

Communications Report (October 2017 to March 2018)

Purpose of report

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

Summary

This report reflects the priorities identified in the organisation's business plan. It tracks and records key communications activity for the past six months and how communications has contributed to achieving our key priorities.

Recommendation

The LGA Leadership Board is asked to note the communications activity for the period October 2017 to March 2018.

Action

Officers to take any action as agreed by the Leadership Board.

Contact Officer:

David Holdstock

Position:

Director of Communications

Phone no:

020 7664 3056

E-mail:

David.holdstock@local.gov.uk

Communications Report (October 2017 to March 2018)

1. To support our organisational priorities, between October 2017 and March 2018 we:
 - 1.1 achieved 27,597 episodes of media coverage in national, regional, trade, broadcast and online publications;
 - 1.2 submitted 38 pieces of written and oral evidence to Parliamentary inquiries including inquiries on business rates, Brexit, adult social care funding, housing and children's mental health;
 - 1.3 briefed for 53 Parliamentary debates in both the House of Commons and House of Lords;
 - 1.4 drove 732,390 visitors to the LGA website and 1,908,500 page views; sent 589 bulletins to 2,808,900 recipients;
 - 1.5 produced 195 marketing documents, including major publications, posters, workbooks, summaries and social media content;
 - 1.6 reached more than 22,500 followers on our Twitter channel @LGAComms; and
 - 1.7 organised and delivered 54 events attended by 4,637 delegates, generating over £2 million gross income over the 2017-18 financial year.

Funding for local government and fair funding

2. During this report period, our campaign has continued to make our calls to address the overall funding gap faced by local government that will exceed £5 billion by 2020 and to allow local government to keep all of the £26 billion in business rates it collects each year.

3. We had some success in the Autumn Budget including key wins on housing that included lifting the housing borrowing cap for some councils, an additional £20 million for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) access scheme, £25 million planning development capacity fund and an additional £2.7 billion for the Housing Infrastructure Fund. The partial lifting of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap, worth £1 billion from 2019/20, was significant. Funding for affordable housing including social rented homes was confirmed resulting in the Affordable Homes Programme budget increasing by £2 billion to £9.1 billion, providing at least 25,000 new affordable homes. Other key announcements included a period of engagement and consultation ahead of a Green Paper on the future of social care by summer 2018, £42 million for the Disabled Facilities Grant, a £1.5 billion package for Universal Credit, and the creation of the £2 million Cultural Development Fund and £220 million Clean Air Fund.
4. We continued to highlight the need for councils to be made financially sustainable in the run up to the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS), resulting in Government announcing the introduction of 10 further 100 per cent business rates retention pilots. The Government also stated that it will introduce 75 per cent business rates retention from April 2020.
5. Our campaigning contributed to the announcement of an increase in the general council tax referendum limit from 1.99 per cent to 2.99 per cent for 2018/19 and

2019/20 worth up to £540 million, was welcomed and confirmation that the Fair Funding Review will be completed in time for implementation in April 2020.

We supported this work by:

- 5.1 generating 75 per cent supportive media coverage on council funding through proactive media work;
- 5.2 continuing to promote and create awareness of our Autumn Budget key asks;
- 5.3 our Autumn Budget submission was downloaded more than 2,640 times and 200 printed copies distributed;
- 5.4 producing three briefings for the provisional LGFS, final LGFS and Autumn Budget, addressing the overall excess of £5 billion funding gap, which achieved more than 6,160 summary page views;
- 5.5 working with colleagues, delivering six local business rates retention events, reaching 215 people; and
- 5.6 driving 9,618 unique page views (14,110 total views) to the finance and business rates hub; **the unique page views were up by 49 per cent** compared to the previous six months.

Media

6. We issued a total of 22 media releases related to fair funding throughout this period achieving 142 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months our most popular story was 'Councils respond to Local Government Finance Settlement' (19 December 2017), generating 22 episodes of national coverage including interviews with Lord Porter on Sky News and BBC Radio 5 Live. The story was also covered by BBC Radio 4 and BBC local bulletins, BBC Radio 4's Today in Parliament, BBC News at Ten, ITV News, Sky News bulletins, Telegraph and the Times.
7. **76 per cent of our coverage was proactive** for this area in the past six months and **75 per cent of our coverage was positive**.
8. There have been 40 articles in First magazine highlighting our work on this issue.

Campaigns and digital

9. Over the last six months we planned, designed and produced promotional content, videos and social media content to create awareness of the funding crisis councils face.
10. Key outputs:
 - 10.1 25,680 video views of our funding calls promoted through our digital channels;
 - 10.2 over 3,728 views of our Autumn Budget submission webpage;
 - 10.3 over 614 views of our LGFS summary webpage; and
 - 10.4 143 tweets published promoting our key asks, reaching 547,100 people.

Public affairs

11. We provided a comprehensive programme of parliamentary engagement to make our case ahead of the announcement of the Autumn Budget and the LGFS. Key highlights included:
 - 11.1 during the Budget statement debate Baroness Eaton (Vice-President and former Chairman of the LGA) called on the Government to give councils greater freedom to borrow to build new homes;
 - 11.2 our analysis was quoted extensively during a parliamentary debate on the Final LGFS; the briefing for the debate was downloaded 146 times with 365 summary page views;
 - 11.3 Our Vice-Chair Cllr David Simmonds gave evidence to the MHCLG Committee inquiry on business rates retention and the Fair Funding Review. Cllr Simmonds was joined by a panel of local government representatives and during the discussions, witnesses set out the increasing financial pressures facing councils; and
 - 11.4 86 per cent of MPs and 89 per cent of Peers agreed with us that councils should have more financial powers and freedoms

Events

12. We held seven events related to funding in the last six months, attended by 339 people. These included:
 - 12.1 LGA Annual Local Government Finance Conference 2018, exploring the current state of play for business rates retention and the fair funding review, attracting more than 100 delegates. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid MP, attended.
 - 12.2 Six regional Fair Funding Review consultation workshops covering the content of the Government's consultation on the relative needs assessment.

Adult social care

13. Our work on social care has seen us work together with councils and partners to call for the Government to commit to addressing the £2.3 billion funding gap facing social care by 2020 and for an urgent injection of £1.3 billion now to bring much needed stability to the social care provider market.
14. As part of our wider campaigning around health and care services, our Autumn Budget Submission called on the Government to cancel future reductions to the public health grant and return funding cut by £531 million since April 2015; we continued these calls in the run up to the LGFS and beyond.

15. The new £150 million funding announced in the final LGFS is recognition of our calls raising the urgent need for the Government to further try and help councils tackle some of the immediate social care pressures they face.

We urged the Government to intervene and assure councils that they will be given genuinely new money to cover the cost of extending the National Living Wage to sleep-ins. As a result of our work and that of representatives of the social care sector, employers won't have to settle any back-payment for sleep-in costs until March 2019.

16. We welcomed the Government's intention to publish a Green Paper 'by summer recess 2018' setting out its proposals for reforming care and support for older people and a period of consultation allowing us to engage actively with Government to inform the Green Paper.

17. We helped deliver this by:

17.1 issuing 60 proactive media releases, achieving a total of 91 per cent positive coverage;

17.2 driving 8,670 downloads of 20 health and social care publications;

17.3 launching our social care flagship publication 'Adult social care funding: State of the nation' at NCAS conference 2017 downloaded 1,210 times and 200 printed copies shared; and

17.4 producing six social care briefings for parliamentary debates, read more than 1,187 times.

Media

18. We achieved 106 episodes of national coverage for this area. Our most popular story was '170 operations a day to remove rotten teeth in children' (13 January 2018) which achieved 20 episodes of national coverage, including Sky News, ITV News, BBC Breakfast, Telegraph, Guardian and Councillor Fleming on BBC News channel.

19. There have been 16 items in First magazine highlighting our work on this issue.

Campaigns and digital

20. We supported our work on social care and public health using digital and online channels. Over the last six months we promoted our work on public health through 11 publications, downloaded 5,380 times. These included 'Making obesity everybody's business: A whole systems approach to obesity' and 'Public health transformation five years on'.

21. Key outputs:

21.1 our social care and health pages have been viewed more than 21,220 times;

- 21.2 3,182 views of three videos;
- 21.3 three health publications launched at LGA/ADPH conference achieved 1,422 downloads and 600 copies printed; and
- 21.4 20 health and social care publications published, achieving in total 8,670 total downloads.

Public affairs

22. Ensuring social care has a high profile in Parliament continues to be a key priority for us and we have continued to make the case for sustainable funding and bringing the Green Paper forward. Key highlights from the period include:

- 22.1 briefing debates including 'Impact of NHS winter pressures on social care' – where our key points were raised during the debate– and the NHS winter crisis. We also provided MPs with an update on local authority efforts to improve delayed transfers of care attributable to social care;
- 22.2 during a debate on human rights for older people and their comprehensive care, reference was made to the LGA's work on the underfunding of councils and our statistics cited;
- 22.3 briefing for the a high profile 'Opposition Day' debate in the House of Commons; our briefing was downloaded 50 times and MPs raised the LGA's concerns about the adult social care funding gap;
- 22.4 the House of Commons Library produced a briefing highlighting a number of our key messages;
- 22.5 our Chairman Lord Porter spoke on the financial challenges facing social care and tabled a series of parliamentary questions on key issues such as the financial sustainability of services and reducing Delayed Transfers of Care; and
- 22.6 84 per cent of MPs and 81 per cent of Peers agreed with the statement that additional funding should go to councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis.

Events

- 23. We held four events relating to health and social care in the last six months, attend by 1,518 people. These were:
 - 23.1 National Children and Adult Services Conference and Exhibition 2017;
 - 23.2 National Strategic Summit - Delivering Health and Care in a Digital Age;
 - 23.3 LGA/ADPH Annual Public Health Conference 2017; and
 - 23.4 New Care Models: what we can learn and the journey to accountable care

Housing

24. During this report period we have continued to highlight how councils can do more if given further powers to borrow to invest in new council housing, the right to keep 100 per cent of Right to Buy receipts to replace sold homes, certainty over future rents, powers to make sure developers build approved homes in a timely fashion, and adequately funded planning departments so councils can cover the cost of processing applications. To achieve our ambitions to end homelessness, we are calling for councils to be given powers and funding to adapt welfare reforms and increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing.

25. In response to our campaigning the Autumn Budget announced a number of very positive measures, including that the housing borrowing cap would be lifted for some councils worth £1 billion from 2019/20. This was an important recognition of our argument about the vital role that councils must play to boost homes for local families in need and solve our housing crisis. The Treasury Committee backed our call to lift the housing borrowing cap following evidence given to the Committee by LGA Senior Vice-Chair, Councillor Nick Forbes.

26. Other Autumn Budget achievements included an additional £20 million for the PRS (Private Rented Sector) access scheme, £25 million planning development capacity fund and an additional £2.7 billion for the Housing Infrastructure Fund. Funding for affordable housing including social rented homes was confirmed resulting in the Affordable Homes Programme budget increased by £2 billion to £9.1 billion, providing at least 25,000 new affordable homes.

27. The Government listened to our call for the Local Housing Allowance rate not to apply to social housing, including supported housing, providing some crucial certainty for councils and their partners to provide housing for some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and to invest in improving and building 300,000 new homes a year.

28. We welcomed the Government's response to our calls to extend the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate cap in the private rented sector. The 3 per cent increase in the Targeted Affordability Fund (TAF) to help private tenants is very positive.

29. The Government accepted our calls to avoid further New Homes Bonus changes and avoid further increase to the threshold, announced in the Final LGFS.

30. Important planning regulations, bringing into force the legal right for local authority planning departments to raise their fees by 20 per cent, have been brought forward in response to our calls to better resource planning teams. We are pushing to increase this by a further 20 per cent.

31. In response to our collective efforts the Prime Minister confirmed in October 2017 that the government will not proceed with plans to apply the local housing allowance to supported housing or the wider social rented sector

32. We helped deliver this by:

- 32.1 generating 37 proactive media releases resulting in 91 per cent positive media coverage;
- 32.2 producing 11 Parliamentary briefings on housing key asks to Government;
- 32.3 publishing 80 tweets reaching over 275,000 people;
- 32.4 producing four publications downloaded 2,208 times in total; and
- 32.5 delivering two housing events attended by 148 delegates.

Media

33. We achieved 213 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months, our most popular story was 'LGA responds to new planning laws for councils' (4 and 5 March 2018), generating 28 episodes of national coverage including Councillor Forbes speaking on BBC News, Sky News, BBC Radio 5 Live, and LBC News. Councillor Tett was interviewed on BBC Radio 5 Live and Councillor Fleming on Channel 5 News.

34. There have been 36 housing related items in First magazine highlighting our work on this issue.

Campaigns and digital

35. We promoted an LGA consultation on homelessness and our planning calls by producing two publications 'LGA Consultation on procedures for referrals of homeless applicants to another local authority', and 'Planning positively through partnership'. During this period we regularly promoted our key asks on housing, planning and homelessness on social media.

36. Our Housing Advisers Programme prospectus has been downloaded of a total of 1,220 times.

37. Key outputs:

- 37.1 our housing webpages have been viewed 19,030 times;
- 37.2 monthly housing bulletin sent to more than 7,000 recipients;
- 37.3 19 videos produced, attracting 9,553 views; and
- 37.4 126 followers on new LinkedIn showcase page for all housing updates.

Public affairs

38. To support our housing campaign we provided a range of briefings and submissions to parliamentary inquiries. Highlights include:

- 38.1 Councillor Nick Forbes appeared before the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee as part of their post-Budget inquiry, arguing for the Government to go further by lifting the borrowing cap across the board; the influential Committee supported our calls by recommending that “the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap should be removed”;
- 38.2 briefing for a range of parliamentary debates, including a debate on the spending to tackle homelessness. Several MPs highlighted our concerns that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) freeze in the private rented sector is causing homelessness and our briefing was downloaded 23 times;
- 38.3 Lord Porter raised our housing and planning priorities in Parliament through interventions in parliamentary debates and written questions; and
- 38.4 Lord Porter and Chief Executive Mark Lloyd attended the Prime Minister’s housing summit in No.10 alongside representatives from housing associations, housebuilders and the development industry.

Events

39. We held two events related to housing in the last six months attended by 148 people in total:

- 39.1 LGA national housing, planning and infrastructure conference;
- 39.2 Fifth national construction conference – construction category 2018

Employment and skills

40. Work Local has now been developed into an integrated campaign calling for changes that put local areas at the heart of addressing skills and employment locally. To help local areas close their skills gap, we are calling on the Government to ensure the ambitions set out in the 2019 Local Industrial Strategies can be fulfilled with devolved powers and funding, and that Work Local is promoted as a framework for their development. We are also calling for changes to how apprenticeships are managed to ensure they work for local government and their residents and for local areas to be treated as true partners to increase employment.

41. We have worked to help councils find solutions to skills gaps they face, particularly around difficulties they face in recruiting social workers, further developing our Return to Social Work Campaign. Fifty-eight social workers have been retrained free of charge to return to practice in London, the West Midlands and East of England

42. As a result of our work, the Government recognised the importance of supporting the return of good experienced social workers back into the profession and announced funding for us to run a campaign Return to Social Work. Fifty-eight candidates have now almost completed their training to return to practice. It costs £27,000 to retrain a social worker, so this programme has saved more than £1.5 million for councils.
43. The Industrial Strategy White Paper announced a new competitive £115m Strength in Places Fund to support areas to build on their science and innovation strengths and develop stronger local networks, in line with our calls in our submission in the Autumn Budget. The fund will support collaborative programmes which can demonstrate a strong impact on local productivity and enhance collaboration between universities, research organisations, businesses, local government and Local Enterprise Partnerships.
44. Cllr Mark Hawthorne and Cllr Peter John (in place of Cllr Sir Richard Leese) met the Rt. Hon Anne Milton MP, Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships. The Minister recognised the importance of engaging with councils. Key skills issues raised which we hope to work with the Government on include skills advisory panels, SME engagement, post 16 routes and apprenticeships. A follow up letter has been sent to the Minister to outline suggested next steps.
45. We helped support this by:
- 45.1 generating 15 proactive media releases resulting in 90 per cent positive media coverage;
 - 45.2 publishing 109 tweets promoting our Work Local activity read by over 254,230 people;
 - 45.3 securing positive promotion of our Work Local proposals in the House of Commons; and
 - 45.4 delivering eight events attended by 468 delegates.

Media

46. Throughout this period we achieved 29 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months our most popular story in this policy area was 'LGA responds to NAO report on adult social care workforce' (7 February 2018) generating four episodes of national coverage in the Express, BBC Online, Mail Online and iOnline.

Campaigns and digital

47. We launched a major campaign promoting Work Local, starting with the apprenticeship-related element of our calls. We worked with five local areas to produce case studies and collateral, along with video content.

48. Following the successful Come Back to Social Work pilot last year, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Department for Education (DfE) and Local Government Association (LGA) have partnered once more for the Return to Social Work programme, to retrain 58 former social workers, free of charge, to qualify them to re-enter the profession.
49. The scheme has been running in three key regions – London, the East of England and West Midlands.
50. Key outputs:
 - 50.1 2,180 views of our Work Local campaign webhub;
 - 50.2 Return to Social Work achieved 15,560 webpage views;
 - 50.3 109 tweets reaching more than 254,230 people promoting Work Local and Return to Social Work;
 - 50.4 18 videos attracting 8,840 views through our digital channels.

Public affairs

51. To support our Work Local campaign we have been engaging with Parliament, including:
 - 51.1 briefing MPs and Peers on our Work Local proposals throughout this period, including briefing for a debate on skills devolution in England led by LGA Vice-President Catherine West MP; and
 - 51.2 providing a briefing response to the Industrial Strategy White Paper, urging Government to work with us and councils on implementing our Work Local proposals

Events

52. We held eight events focused on employment and skills in the last six months, attended by 468 people:
 - 52.1 Meeting GDPR and the Pension Regulator's data requirements;
 - 52.2 Reducing the Gender Pay Gap;
 - 52.3 What it takes to be a 21st Century Public Servant Employer;
 - 52.4 Employment law training;
 - 52.5 Two events on apprenticeships; and
 - 52.6 Two Annual Teachers Pension events.

Leaving the European union

53. Our key ask is for Government to give local government a central role in deciding whether to keep, amend or scrap EU laws once they are converted into domestic law. Secondly, local areas need £8.4 billion of EU funding replaced after Brexit. We particularly want to highlight issues around workforce, funding and procurement. Our calls include the need new legislative freedoms and flexibilities for councils to run local services closer to where people live to improve services and save money
54. The LGA's EU Brexit team, media and public affairs teams and Brussels office are working together to understand the Government's preparations and ensure local government plays an important part in the preparations to leave the EU.

55. While Government goes through the process of preparing to leave the EU, there have been a number of positive signs that the concerns of local government and our key asks are being taken into account.
56. Following our lobbying, the Government has made a commitment in Parliament to update formally through a written statement on how the Government will give local government a clear assurance as to how it will be consulted following the repatriation of powers from the EU. This is to ensure that the consultation with local government that is carried out through the EU's Committee of the Regions continues after Brexit, without creating new bureaucraices.
57. The House of Lords *Brexit: Competition and State Aid* report quoted our concerns and policy positions extensively in their report, including a recommendation that: 'In developing this framework {a replacement for structural funding}, the Government should take into account calls from local authorities for a less complex and burdensome approval process than under the current EU regime'.
58. We welcomed the continued participation in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-20 as a short-term solution but reiterated our calls in our second reading briefing to the House of Lords EU (Withdrawl) Bill debate that funding to local areas is fully replaced from 2021. A locally-led successor to EU regional aid is needed to stop an £8.4 billion UK-wide funding gap for local communities opening up at this point.
59. We helped support this by:
- 59.1 generating five proactive media releases;
 - 59.2 publishing 71 tweets highlighting our key asks;
 - 59.3 engaging with a range of committees; and
 - 59.4 delivering two events attended by 91 delegates.

Media

60. We issued five media releases related to Brexit throughout this period, achieving 13 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months, our top story was 'LGA: use Brexit to make traffic light food and drink labelling mandatory' (10 February 2017),

which achieved nine episodes of national coverage including interviews with LGA Vice Chairman Councillor Marianne Overton featured on BBC Radio 5 Live, Sky News Radio and BBC regional radio news bulletins.

61. 100 per cent of our coverage was proactive and 100 per cent of our coverage was positive.
62. There have been nine items in First magazine highlighting our work on this issue.

Campaigns and digital

63. Over the last six months, we have promoted our messages on Brexit through the website, social media channels and in our ebulletins.
64. Key outputs:
 - 64.1 1,433 visits to the Brexit website pages (1,924 total page views);
 - 64.2 10 videos attracting 6,032 views;
 - 64.3 Brexit bulletin sent to 4,700 subscribers; and
 - 64.4 discussion document 'Beyond Brexit: Future of funding currently sourced from the EU' downloaded 946 times and achieving 2,430 summary page views.

Public affairs

65. Since the announcement of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, we have been working closely with Ministers, government officials, the four local government associations and Parliamentarians to promote our arguments on Brexit. This includes briefing for the different stages of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill as it passes through Parliament and briefing for a range of other debates that were opportunities to push our lines on Brexit and devolution. Key highlights include:
 - 65.1 Following our lobbying, the Government has made a commitment in Parliament to update formally through a written statement on how the Government will give local government a clear assurance as to how it will be consulted following the repatriation of powers from the European Union. This is to ensure that the consultative function that is carried out through the Committee of the Regions continues;
 - 65.2 Our Chairman Lord Porter has through parliamentary debates and questions raised a number of key issues on Brexit, including ensuring councils continue to be consulted on new laws and regulations;
 - 65.3 We engaged with a range of parliamentary committees. Councillor Kevin Bentley, Chair of the Brexit Task and Finish Group, has given evidence to the All-Party-Parliamentary group on Devolution Reform and Decentralisation, the MHCLG Committee and the Public Administration and Constitution Committee;

- 65.4 The House of Lords *Brexit: Competition and State Aid* report quoted our concerns and policy positions extensively in their report, including a recommendation that: ‘In developing this framework *{a replacement for structural funding}*, the Government should take into account calls from local authorities for a less complex and burdensome approval process than under the current EU regime’; and
- 65.5 Our parliamentary briefings were downloaded 488 times and received 1,384 summary page views.

Events

66. We held two events related to Brexit in the last six months, attended by 91 people. These were:
- 66.1 Smith Square Debate on Brexit and local government, held in December 2017.;
- 66.2 Devolution Network.
67. The Smith Square debate explored which repatriated powers should be devolved to local government; how the £5.3 billion investment that was supposed to be received from the EU until 2020 will be replaced; and the impact on the workforce and skills. Speakers included Cllr Kevin Bentley, the Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, Wera Hobhouse MP and the former UKIP Leader, Henry Bolton. – There were 69 attendees and it was the most popular topic on Twitter that night in London.

Children’s social care

68. Growing demand for support has led to 75 per cent of councils in England overspending on their children’s services budgets by more than half a billion pounds. The pressures facing children’s services are rapidly becoming unsustainable, with a £2 billion funding gap expected by 2020. We therefore launched our Bright Futures campaign calling for properly funded children’s services and for children and adolescent mental health services to be prioritised.

69. Through our collective lobbying efforts an additional £7.6 million a year has been awarded to councils, to extend virtual school head support for looked- after children, including adopted children. Councils will also receive £2 million in funding to improve leadership in children’s social care services.

70. During a debate on the provision for children’s services focusing on the concerns the LGA has raised regarding the £2 billion funding gap, the then Minister for Children and Families, Robert Goodwill MP, said DfE, DCLG and the sector on the Fair Funding Review are “determined to get this right for children’s social care services”.

71. Following our calls for an urgent injection of funding into early intervention initiatives that provide support for children experiencing domestic violence, the Government has allocated an £8 million fund towards support for children who

witness domestic abuse and help with their recovery through locally commissioned projects.

72. We helped support this work and the wider campaigning by:

72.1 generating 107 episodes of national media coverage;

72.2 our Early Day Motion (EDM) on children's mental health has been signed 28 times so far;

72.3 seeking agreement for our asks in Parliamentary debates on children's services funding and children's mental health;

72.4 publishing eight Bright Futures campaign publications downloaded a total of 6,700 times;

72.5 producing extremely popular video content (25,315 views) explaining the current pressures faced by children's services, along with our asks.

Media

73. We issued 21 media release related to children and young people throughout this period.

74. In the last six months our most popular story was 'A child is referred to children's services every 49 seconds, councils warn' (12 January 2018) which achieved 19 episodes of national coverage, including Councillor Watts on BBC Radio 5 Live, Councillor Simmonds on Good Morning Britain, coverage reported on Sky News, Channel 4 News and the Times.

75. 89 per cent of our coverage was proactive for children's social care in the past six months and 89 per cent of the coverage was positive.

76. There have been 24 children's social care related items in First magazine.

Campaigns and digital

77. We launched our high-profile campaign Bright Futures with a web hub, publications and a variety of digital content; this was followed up with the launch of a campaign thread specifically focusing on children's mental health during Children's Mental Health week.

78. Over the period, we have published three particularly successful publications: 'Bright Futures - getting the best for children, young people and families', which sets out seven clear priorities we believe will help drive improvement for children and families, downloaded 1,354 times; short Children's and Young People's Mental Health Services (CAMHS) explainer 'Don't be left in the dark: children and young people's mental health', downloaded 506 times; and Bright Futures: our vision for youth

services publication, our first online-first publication which received 2,013 page views.

79. Key outputs

79.1 10 children's publications published, achieving in total 7,360 total downloads;

79.2 More than 18,900 total webpage views of children's social care pages;

79.3 published 133 tweets reaching over 447,680 people;

79.4 500 copies of a one-page flyer sent to all MPs;

79.5 joint letter issued to Government, with the Children's Society, Barnardo's, Action for Children and the National Children's Bureau, viewed 821 times;

79.6 Our EDM motion has been supported online by a range of MPs and partners, including The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the Children's Society; and

79.7 25,315 video views of 30 videos.

Public affairs

80. Throughout this period we continued our work promoting the role of councils in improving children's life chances. Key highlights include:

80.1 writing to all MPs to highlight our Bright Futures campaign;

80.2 briefing for debates on the provision of children's services and the Children's Commissioner's report; social workers and the rising demand facing services and foster care;

80.3 Councillor Richard Watts gave evidence to the Early Years All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and discussed the £2 billion funding gap. He also gave evidence to the Children APPG on the variation in children's services funding;

80.4 launching a cross-party EDM on children's mental health and school counselling, which has so far been signed 28 times;

80.5 Lord Porter tabled written parliamentary questions on in-school counselling and the Government's assessment of Bright Futures;

80.6 writing to all LGA vice-presidents during children's mental health week to raise awareness of the campaign launch;

80.7 writing to approximately 150 parliamentarians (from Cllr Seccombe and Cllr Watts) including relevant ministers, opposition spokespeople, committee

members and APPG officers to promote the key recommendations of the campaign, including a copy of the Don't be left in the Dark publication;

80.8 Cllr Watts met with the new Children's Minister Nadhim Zahawi MP to discuss our key priorities.

81. Our briefings on this campaign have been downloaded over 260 times and received over 740 summary page views.

Events

82. We held five events across the country related to children and young people in the last six months, attended by 1,369 people in total. In the last six months these have included:

82.1 National Children and Adult Services Conference and Exhibition 2017;

82.2 Understanding spend in children's services;

82.3 Improving Children's Lives: supporting councils to reach out to families with multiple adversities;

82.4 A new vision for youth services; and

82.5 Sport and Physical Activity Conference.

Supporting and engaging with our member councils

83. Effective communications is integral to the success of sector-led improvement, with an element of sharing and promoting best-practice woven into all our campaigns.

84. We have worked closely with councils to support them in delivering sector-led improvement. Councils' take-up of our improvement support offer, peer challenge and leadership programmes remains strong. Our digital promotion includes direct and targeted support for councils through our #InnovateTuesday tweets focusing on both individual examples of councils' work and general council updates.

We helped support and engage our member councils by:

84.1 issuing 28 proactive media releases, achieving a total of 83 per cent positive coverage;

84.2 publishing 119 tweets celebrating #InnovateTuesday, reaching 260,140 people, engaging over 6,000 more people compared to the previous six months;

84.3 82 per cent of heads of communication said they were satisfied with the LGA communications and improvement and support service provided to them;

84.4 developing 16 best practice case studies, 65 in total to date; and

84.5 publishing 125 communications support and improvement recommendations for councils in receipt of a health check, three day communications review or corporate peer challenge.

Media

85. Our media work achieved 145 episodes of national coverage. In the last six months our most popular story was 'LGA responds to RAC Foundation report on parking' (27 November 2017), which achieved 12 episodes of national coverage including BBC Radio 4's Today, You and Yours programme, BBC Breakfast, Times and Independent Online.

Campaigns and digital

86. We produced 16 documents to support councils in the last six months, as well as planning and producing a range of online and print materials to promote our support offer to members. The most popular publication 'Modern slavery: a council guide' achieved 1,277 total downloads.

87. Key outputs:

87.1 31,814 visits to the improvement webpage and subpages (43,649 total page views);

87.2 visitors spent an average of two minutes 20 seconds on the page (in the top 10 for LGA web pages); and

87.3 16 publications produced, including 'Modern slavery: a council guide', downloaded a total of 4,960 times.

Public affairs

88. In this period we held one Communications and Parliamentary Network briefing. These events are designed to help those working in local government understand the key legislation and policy being agreed nationally that affects councils. The Network also helps disseminate best practice and learning across the sector.

89. In Parliament we continue to promote our calls that will help councils keep their communities safe. This includes:

89.1 supporting a proposed Taxi and PHV Licensing Reform Bill; we briefed MPs on our key concerns and whilst it was disappointing the Bill was not passed, we have already started work to establish a voluntary register with the same ambitions; and

89.2 briefing for a debate on the challenges facing problem gamblers; crossbench peer Lord Alton of Liverpool quoted our briefing and the Gambling Commission has now recommended Fixed Odds Betting Terminals go down to the £2 maximum stake.

Events

90. We hosted eleven events related to sector-led improvement in the last six months, attended by 630 people:

- 90.1 five Modern Slavery Workshops;
- 90.2 two Apprenticeships: How to get the most out of your council's apprenticeship;
- 90.3 Using behavioural insights in local government;
- 90.4 Annual licensing conference;
- 90.5 Violent Crime Conference (London); and
- 90.6 PACE workshop: How to align your vision, resources and people

Communications improvement and support team

91. We have continued to develop our sector-led improvement offer over the most recent quarter, providing a range of three day reviews, one day health checks, bespoke support activities, events and training and development opportunities. We have continued to develop our online support services by expanding our communications case study library and by continuing to run surveys to support the sector with benchmarking resident satisfaction and their communications activity.

Communications reviews and health checks

- 92. The communications support and improvement team delivered four one day health checks during this period. The councils in receipt of these were Stroud (South West), Salford City Council (North West), Broxtowe (East of England) and Northampton Borough Council (East of England).
- 93. The team delivered four in-depth, three day communication reviews for Stevenage (East of England), Blackpool (North West), Swindon (South West) and the West Midlands Combined Authority (West Midlands). This support for the West Midlands Combined Authority was the very first communications review delivered for a combined authority and the first to include a communications practitioner from the private sector. The team was assembled in this way at the request of the combined authority who valued a wide range of expertise as they seek to make the new combined authority model a success.
- 94. The communications and improvement team also joined two corporate peer challenges as subject matter experts. These included Medway (South East) and Exeter (South West) where they provided expertise on issues including place branding and ensuring effective communications activity.

95. A total of 125 communications support and improvement recommendations were made for councils in receipt of a health check, three day communications review or corporate peer challenge during this period.

Strategic support

96. In addition to the core support offer, we also developed a number of bespoke packages for councils requiring more in depth strategic communications support. This included providing on-site strategic communications, support for crisis communications, running resident satisfaction surveys, providing bespoke social media and media training courses and facilitating visits for councils keen to learn from LGA best practice. Six local authorities have received some form of support.

Resources

97. In January 2018 we published the results of our annual Heads of Communication survey. 179 practitioners completed the survey providing a response rate of 49 per cent. 82 per cent of those surveyed said they were satisfied with the LGA communications and improvement and support service provided to them.
98. We also ran our national resident satisfaction polling in October 2017 and have redesigned the Comms Hub to ensure that communications practitioners are clear on the support offer provided by the LGA and can navigate the resources more efficiently.
99. We have continued to develop the communications best practice library available on the online Comms Hub. We have added a further 16 case studies to the resource during this reporting period, taking the total to 65.

Events

100. In February 2018 the team delivered a bespoke place branding event at Smith Square for more than 100 communications practitioners. The event included case studies from Hull, Luton, Essex and Hackney alongside panel discussions, Q&A opportunities and workshops. The team is now exploring opportunities to run a second event in the North of England to meet demand for this support.
101. In December 2017 the team sponsored and judged categories in the 2017 Unawards to celebrate best practice across local government. They also partnered with the LGA's public affairs team to deliver a communications and parliamentary network event for more than 30 communications experts.

Professional development and training

102. The communications support team has continued to support the development of communications practitioners both inside the LGA and across our wider membership. A team member is also currently undertaking the Future Leaders Programme for potential future heads of communication leaders. The team used 16 new peers as part of its health check and review teams during this period.

Reputation of local government

103. With local authorities increasingly having to deliver more with less, the reputation of local government has never been more important and supporting local government underpins all of our communications activity. In the last six months we have continued to champion the priorities of our members through campaigns, parliamentary activity, awareness of the LGA's key asks through our media engagement, digital channels and events, and promoting the invaluable work councils do on a daily basis to improve the quality of life of residents.

In the last six months we have worked to promote and protect the reputation of local government by:

- 103.1 achieving 218 episodes of national coverage for issues impacting council reputation (outside of priority campaigns, activity for which is detailed in the rest of this report);
- 103.2 bringing council officers together at our Parliamentary Network event to share best practice and update members on our political priorities;
- 103.3 achieving over 5.4 million impressions (5,406,000) for 1,590 tweets relating to councils during this report period;
- 103.4 promoting the #OurDay campaign which reached close to 14,000 contributors, generating 45,083 tweets nationwide and reaching more than 31 million people making it the most successful #OurDay campaign to date;
- 103.5 sending our CommsNet bulletin to a total of 1,961 subscribers every week, an increase of 154 (8.5 per cent) new subscribers since the previous six months; and
- 103.6 driving traffic to the 'Be a Councillor' website, with 42,036 unique page views (53,203 total page views).

Media

104. In this six month period we issued 30 press releases relating to council reputation. Our most popular story was 'Councils ready for winter with 1.5 million tonnes of salt stockpiled' (25 November 2017) generating 15 episodes of national coverage including an appearance by Councillor Tett on Sky News, and pieces in the Times Online, Independent Online, and the Telegraph.

Campaigns and digital

105. #OurDay our 24 hour social media campaign took place on 21 November 2017, demonstrating the value local government provides to the public and highlighting innovative work. As a result #OurDay trended number one in the UK for most of the day, as well as first worldwide in the English language.

106. We also continued to promote the 'Be a Councillor' campaign. The campaign's website was well visited with 42,036 unique page views.
107. Almost a year since our website was launched (in April 2017) we're already seeing great improvements in audiences' unique page views, which have **increased by 13 per cent year** on year. **The average time spent on the site by users has improved by 27 per cent with a drop of 6.9 per cent in bounce rate from 58.61 per cent to 51.71 per cent.** Visitors directly going to specific pages, referrals from other websites and social media links in the same period has increased. The improved accessibility and responsiveness of the site to mobile devices has seen significant increases in visitors accessing the website using mobiles phones and tablets.
108. We further developed our video output during this period, creating custom content for campaigns including gifs and short videos.
109. Key outputs:
- 109.1 1,908,500 webpage views in total between October to March 2018;
 - 109.2 118 short explainer videos in total, supporting our calls to Government, new publications and media releases with 106,835 combined views across online digital channels including 11 videos viewed over 9,700 times through our linkedin page; and
 - 109.3 #Our Day achieved 16,088 video views, around 10,400 webpage views and a 48 per cent increase in the thunderclap social reach compared to the previous year.

Public affairs

110. We regularly poll MPs and Peers to ask them whether they believe the LGA is an effective communicator and whether they would advocate on our behalf. To provide context, we rank ourselves against five similar lobbying organisations. Key highlights include:
- 110.1 52 per cent of MPs said they would advocate for us. This is an increase from 47 per cent in both 2016 and 2015. The organisational average (this is averaging the scores of all the organisations polled, not our organisational average over time) is 35 per cent;
 - 110.2 52 per cent of Peers said they would advocate for us. This has increased by 2 percentage points from 2016 (52 per cent in 2017 against 50 per cent in 2016);
 - 110.3 51 per cent of MPs think we are an effective organisation. The average net effective rating for the organisations we are compared to is 35 per cent;

110.4 58 per cent of Peers believe we are an effective organisation. This is stable (58 per cent in 2015, 59 per cent in 2016 and 58 per cent in 2017). We now lead against those organisations we track ourselves against; and

110.5 Responding to the MHCLG Committee inquiry into local government scrutiny, the Government backed our sector led approach. This follows the LGA giving evidence to the Committee and promoting our work supporting local government.

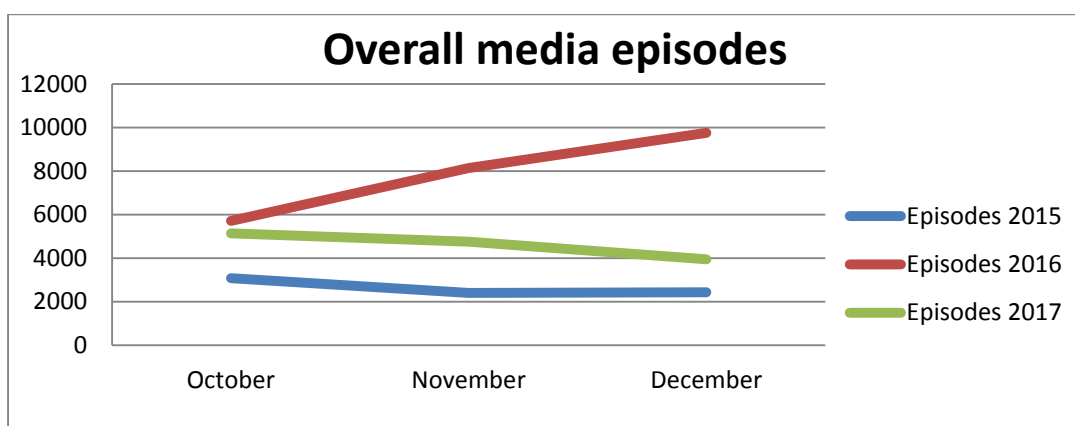
Events

111. The team have organised and delivered 54 events, attended by 4,637 delegates, with 37 per cent in the regions in the last six months. Events and sponsorship have generated over £2 million gross income over the 2017-18 financial year.

Appendix 1: Analysis of media coverage

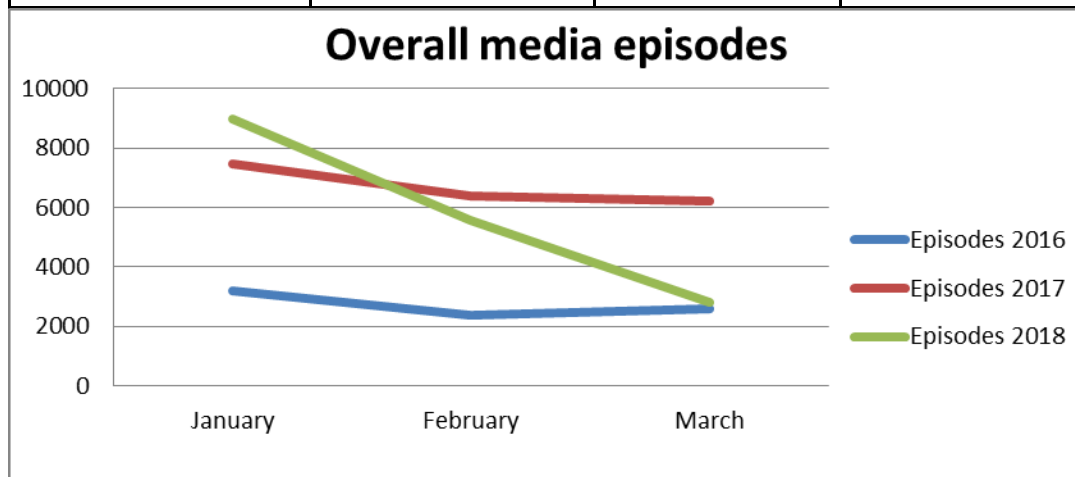
Overall media coverage (October-December 2017)

	Episodes 2015	Episodes 2016	Episodes 2017
October	3086	5714	5142
November	2396	8143	4752
December	2430	9762	3950



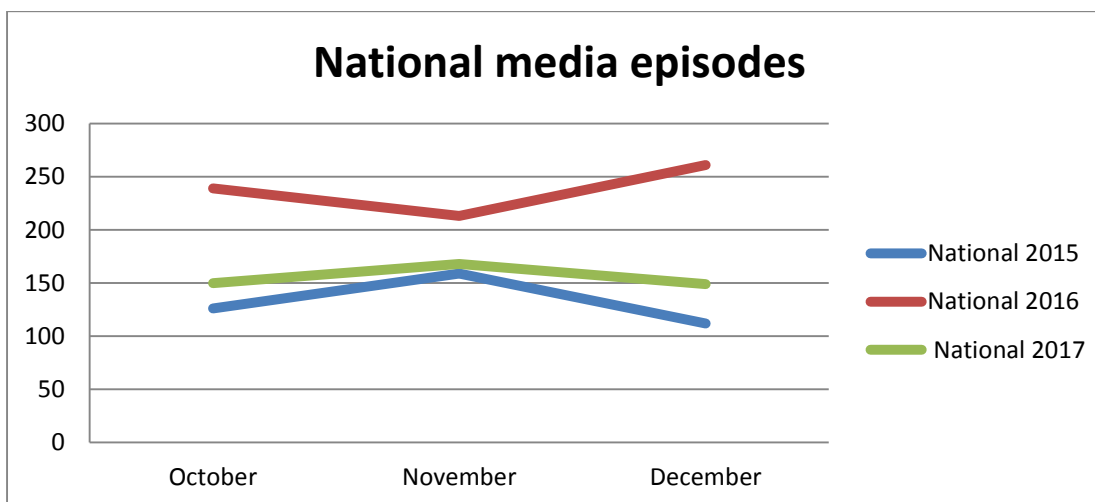
Overall media coverage (January-16 March 2018)

	Episodes 2016	Episodes 2017	Episodes 2018
January	3196	7449	8979
February	2372	6376	5552
March	2568	6229	2792 (to 16 March)



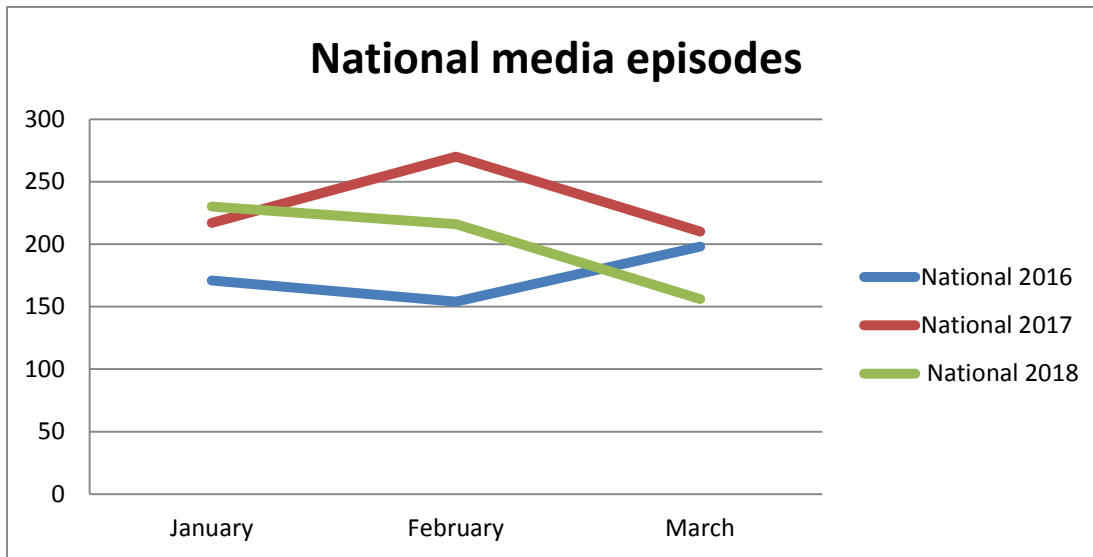
National media coverage (October 2017-December 2017)

	National 2015	National 2016	National 2017
October	126	239	150
November	159	213	168
December	112	261	149

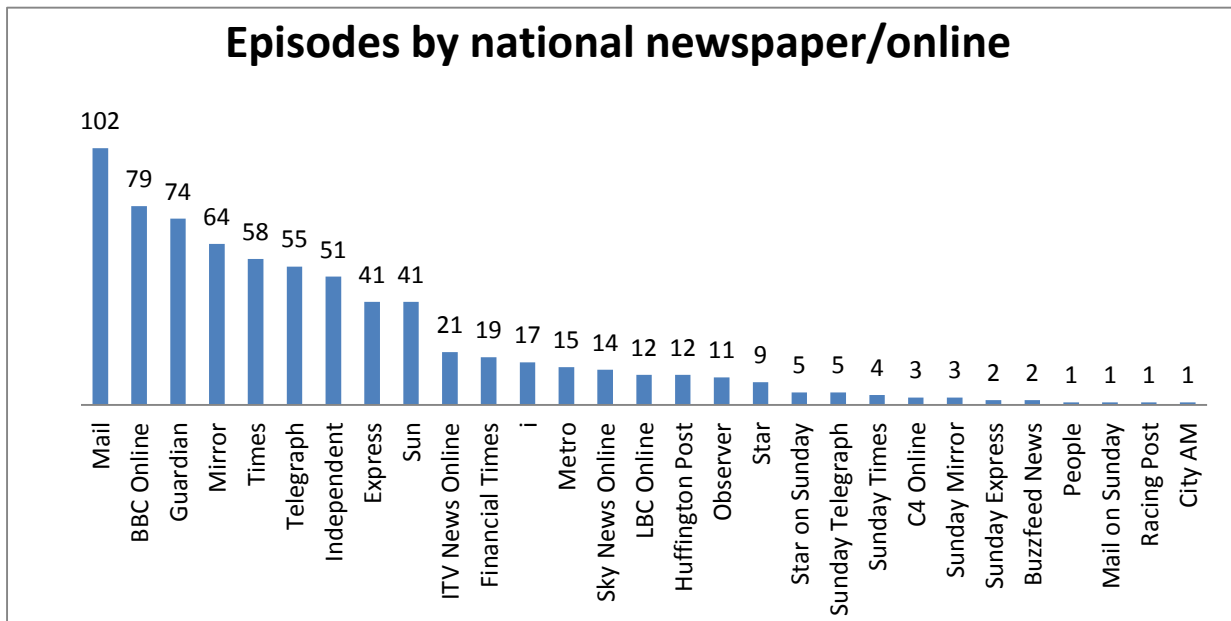


National media coverage (January-16 March 2018)

	National 2016	National 2017	National 2018
January	171	217	230
February	154	270	216
March	198	210	156 (to 16 March)



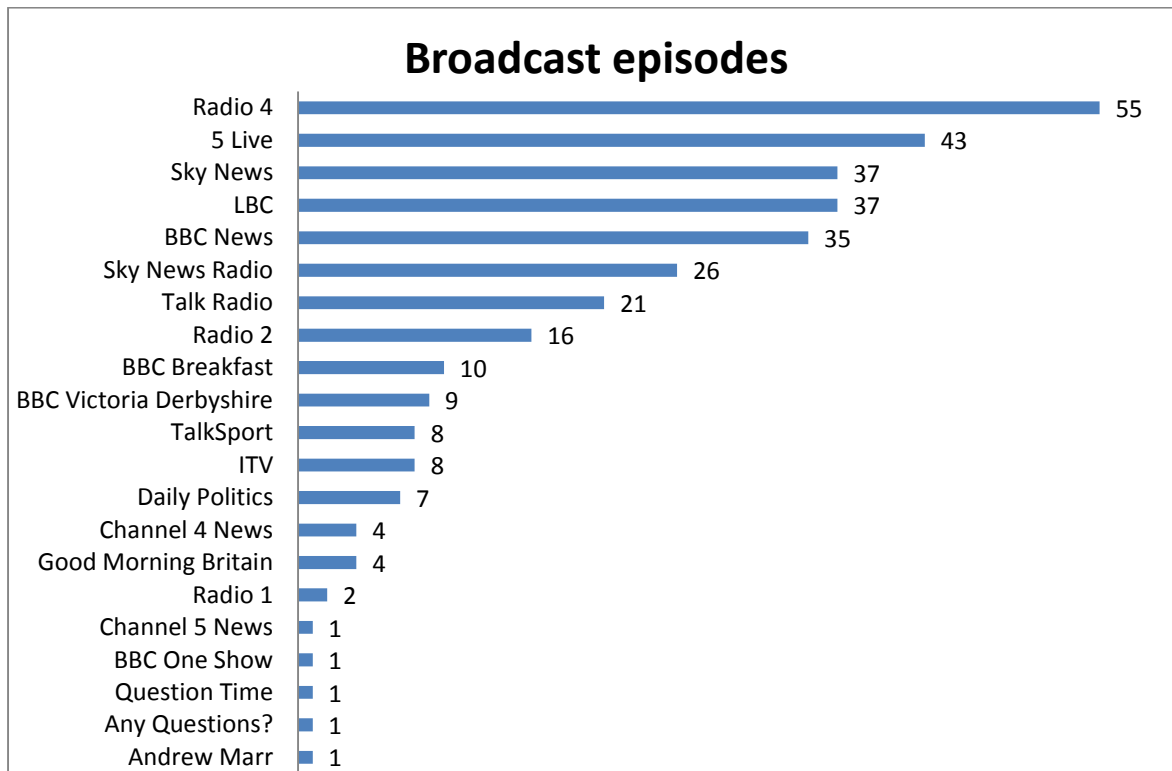
October 2017-16 March 2017



National newspaper/online episodes

The LGA appeared in 29 national newspaper or online outlets during this period, including 20 daily and Sunday newspaper titles. We featured in the **Mail** the most with **102** episodes, followed by **BBC Online** (79 episodes) and the **Guardian** (74 episodes).

Broadcast episodes (October 2017-16 March 2018)



Our media work saw **327** episodes of media coverage on national TV and radio during this period, with **55** mentions on **BBC Radio 4** followed by **BBC Radio 5 Live** with **43** mentions and then **Sky News** with **37** mentions.

Appendix 2: Analysis of parliamentary activity and reputation

ComRes polling

Methodology note

ComRes interviewed a number of MPs and Peers by online and self-completion paper survey 2015-17, as set out below.

MPs

Wave	Fieldwork dates	Sample size	Weighting
2015	12 th November – 16 th December	150	By party and region to be representative of the House of Commons
2016	10 th November – 19 th December	152	
2017	14 th November – 11 th December	155	

Peers

Wave	Fieldwork dates	Sample size	Weighting
2015	13 th November -11 th December	100	By party to be representative of the House of Lords
2016	14 th November – 15 th December	100	
2017	14 th November – 11 th December	103	

House of Commons/House of Lords mentions

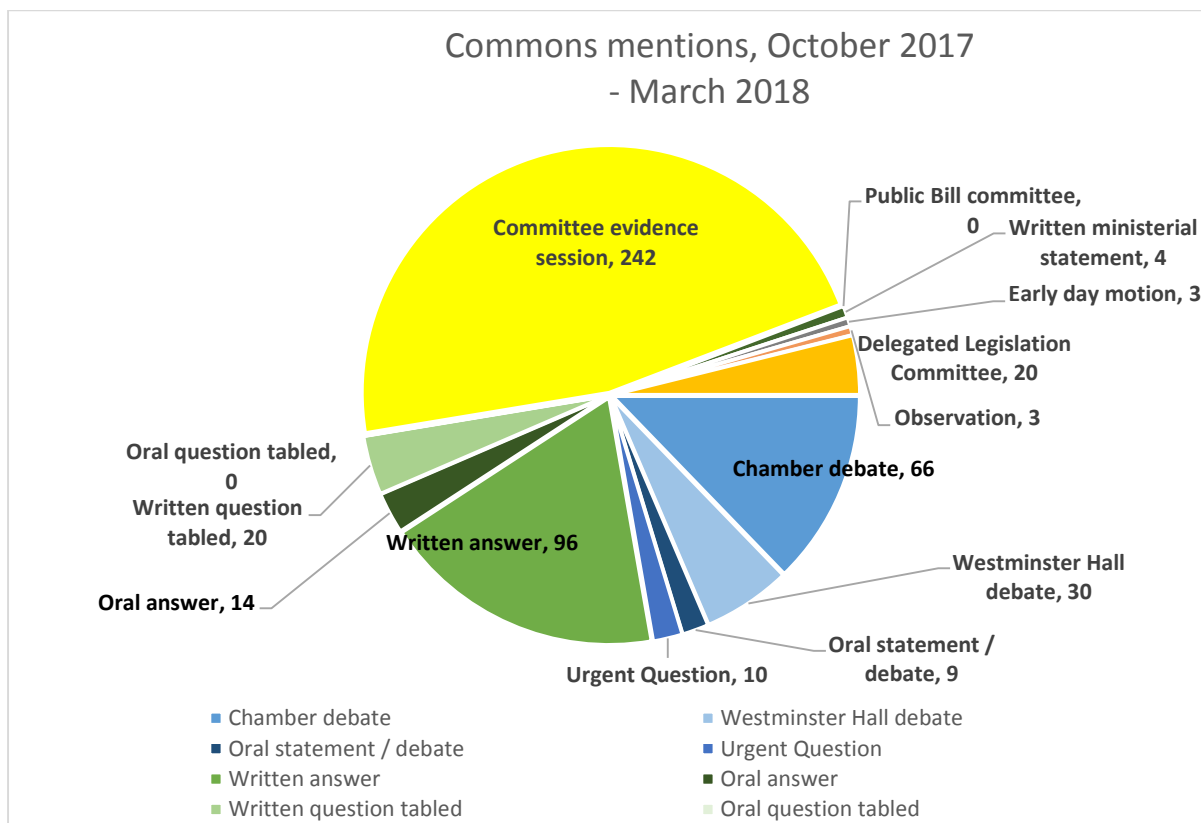
Source	Type	Total for Session
Commons	Chamber debate	66
Commons	Westminster Hall debate	30
Commons	Oral statement / debate	9
Commons	Urgent Question	10
Commons	Written answer	96
Commons	Oral answer	14
Commons	Written question tabled	20
Commons	Oral question tabled	0

Commons	Committee evidence session	242
Commons	Public Bill committee	0
Commons	Written ministerial statement	4
Commons	Early day motion	3
Commons	Observation	3
Commons	Delegated Legislation Committee	20
Joint	Committee evidence	0
Commons	Total Commons mentions	517
Lords	Chamber Debate	125
Lords	Grand Committee Debate	23
Lords	Oral statement / debate	34

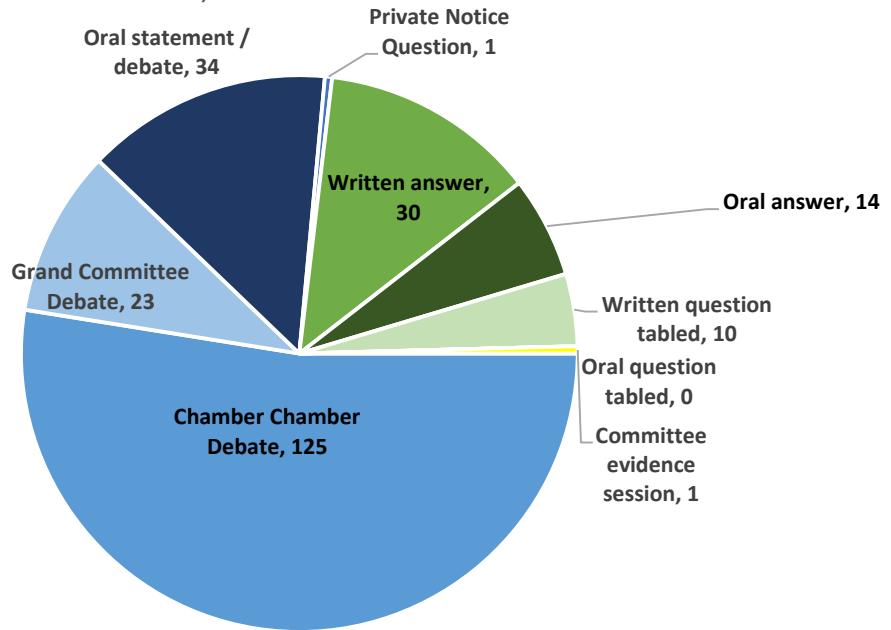
Mentions per sitting day:

From October 2017 to March 2018 the Parliament has sat for 88 days.

The LGA was mentioned on average 8.5 times per sitting day from October 2017 to March 2018.



Lords Mentions, October 2017 - March 2018



- Chamber Debate
 - Oral statement / debate
 - Written answer
 - Written question tabled
- Grand Committee Debate
 - Private Notice Question
 - Oral answer
 - Oral question tabled