of the land registry and on the plans to deal with homelessness. Across

these debates we were able to highlight local government's commitment to building new homes and call for a new national strategy that would bring together local housing, health, justice and employment partners. It was also an opportunity to call for councils to be empowered to resume their historic role as a major builder of affordable homes.

3.4.2. Throughout this period, we sent nine parliamentary briefings:

- 3.4.2.1. [Housing and Planning Bill, Report Stage](#) (11 and 13 April, 2,446 downloads)
- 3.4.2.2. [Housing and Planning Bill, Report Stage](#) (13 April 16, 1,109 downloads)
- 3.4.2.3. [Housing and Planning Bill, Report Stage](#) (18 April, 1,339 downloads)
- 3.4.2.4. [Housing and Planning Bill, Report Stage](#) (20 – 25 April , 450 downloads)
- 3.4.2.5. [Housing and Planning Bill, Third Reading](#) (27 April , 315 downloads)
- 3.4.2.6. [Housing and Planning Bill, consideration of amendments](#) (4 May 2016, 264 downloads)
- 3.4.2.7. [Housing and Planning Bill, summary at Royal Assent](#) (13 May 2016, 5,765 downloads)
- 3.4.2.8. [Debate on privatisation of the land registry](#) (30 June 2016, total opens 45, unique opens 25)
- 3.4.2.9. [Debate on plans to deal with homelessness](#) (7 September, total opens 29, unique opens 24).

3.4.3. Parliament has held a range of inquiries that affect our housing agenda. This includes investigations into the Homelessness Reduction Bill and the capacity of the homebuilding industry being led by the Communities and Local Government Committees; the Private Rented Sector (PRS) being led by the All-Parliamentary Group on Housing and Planning; and the disposal of public land for new homes being led by the Public Accounts Committee. We provided evidence to each of these inquiries highlighting key areas of work for the LGA such as the Housing Commission and the One Public Estate Programme.

3.4.4. We complemented our briefings in Parliament by working with stakeholder organisations to secure opportunities to contribute to debates on housing policy, including discussions on how we can build new homes.

3.4.5. Neighbourhood Planning Bill: The Neighbourhood Planning Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on 7 September 2016. It aims to streamline the neighbourhood planning process. The Bill is having its Second Reading in the House of Commons on 10 October 2016 and will be debated by Parliament throughout the autumn and winter. It is an opportunity for us to call for greater flexibility and influence over housing development. The Government has listened to our concerns and put a pause on privatising the Land Registry.

3.4.6. Homelessness Reduction Bill: Bob Blackman MP (Conservative, Harrow East) is leading a Private Members Bill on homelessness reduction which is due to be in the House of Commons on 28 October 2016. We worked to ensure the five concerns raised by councillors were removed or changed and secured a commitment to funding for any new burdens. We will provide further briefings to argue that the only viable long-term solutions are increasing the availability of suitable affordable housing and addressing other underlying causes of homelessness.

3.4.7. Housing and Planning Act 2016: We published a Get in on the Act for the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (25 July 2016), highlighting our work influencing the legislation and explaining the key tenets in the Act. This has received 709 unique downloads, 791 total downloads since publication.

3.5. Campaigns and digital

3.5.1. The Housing Commission report, Building our homes, communities and future: preliminary findings from the LGA Housing Commission was launched at the LGA Annual Conference with 300 printed copies distributed.

3.5.2. During this time, there were 733 unique downloads of the publication, 984 downloads in total. The report has also been promoted extensively on Twitter using infographics based on statistics in the report since publication with. Forty-seven tweets during this period potentially reaching a total of 1,271,922 people.

3.5.3. The Housing Commission webpage (http://www.local.gov.uk/housing/-/journal_content/56/10180/7570944/ARTICLE) has received a total of 1,105 page views with 886 unique page views.

3.5.4. A number of other publications were published to support the housing campaign throughout this period include:

3.5.4.1. Housing and Planning Act 2016 (Get in on the Act), published 25 July 2016 (709 unique downloads, 791 total downloads)

3.5.4.2. Building our homes, communities and future: preliminary findings from the LGA Housing Commission published 6 July 2016 (773 unique downloads, 1,073 total downloads)

3.6. first magazine

3.6.1. Housing issues were covered on first's news pages (six articles), often reflecting work on legislation. Housing issues have also been referenced in two interviews, seven comment articles and seven features. The latter include a two-page Parliament feature on the Housing and Planning Bill (first 599) and a two-page spread around the launch of the LGA Housing Commission's first report at the LGA Annual Conference (first 602).

3.6.2. Key articles from the last six months include:

- 3.6.2.1. Drop in replacement homes sold under Right to Buy – p4 news story based on media team press release (first 603, September 2016)
- 3.6.2.2. Right to Buy must not become a one-off giveaway – p20 chairman's comment (first 603, September 2016)
- 3.6.2.3. Tackling the housing crisis – p12-13 feature on the launch of the LGA Housing Commission's first report (first 602, August 2016)
- 3.6.2.4. Housing improvements – p28-29 Parliament feature on the Housing and Planning Bill (first 599, May 2016)
- 3.6.2.5. Helping residents in the private rented sector – p23 comment from Betsy Dillner, Director of Generation Rent (first 598, April 2016)

4. Devolution

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. This year, DevoNext was the flagship campaign at the LGA Annual conference with the launch of 'What Next for Devolution? A discussion paper', aiming to engage councils in further conversation around what devolution means.
- 4.3. We worked closely with councils throughout this period to provide both direct support through devolution focused events and numerous resources that have been developed online to support councils through the process of devolution and in communicating devolution to their communities.

The main highlights include:

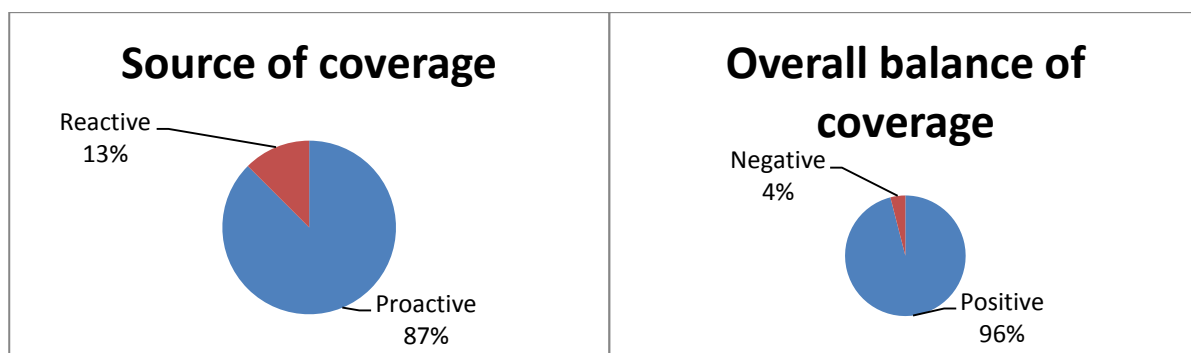
- Launch of the publication 'What Next for Devolution? A discussion paper' at this year's LGA Annual Conference
- Ninety-six per cent of all devolution coverage was positive during this period
- Briefings for three Parliamentary debates and evidence submitted to four Committee inquiries
- A number of free to attend devolution events have taken place reaching a total of 248 people
- Over 200,000 people have seen our tweets.

4.4. Media:

- 4.4.1. We issued a total of nine media releases as part of the DevoNext campaign throughout this period, including:

- 4.4.1.1. LGA: Councils must have leading role in EU exit negotiations (5 July) (10 episodes of national coverage)
- 4.4.1.2. Flood protection: LGA responds to new report by cross-party environmental audit committee (8 June) (nine episodes of national coverage)
- 4.4.1.3. LGA statement on 'leave' vote in EU referendum (24 June) (four episodes of national coverage)
- 4.4.1.4. LGA responds to EFRA committee report on air pollution (27 April) (two episodes of national coverage)

4.4.2. 87 per cent of our devolution coverage in the past six months was through pro-active work for the campaign and 96 per cent of our coverage was positive.



4.5. Public Affairs:

- 4.5.1. We continued to work with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution to promote the report into Better Devolution for the UK. This included hosting a roundtable with parliamentarians, stakeholders and academics to discuss constitutional reform and the need for further devolution to local government.
- 4.5.2. We also promoted our recommendations on devolution in formal evidence to Parliamentary committees. This included providing evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ageing and Older People on the importance of devolution and integration in our health services, the important role local leadership will play in delivering the Industrial Strategy, the Government's policy on regional growth, and the future of apprenticeships.
- 4.5.3. We worked with stakeholders from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to support our influencing of the devolution agenda. In debates hosted by the LGA, we will be discussing the importance of powers being devolved from Brussels to local areas (rather than to Westminster) and we discussed key measures that we would like adopted in the Autumn Statement that would give local areas greater powers over services and funding. Our councillors also contributed to debates on the role of mayors with Centre for Cities, a devolution debate held by the Local Government

Information Unit (LGIU) and a roundtable to discuss the Royal Society Art's inclusive economic growth commission.

4.5.4. The Bus Services Bill: The Bus Services Bill will give elected mayors and local transport authorities the power to improve bus services for the people who use them. Mayoral combined authorities are due to be given London-style powers to franchise local services. We have been working with Peers to table amendments and make sure that our arguments are debated in the House. In particular, we have been supporting amendments to the Bill that enable us to promote our call for:

- 4.5.4.1. The Bill to go further by providing all areas should be given automatic rights to bus franchising powers, not just mayoral combined authorities.
- 4.5.4.2. The requirement for Secretary of State approval of bus franchising powers to be removed from the Bill, and for bus franchising decisions to be made locally.

4.5.5. Two briefings on this Bill were published on the LGA website:

- 4.5.5.1. [Bus Services Bill, Committee Stage](#) (4 July 2016) (total opens 22, unique opens 20)
- 4.5.5.2. [Bus Services Bill, Committee Stage](#) (20 July 2016) (total opens 18, unique opens 18).

4.5.6. Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016: We published a Get in on the Act in February this year for the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016, highlighting our work influencing the legislation and explaining the key tenets in the Act.

4.6. Campaigns and digital communications

4.6.1. 'What Next for Devolution? A discussion paper' Green Paper was launched by Lord Porter during his opening speech at the LGA Annual Conference 2016.

4.6.2. We promoted the paper throughout conference with 800 printed copies of the document handed out to delegates as well as being supported through digital communications. In addition, there have been 360 unique downloads of the publication, 452 downloads in total.

4.6.3. Explainer videos – produced to simplify messages around devolution – have also continued to be well received, getting frequent positive mentions by members and being used by councils to support them in communicating devolution to their communities.

- 4.6.3.1. Devolution: explained in 60 secs: (published on 26 February 2016) has had 2,260 views since 1 April (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYJuYyVkJfk>)

- 4.6.3.2. Devolution Act explainer (published on 30 June 2016) has received 158 views (released 30 June 2016) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNviIB_6AQs)
- 4.6.3.3. Devolution explained: Combined authorities (published on 27 October 2015) has had 883 views since 1 April (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtzL12d2eGk>)

4.6.4. In addition to the main conference publication, four devolution-focused documents were launched during the week of the conference, each focussing on different areas of devolution such as health, the visitor economy, skills and lessons from sub-national governance. In total 945 copies of devolution documents were handed out to delegates. We also produced the first in a series of explainer documents for councils; 'Devolution: don't be left in the dark' which was promoted throughout conference and has so far received 134 unique downloads and 145 total downloads. It has also been shared by councils looking for support in communicating devolution.

4.6.5. The DevoNext resources hub (<http://www.local.gov.uk/devolution/>) on the LGA website has continued to be developed, specifically to include a new section on devolution communications. The hub has had 25,438 unique page views since 1 April 2016 with 5,613 unique page views of the homepage.

4.7. Events:

4.7.1. We have run a series of free to attend events, reaching a total of 248 people.

4.8. Communications Improvement:

4.8.1. With communications central to the devolution agenda the communications improvement team hosted a number of regional events, bringing together communication practitioners from across the country to share best practice.

4.8.2. As a result, we have developed a comprehensive guide to devolution specifically for communications professionals. The resource contains information on how to develop strategic devolution communications, create compelling devolution narratives and suggested frameworks for adapting communications structures to fit devolved ways of working. The resource also provides a range of case studies from councils who are already working as combined authorities or who have delivered innovative or particularly successful devolution messages.

5. Sector-led improvement

5.1. Sector-led improvement is integral to all communications work, with an element of sharing and promoting best-practice weaved into all campaigns. Throughout April to September we have worked closely with councils to support them in delivering sector-led improvement. This included targeted sessions in the Innovation Zone throughout the LGA Annual Conference for councils to present and share information as well as direct and targeted

support for councils throughout the year. A programme of work has been running throughout 2016 to promote our wider support and improvement offer.

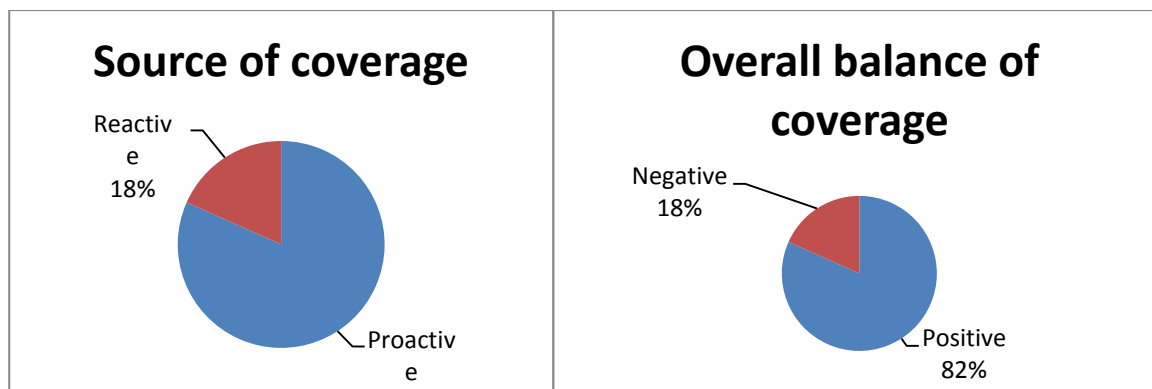
The main highlights include:

- Eighteen proactive media releases were issued achieving a total of 82 per cent positive coverage, and
- two Parliamentary briefings were issued and downloaded by nearly 400 people.

5.2. Media:

5.2.1. We issued 18 media releases supporting sector-led improvement, including:

- 5.2.1.1. Warning about school planning as children receive primary school offers (18 April) (15 episodes of national coverage)
- 5.2.1.2. 'Scores on the doors' food hygiene ratings must be mandatory, say councils (2 May) (13 episodes of national coverage)
- 5.2.1.3. Councils respond to High Court ruling on term time holidays (13 May) (13 episodes of national coverage)
- 5.2.1.4. Flooding: Councils call for new measures to protect homes and businesses (30 April) (five episodes of national coverage)
- 5.2.1.5. Eighty-two per cent of our coverage was proactive for sector-led improvement in the past six months and 82 per cent of our coverage was positive.



5.3. Public affairs:

- 5.3.1. We gave evidence to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into local authorities and commissioners. In our evidence we highlighted how the LGA provides support to councils, including authorities facing particular challenges. We also argued that our strong track record has helped to minimise the number of authorities that the Department for Communities and Local Government

(DCLG) has felt needed formal intervention. Elsewhere a recent Health Committee report, Public Health Post 2013, highlighted how the system of sector-led improvement is 'beginning to be used to good effect in some areas, and clearly has potential to deliver performance improvements'.

5.3.2. The Committee called for the programme to be given 'added impetus and more clearly linked to accountability and performance'.

5.3.3. Throughout this period, we sent two Parliamentary briefings which were downloaded by nearly 400 people:

5.3.3.1. [Debate on FOBTs](#) (26 April, 232 downloads)

5.3.3.2. [Adjournment debate on taxi licensing](#) (4 May, 164 downloads).

5.4. Campaigns and digital:

5.4.1. On the website, the Innovative Councils page has been improved, with the database content being formatted in a more user friendly way and the page design improved to enable promotion of up to three specific case studies.

5.4.2. #InnovateTuesday has continued throughout this period, focusing on individual examples of councils' work and general council updates.

5.4.3. Since 1 April 2016, there has been a total of 10,766 total page views with 7,524 unique page views of the Innovative Councils page and an average time on page of two minutes 18 seconds. It is one of the most popular pages on the website (in the top 10) and also the time spent on page is around twice that of the average time spent on individual pages on the site.

5.4.4. We have supported and promoted the role of the LGA in the launch of the Public Sector Audit Appointments body (PSAA). This included supporting the event that took place at the LGA Annual Conference, targeted media activity and bulletins and letters to those interested. A targeted bulletin promoting the events was sent on 1 July to 103 recipients, achieving an open rate of 30 per cent. A further email was sent on 23 August to 155 recipients/councils outlining next steps for joining the PSAA. This achieved an open rate of 38 per cent and a click through rate of 31 per cent, meaning that over 80 per cent of those opening the email clicked through to the information linked to within the bulletin.

5.5. Communications Improvement:

5.5.1. The majority of the communication improvement department's work has been focused on sector-led improvement, from both a review and resource perspective.

- 5.5.2. With the concept of place branding becoming an ever increasing priority for councils, especially for those where the concept of 'place' has changed as a result of mergers of combined authorities, the communications improvement team developed a comprehensive 'place branding' online resource. The toolkit, which is aimed at communications professionals, includes an overview of what place branding is, how it differs from a council brand and how councils can develop their own place identity. Developed in partnership councils, the resource guides communicators through the necessary considerations when developing a new brand and provides case study examples of councils who have successfully delivered this. Site-specific place branding support has also been provided to a number of councils.
- 5.5.3. The department has continued to deliver its core communication health checks and three-day reviews in order to improve the quality, consistency and delivery of council communications services. Health check reviews on topics including social media, strategy and engagement and full three day reviews have been provided to a range of councils.
- 5.5.4. From April to September we delivered three health checks and three three-day reviews. There has been lots of discussions with other councils about future reviews during this period but these are the six that have been delivered.
- 5.5.5. The communications improvement team has continued to promote the importance of research and insight and has publicised a number of resident surveys during this period. The August residents survey was one of the most visited links in CommsNet with 68 per cent of the unique views accessing the data. The team also published the LGA's annual Heads of Communication survey in August 2016 to assist communications professionals and councils more broadly with benchmarking their communications activities. The findings were further promoted to members in first magazine to highlight the increasing importance of strategic rather than tactical communications.

6. Reputation

- 6.1. Following a direction from Leadership Board, the team has been working on a campaign on the wider reputation of local government, helping to demonstrate the good work councils have done/ are doing. This will build on the annual #OurDay tweetathon which showcases council services and demonstrates the quality of people working in local government and the good work councils are doing. The following work is directly linked to promoting the reputation of local councils.

The main highlights include:

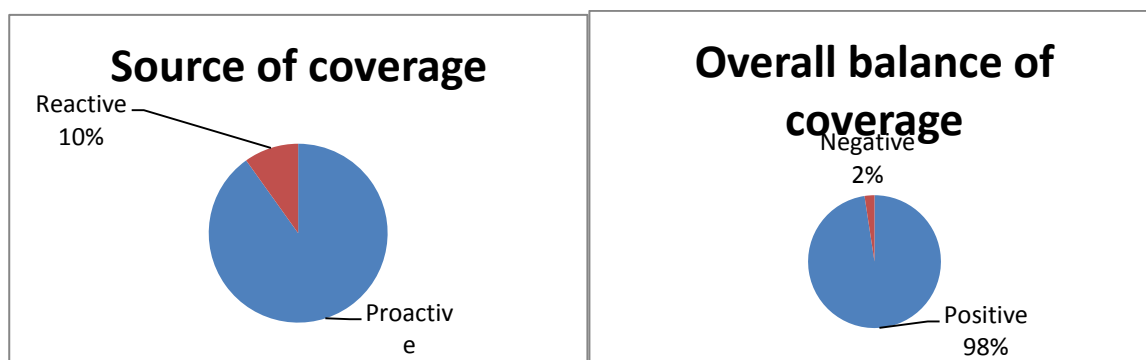
- Ninety-eight per cent of media coverage was positive, with more than 56,329 unique page views of media releases in this period.
- We have raised the profile of local government in Parliamentary debates on lesser-known issues such as fires arising from faulty tumble-dryers. Our summer Parliamentary Network event brought together council officers to share best practise and update members on our political priorities.
- More than 900 tweets relating to councils have been sent during this report period, achieving around 2.5 million impressions.
- CommsNet bulletin is sent to a total of 1,581 subscribers every week, an increase of 205 new subscribers since 1 April 2016.

6.2. Media:

6.2.1. We issued 22 media releases related to the promotion of council reputation, including:

- 6.2.1.1. LGA responds to PM announcement on unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Europe (4 May) (27 episodes of national coverage)
- 6.2.1.2. New figures reveal council maintained schools continue to outperform academies (25 April) (14 episodes of national coverage)
- 6.2.1.3. Flash floods: councils' awareness campaigns as thundery showers forecast (16 June) (nine episodes of national coverage)
- 6.2.1.4. Councils respond to High Court judgement on HIV treatment PrEP (2 August) (six episodes of national coverage)

6.2.2. Ninety per cent of our coverage was proactive for the reputation of local government campaign in the past six months and 98 per cent of our coverage was positive.



6.3. Public Affairs:

6.3.1. We continue to provide support to councils through our parliamentary network. This is a forum for us to share our briefings and reports with local government, hold events to discuss key policy challenges and to share best practice in regard to communicating on public affairs issues.

6.3.2. Throughout this period, we sent three briefings relating to council reputation:

6.3.2.1. [Debate on the risk of fire from faulty tumble dryers](#) (13 September, total opens 13, unique opens 11)

6.3.2.2. [Debate on Social Fund funeral payments](#) (14 September, total opens 5, unique opens 5)

6.3.2.3. [Queen's Speech OTD briefing](#) (18 May, 73 downloads)

6.4. Digital and campaigns:

6.4.1. The campaign work on council reputation is ongoing, with plans for a broader campaign in the coming months. Throughout this period a number of publications were launched that related to council reputation.

6.5. Communications Improvement:

6.5.1. The LGA's communications improvement function has provided a range of in-person and over the phone support for councils facing reputational challenges. Between April and September 2016, the department provided on-site support to 39 councils. We also produce a weekly CommsNet bulletin which is sent to a total of 1581 subscribers with information and support for communications teams.

6.5.2. Between April and June, we helped a council address significant media negativity following criticisms of the council's taxi licensing regulations and its links to child sex exploitation. The LGA provided expertise in crisis communications, media handling, internal communication and stakeholder engagement, as well as direct advice to the communications team and senior leadership on how to build robust communications strategies that reduced the risk of similar issues occurring again.

6.5.3. The department also provided support to two councils ahead of their merger vote to ensure that messages regarding the merger proposals were clearly communicated to residents, stakeholders and staff and that the reputations of both councils were protected throughout the process. In September, the team began providing assistance to a group of councils following initial proposals to merge five district councils. The team is providing ongoing support to the districts involved in respect of developing communication strategies, key messages, engaging stakeholders, and channel and milestone planning.

6.5.4. Additional reputational support was given to a council following active interest in planning issue and to another to help the communications team improve the profile of children's services in the area.

6.6. first magazine:

6.6.1. Many of the feature and comment articles in first look at good practice in councils, and the magazine seeks to promote best practice. One news item, two comments and seven features touched on this issue. For example, we carried a call for member views on how we improve the reputation of local government in first 600, and looked at the value of strategic communication in first 603.

6.6.2. Highlights included:

- 6.6.2.1. The value of strategic communication – p17 feature on the LGA's annual heads of communication survey (first 603, September 2016)
- 6.6.2.2. Building a reputation – p12 feature on call for member views on improving the reputation of local government (first 600, June 2016)
- 6.6.2.3. Changing perceptions – p11 feature on the LGA's perceptions survey (first 598, April 2016).

7. Social Work Campaign

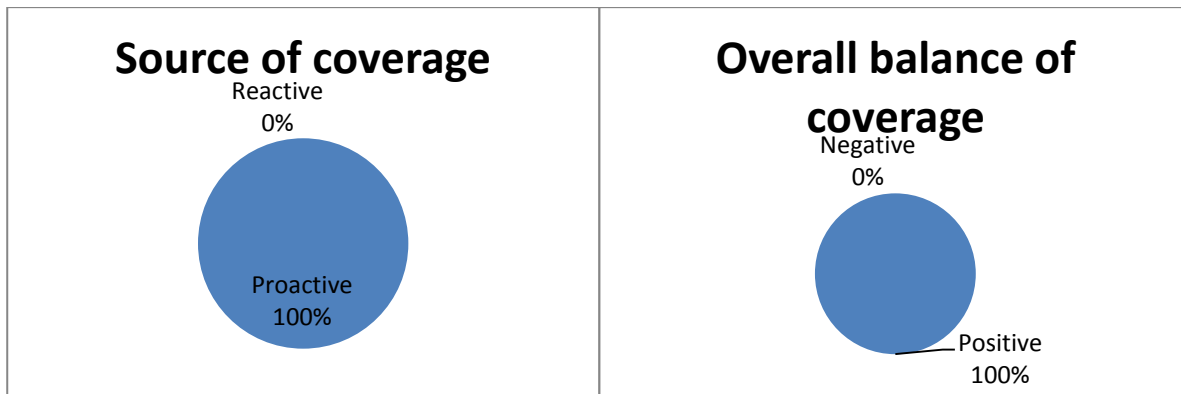
7.1. 'Come Back to Social Work' is a campaign which launched in September developed in partnership with the Department for Education (DfE), Department of Health (DH) and Jobsgopublic to offer former social workers the opportunity to come back to social work and provide them with free training to prepare them to re-register for the profession.

The main highlights include:

- we issued a proactive media release which was reported by ITV Online
- proactive media releases were issued achieving 91 per cent of positive coverage
- three parliamentary briefings were issued on the Children and Social Care Bill
- The campaign communications toolkit was downloaded over 200 times, there were 94 applications for 30 vacancies and 51 employers registered with the scheme.

7.2. Media:

- 7.2.1. We issued one media release related to the social work campaign: [Recruitment campaign launched to entice Social Workers back to profession](#) (6 September) (one piece of national coverage)



7.3. Public Affairs:

- 7.3.1. Children and Social Work Bill: The Children and Social Work Bill includes measures to boost adoption rates by requiring courts and social workers to take account of a child's need for stability up to the age of 18, extend personal adviser support for care leavers up to the age of 25, require councils to consult on and publish a local offer for care leavers, establish a new specialist regulator for social work, and allow local authorities to pilot new, innovative approaches to children's social care. The LGA has been working with peers to table amendments to the Bill so that we can highlight our key points which are that:

- 7.3.1.1. Any new burdens must be fully funded to ensure that resources are not diverted from other services for vulnerable children, which are already considerably over- stretched.
- 7.3.1.2. The focus on the long-term interests of children is positive. It is positive that the Bill includes not just adoption but other types of long-term placement.
- 7.3.1.3. We are concerned that the panels that will be created by the Bill to review serious case reviews are too closely controlled by the Secretary of State and this risks politicising the serious case review process.
- 7.3.1.4. We welcome the powers the Bill gives to innovate. However we remain concerned that the Bill allows for the Secretary of State to remove regulations potentially including significant duties in relation to the direct care and support of children and young people from local authorities in intervention without any form of local democratic scrutiny.

- 7.3.1.5. A balance needs to be found between sufficient regulation to provide public assurance and encouraging experienced social workers to remain or return to the profession.
- 7.3.1.6. In addition to providing a range of briefings on the Children and Social Work Bill, we have also briefed Parliament on the importance of free childcare, highlighting how helping children to have a good start in life is one of the most important jobs councils do and we all have a duty to make sure that children, along with their parents and carers, have access to the services they need. We also pointed out the significant role of local government in early years' education and care, and called for the system to be properly funded.

7.3.2. Throughout this period, we sent three parliamentary briefings:

- 7.3.2.1. [Children and Social Work Bill, Committee Stage](#) (27 June 2016, day 1, total opens 7, unique opens 6)
- 7.3.2.2. [Children and Social Work Bill, Committee Stage](#) (4 July 2016, Committee Stage 2, total opens 22, unique opens 19)
- 7.3.2.3. [Children and Social Work Bill, Committee Stage](#) (11 July, Committee stage 4 and 5, total opens 24, unique opens 24).

7.4. Campaigns and digital:

7.4.1. We created a toolkit to help councils promote the campaign in their local areas and ask people to apply to be part of the programme. This included posters, Twitter images, an email to former social workers and design assets so that councils could send out the email through their own systems. The toolkit was downloaded 204 times.

7.4.2. The microsite had 2,189 views, and 94 applications from former social workers. Fifty-one employers registered with the scheme.

8. Improving Broadband – Up to Speed campaign

8.1. The Government funded Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) was introduced in 2010 aiming to supply superfast broadband to 95 per cent of the UK by 2017. Although almost 4 million premises now have a much faster broadband connection, blackspots remain in both rural and urban areas, with the final five per cent representing over a million UK residents.

8.2. Reliable broadband is essential for the economy, education, preventing social exclusion and enabling older people to live in their homes longer. Up to Speed is an integrated campaign to connect the final five per cent and to ensure future proofed broadband speeds for all.

The main highlights include:

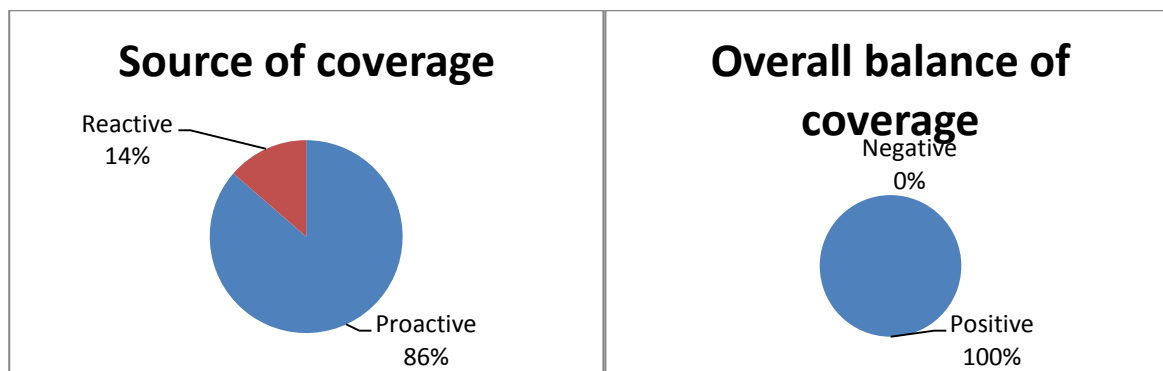
- the microsite speed test has been taken in over 65 per cent of member council areas
- following the campaign, the Government has committed to increasing minimum broadband speeds relative to average speeds
- we worked with the Telegraph to launch our campaign, including successive front page stories supporting our call for a universal minimum broadband speed to rise in line with the national average, to extend broadband to all parts of the UK and for greater transparency from internet providers about their download speeds.

8.3. Media:

8.3.1. We issued six media releases related the Up to Speed broadband campaign, including:

- 8.3.1.1. 'Misleading' Broadband speed adverts ignore rural areas (10 August) (14 episodes of national coverage)
- 8.3.1.2. Flexible minimum standard of broadband speed needed to avoid digital twilight zones (9 May) (three episodes of national coverage)
- 8.3.1.3. Councils urge Government to re-affirm its broadband commitment (27 July) (four episodes of national coverage)
- 8.3.1.4. Queen's Speech: Councils respond to Digital Economy Bill (18 May) (one piece of national coverage)

8.3.2. Eighty-six per cent of our coverage was proactive for broadband campaign in the past 6 months and 100 per cent of our coverage was positive.



8.4. Public Affairs:

- 8.4.1. At the party conferences the LGA hosted a debated supported by ICT investor Huawei on the importance of technology in enabling efficiencies and improving services for residents. Our councillors also spoke at debates on the importance of tackling digital exclusion. This supported our work on the broadband campaign by highlighting the good work of councils so far and the reforms we need to ensure that the public sector can take advantage of technological advancements.
- 8.4.2. The Digital Economy Bill: In September, the Digital Economy Bill had its Second Reading debate in the House of Commons. The Bill will receive further scrutiny from MPs in the autumn. The Bill seeks to give every household and business a legal right to a fast broadband connection; create new laws to help telecommunications providers build the infrastructure needed for faster broadband and better mobile networks; allow consumers to be automatically compensated when things go wrong with their broadband service; and reform the way the Government uses data to deliver public services. To support our broadband campaign we are calling for a new clause to create a reporting function which would compel the Government to report annually on the progress, success and take up of the USO.
- 8.4.3. We provided a parliamentary briefing on the [Digital Economy Bill, Second Reading](#) which has received a total of 53 opens (46 unique opens).

8.5. Campaigns and digital:

- 8.5.1. We commissioned an Up to Speed microsite to provide councillors and council officers with a set of resources to help them improve broadband coverage in their local area.
- 8.5.2. The microsite (<http://lgaupertospeed.org>) has received 4,391 unique page views since its launch on 14 April 2016 and 1,375 tests have been taken. Tests have been taken in over 65 per cent of member authority areas, significantly exceeding the 50 per cent objective.
- 8.5.3. On Twitter, there have been regular and intense promotions of the campaign reaching a total of 119,899 people.

8.6. first magazine

- 8.6.1. The LGA's Up to Speed broadband campaign was launched in first 599 with the front page cover and a two-page feature. There have been three news stories since then, plus references to digital issues in two interviews and a comment piece from Rachel Neaman of Doteveryone, and a total of two features.

8.6.2. Highlights include:

- 8.6.2.1. 'Misleading' broadband ads – p5 news story based on LGA media release (first 603, September 2016)
- 8.6.2.2. Digital councils and social inclusion – p21 comment from Rachel Neaman, Campus Director of Doteveryone (first 601, July 2016)
- 8.6.2.3. Up to Speed – p10-11 feature and cover story, launching LGA's Up to Speed Campaign (first 599, May 2016).

9. Mental health

9.1. Improving children and young people's mental health outcomes by 2020 is a national priority. Transforming child and adolescent mental health services is vital for us to be able to meet this challenge.

9.2. The LGA, Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Association of Directors of Public Health are working in partnership with NHS England, the Department of Health (DH) and wider partners to support local areas to transform services. This is a living web resource which will be updated with new information as it becomes available. The resource includes health and wellbeing bulletins, access to the completed Local Transformation Plans (LTPs), tools, briefings and publications.

The main highlights include:

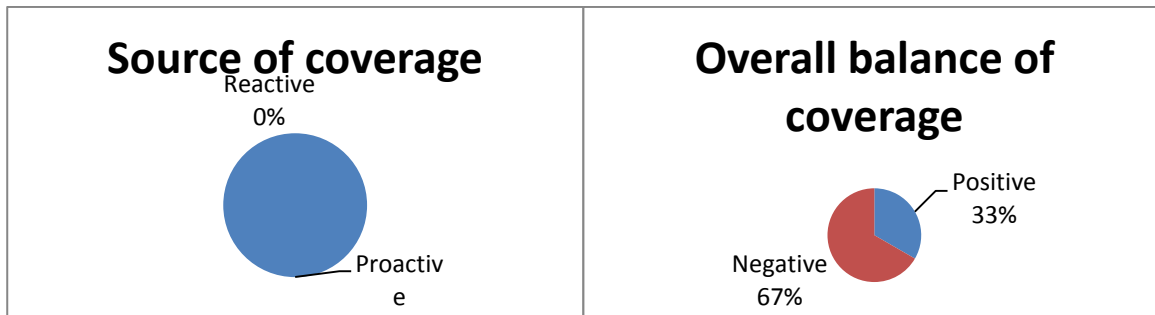
- One-hundred per cent of our coverage was proactive, with mentions in national newspapers and broadcasters including the Guardian, Mail, BBC Online and LBC
- DH has agreed to fund the LGA to build new webpages to improve access to LTPs information, totalling almost £16,000. This was agreed based on the LGA's proposed solution to DH's requirements.

9.3. Media:

9.3.1. We issued three releases related to the issue of mental health, including;

- 9.3.1.1. Councils respond to Education Committee report on mental health of looked-after children (28 April) (4 episodes of national coverage)
- 9.3.1.2. Tackling mental illness in children should begin before birth (7 July) (1 episode of national coverage)
- 9.3.1.3. Councils respond to Children's Society 'Good Childhood report 2016' (31 August)

9.3.2. One-hundred per cent of our coverage was proactive for the mental campaign in the past 6 months and 33 per cent of our coverage was positive.



9.4. Public Affairs:

9.4.1. In Parliament we gave evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on mental health. We highlighted the importance of improving waiting times in adolescent and children mental health services and called for investment in mental health support.

9.5. Campaigns and digital

9.5.1. A number of publications were published in the run up to the LGA Annual Conference including:

- 9.5.1.1. Best start in life: promoting good emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people (published 20 May 2016), 6,572 downloads
- 9.5.1.2. Just what the doctor ordered: social prescribing - a guide for local authorities (published 18 May 2016), 6,647 downloads
- 9.5.1.3. Health, work and health related worklessness - a guide for local authorities (published 19 May 2016), 2,859 downloads.

10. 'Be A Councillor' campaign

10.1. Increasing the pool of talent from which councillors are elected is a key task for local government.

10.2. Our refreshed 'Be a Councillor' campaign was launched as a pilot campaign in Rotherham. Following its success, other councils have approached us to support them with similar, local bespoke campaigns, with one project in Lancashire.

10.3. The 'Be a Councillor' website at the heart of the campaign encourages councils, regional organisations and local parties to support the 'Be a Councillor' campaign by running a local version tailored to their particular area.

The main highlights include:

- The 'Be A Councillor' website has been heavily visited, with 55,269 unique page views (this figure would make it one of the most popular sections of the LGA website).

10.4. Campaigns and digital:

10.4.1. 'Be A Councillor' was promoted heavily in conjunction with Local Democracy Week, taking place the week commencing 10 October.

10.4.2. The Innovation Zone of the LGA Annual Conference 2016 saw the launch of the campaign's pilot 'package' of promotional support for Lancashire County Council. This included a set of resources, which can then be tailored to specific localities. For Lancashire this included a section of the main 'Be a Councillor' website (<http://beacouncillor.co.uk/lancashire/>) to be used as a platform for two promotional publications, a tailored e-learning module, eligibility test, and a four minute film looking at the day in the life of four councillors, as well as photography and editable posters.

10.4.3. The local campaign has now launched with Lancashire's first information evenings in October, alongside promotion through LGA channels. The film has to date had 269 views.

10.4.4. Since 1 April, the main Be A Councillor website has received 67,438 total page views (unique page views: 55,269) with people spending an average of one minutes 14 seconds on the page.

10.4.5. Of that the Lancashire section has so far received 1,674 total page views (unique page views: 1,096) with people spending an average of two minutes 49 seconds on the page.

10.4.6. Since the delivery of the pilot, agreements are in place to provide similar support for Birmingham City Council, and some more basic support for other areas.

10.5. first magazine

10.5.1. The magazine's councillor section has included 'Be A Councillor' and general features around recruitment, candidates and local elections.

10.5.2. Coverage so far has included six features in total and one comment piece, including:

- 10.5.2.1. Celebrating local democracy – p30 councillor feature linking Local Democracy Week to the 'Be a Councillor' campaign (first 604, October 2016)
- 10.5.2.2. Encouraging people to stand – p30 councillor feature on 'Be a Councillor' campaign focusing on Be a Councillor Lancashire (first 602, August 2016)
- 10.5.2.3. Making a difference – p29 councillors feature on LGA's Councillors' Guide 2016 (first 600, June 2016).

11. Exiting the EU

11.1. Media:

11.1.1. We issued four releases related to Brexit, including:

- 11.1.1.1. LGA statement on 'leave' vote in EU referendum (24 June) (four pieces of media coverage)
- 11.1.1.2. LGA: Councils must have leading role in EU exit negotiations (5 July) (nine pieces of media coverage).

11.2. Public affairs:

- 11.2.1. We produced a briefing for members on Exiting the European Union which was opened a total of 661 times (30 June) (unique opens 586).

11.3. Campaigns and digital communications:

- 11.3.1. We developed a regular Brexit bulletin providing updates on the role councils are playing in negotiating Britain's exit from the EU. The LGA's EU exit 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.

- 11.3.2. To showcase this work the monthly bulletin keeps subscribers informed with recent July and August editions published so far. The subscriber numbers have increased by six per cent since the initial July bulletin from 3,143 to 3,334 subscribers indicating interest is increasing in our Brexit work. The Brexit dedicated web page has also shown a steady increase in page views from 638 page views to 886 page views (733 unique page views) since 12 September, a 38 per cent increase in views over the last 12 days. The bulletin unique open and click through rates have remained consistent with a 23 per cent unique open rate and two per cent click through rate recorded for both July and August bulletins.

11.4. first magazine:

11.4.1. Brexit has featured regularly in first since the 23 June referendum. This included the post-annual conference edition (first 602), including several news stories based on speaker comments as well as references in the chairman's conference review. More recently the issue has come up again in relation to the party conferences.

11.4.2. Coverage includes six news stories, four features, and one comment, with highlights such as:

11.4.2.1. Debating Brexit at the party conferences – p8-9 feature on LGA's work at party conferences (first 603, September 2016)

11.4.2.2. EU funding commitment 'short' of what is needed – p5 news story based on media team press release (first 603, September 2016)

11.4.2.3. Keeping you up to date on EU exit negotiations – p11 feature based on latest Brexit bulletins, (first 603, September 2016)

11.4.2.4. Making Brexit work for Wales – p23 comment from Welsh LGA (first 602, August 2016)