

Communications – quarterly report – April to June 2014

Purpose of report

To outline communications activity between April and June 2014.

Summary

Since December 2012, and following the publication of the our communications plan and strategy, a monitoring and evaluation system has been developed to allow tracking and recording media coverage. As well as volume of media activity, it also allows the tone of coverage (positive or negative) and ratio of proactive and reactive coverage to be measured.

The main results for April to June 2014 are:

- National media mentions slightly down 3 per cent year-on-year from **306** in the same period for 2013 to **295** in the first quarter of 2014. This is mainly attributable to extensive coverage on the Spending Round in 2013.
- **85 per cent** of coverage was through pro-active media work against our target of 75 per cent.
- **79 per cent** of our national coverage was positive.
- More than **1.2 million** website page views by more than **230,000** unique users.
- **274** mentions of the LGA in Parliament from April to June.

Recommendation

That the Leadership Board notes the communications activity for the period April to June 2014.

Action None.

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Background

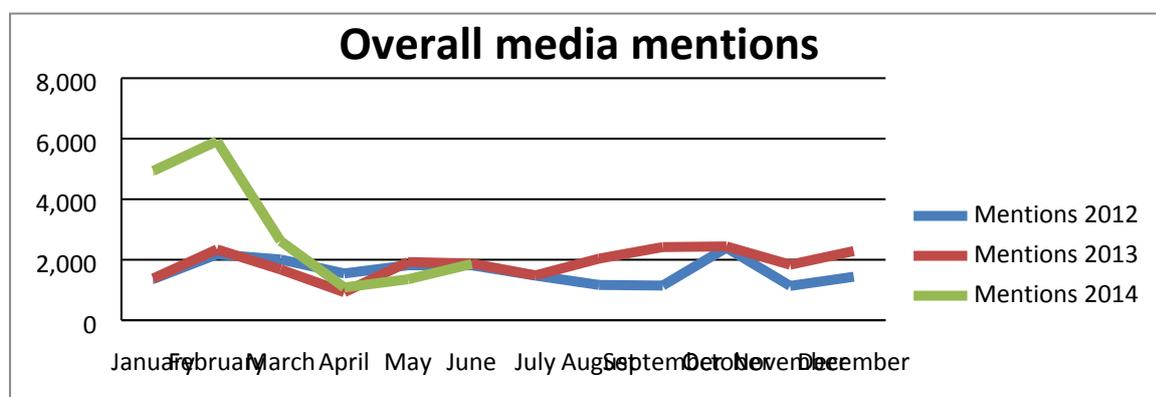
1. Last April, we presented and published our three year Communications Strategy, following approval by Leadership Board. It outlined our key targets, which included a target to deliver high quality communications activity which is 75 per cent proactive, with a clear focus to national media.
2. Our aim is to position ourselves as the ‘come to’ organisation on all matters which affect local government through high quality, proactive communications. When it is necessary to react to events, stories or announcements, we will ensure the LGA provides a strong voice for local government, defending the sector’s position.

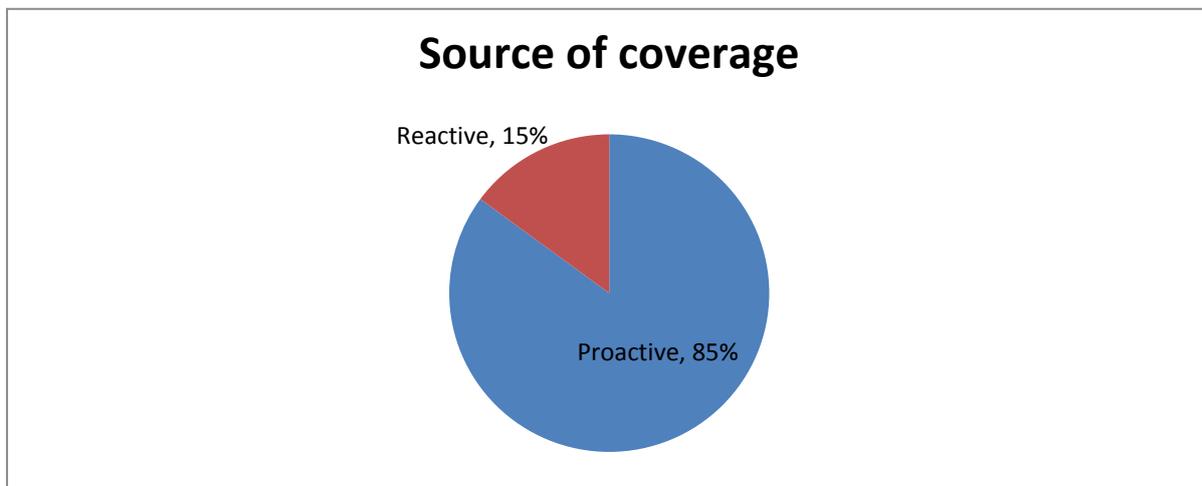
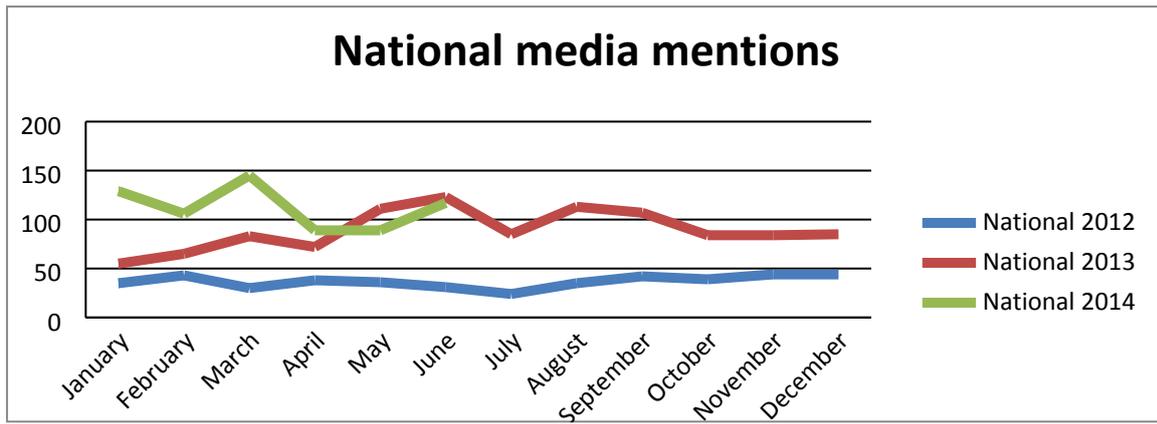
Media activity – April to June 2014

3. Our strategy has been to focus more on national media coverage to ensure maximum coverage for the key issues for local government. The following sets out all media coverage for the period April to June 2014.

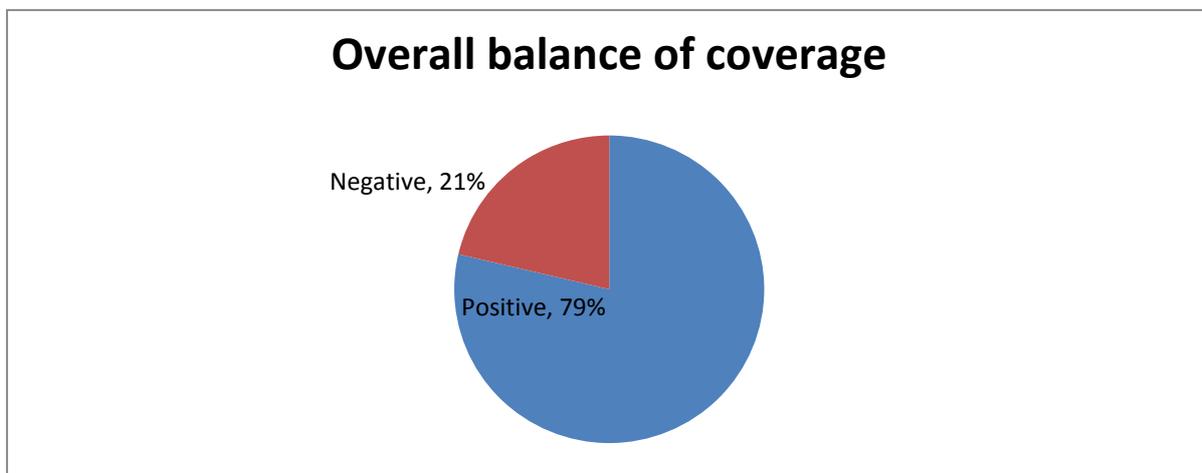
	April – June 2014	April – June 2013	April – June 2012
Coverage (all)	4299	4729	5179
National (Print, online, broadcast)	295	306	105

4. This quarter has seen a small reduction in our overall and national media coverage year-on-year. This has been in part due to the extensive coverage we received around last year’s Spending Round (the national coverage figure in 2013 (306) included 86 pieces of media coverage generated by our media work for the Spending Round.)





5. **85 per cent** of media coverage this quarter was through pro-active work. This is up from **80 per cent** in the previous quarter (January–March 2014). This has been led by our work on the Better Care Fund, parking, school places, school accountability and powers to tackle the spread of betting shops on our high streets.
6. As a result, **79 per cent** of our coverage this quarter was positive.

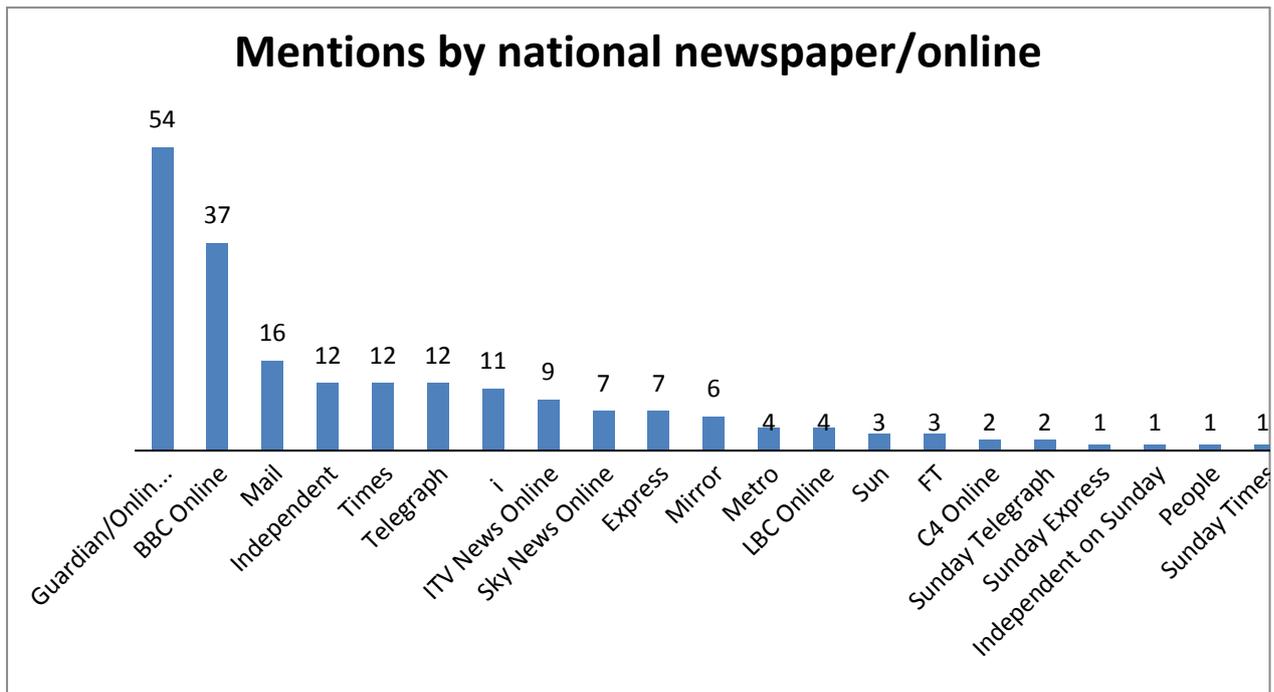


7. Other proactive releases this quarter included:

- Blue badge fraud prosecutions by councils double (**15 episodes of media coverage**)
- Restore school intervention powers to councils to bring stability (**14 episodes of media coverage**)
- Tougher powers needed for councils to tackle rogue landlords (**14 episodes of media coverage**)
- Councils secure tougher powers to address betting shop clustering (**10 episodes of media coverage**)
- Councils face £5.8bn funding black hole (**9 episodes of media coverage**)
- LGA calls for five-year commitment to health and social care funding (**6 episodes of media coverage**)

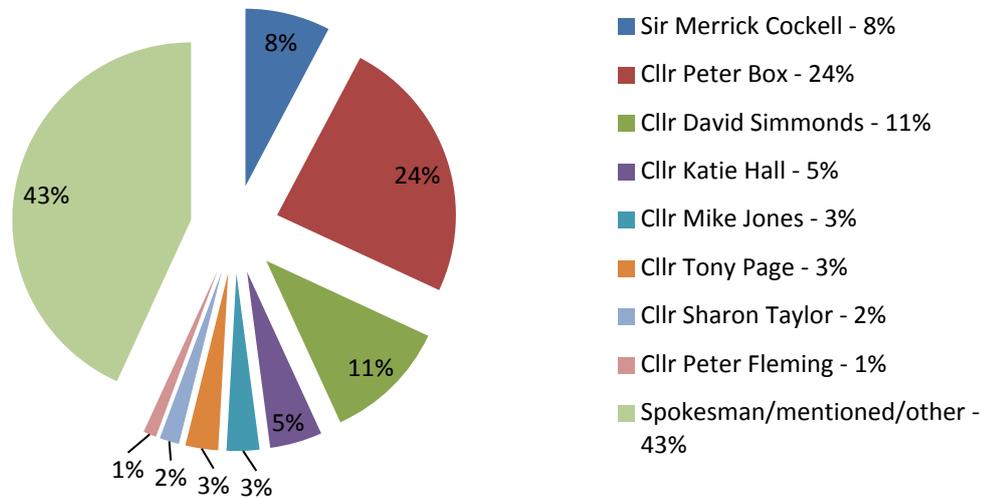
Print and online media

8. The following sets out national newspaper and online coverage for the period April to June 2014.



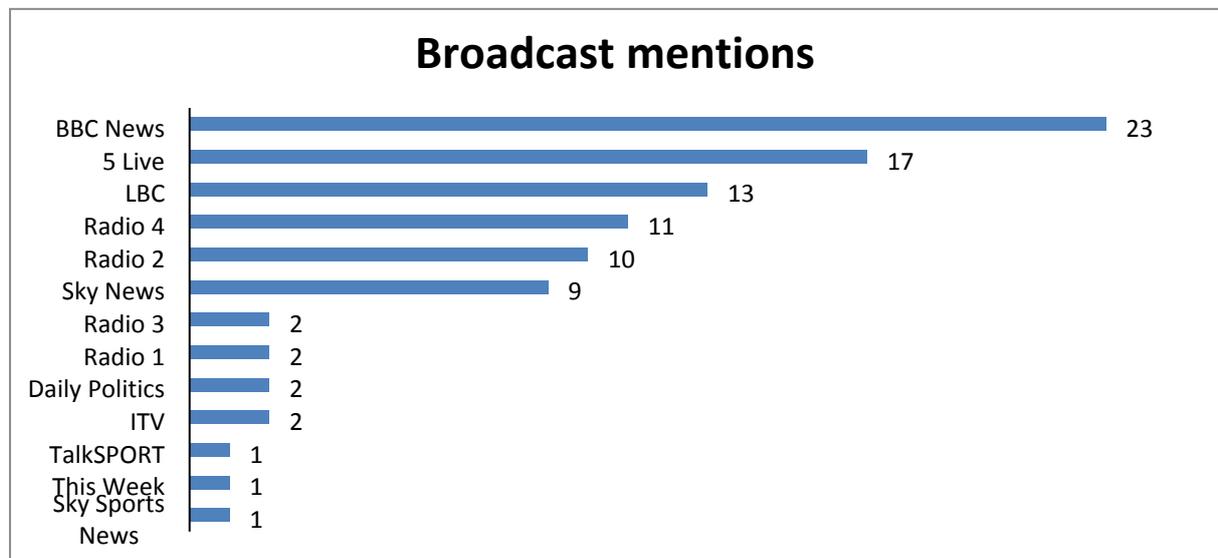
9. The LGA appeared in every national daily newspaper – except for the Star – and five Sunday titles during this quarter. We featured in the **Guardian** most with **54** mentions while the **BBC** covered stories **37** times including reports on CCTV parking, school places, local elections and school accountability.

Mentions (national and online) by spokesperson



Broadcast media

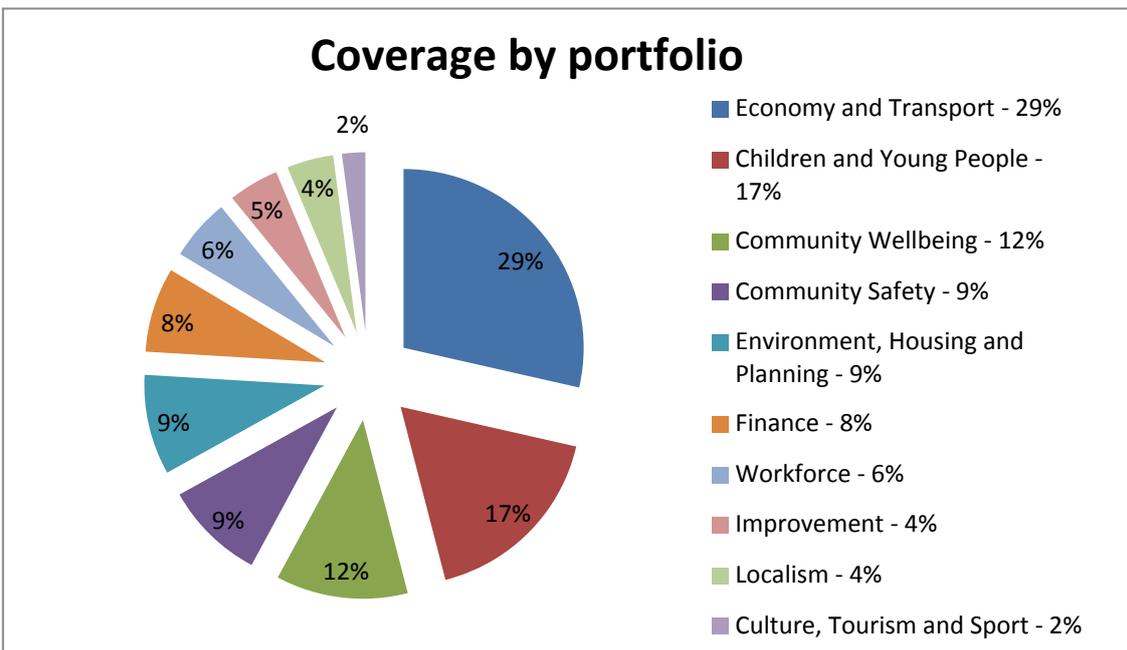
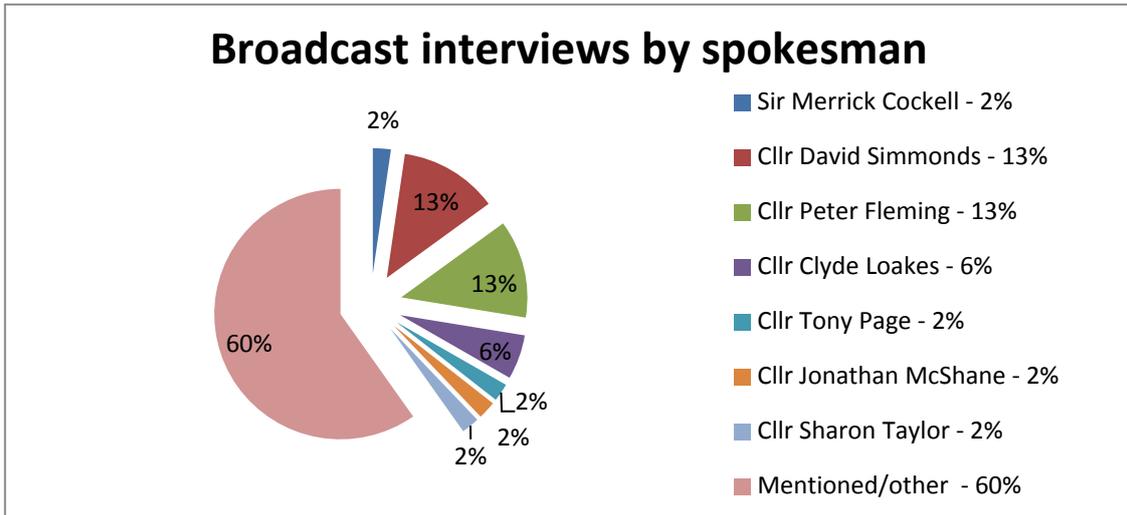
10. The following sets out our broadcast activity for the period April to June 2014.



11. Our media work saw **94** episodes of media coverage on national TV and radio this quarter. June was our busiest broadcast month with **40** mentions over **13** different channels and programmes.

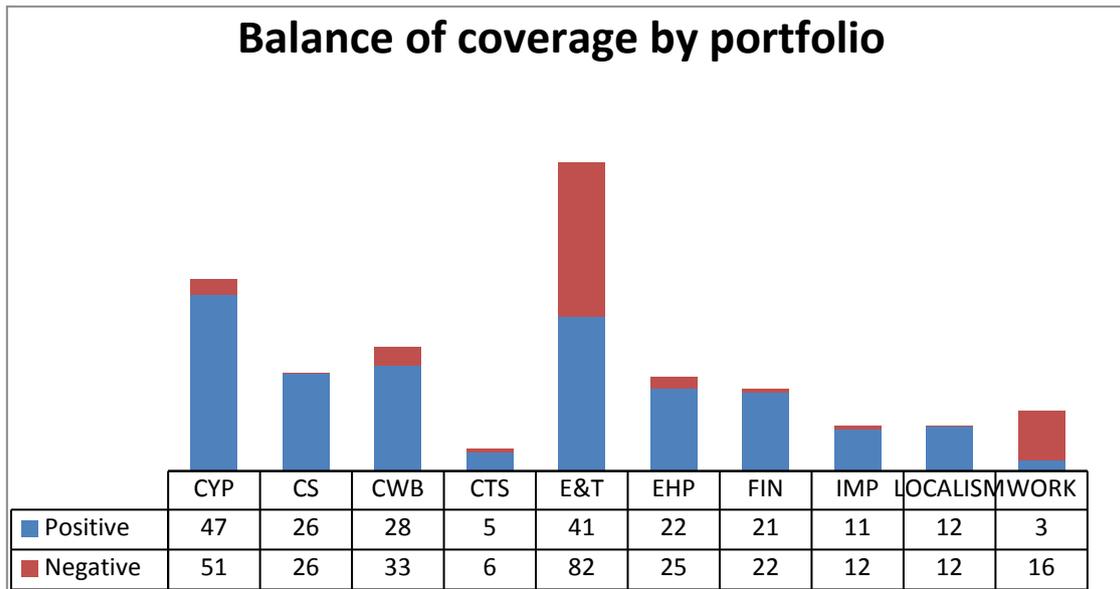
12. Sir Merrick Cockell was interviewed live on **BBC News** on **May 23** to discuss the local election results and the challenges ahead for councils. Sir Merrick returned to the **BBC Daily Politics** on **June 9** to talk about what life will be like for new councillors.

13. Cllr Peter Fleming spoke on a wide range of subjects this quarter as our lead spokesman unrestricted by Purdah. He appeared on **LBC** on **May 5** to discuss taxi licensing, **Daily Politics** on **May 6** on voter registration and on **BBC Breakfast** to talk about Shared Lives schemes on **May 28**.
14. **On 28 June** we widely promoted our lobbying win on the Government's reversal of its blanket ban on CCTV parking enforcement. Cllr Fleming discussed the announcement on **BBC Breakfast**, **BBC Radio 5 Live**, **BBC News** and **Sky News**.



15. The majority of coverage this quarter was positive.
16. Negative **Children and Young People** coverage came a story from Ofsted about children placed in foster care and cuts to children's mental health services, while in **Community Wellbeing** it was on 15 minute care visits and a report on rising adult social care complaints from the Local Government Ombudsman

17. In **Economy and Transport**, reports around parking income, the use of CCTV in parking enforcement and council road works generated some negative coverage and stories on local plan delays and green waste collection charges generated negative coverage in **Environment, Housing and Planning**.
18. The negative **Finance** story was a report on one in 10 councils having used powers to cut business rates in the FT. The local government pay offer and strike action generated negative coverage for **Workforce**.



Public affairs activity, April – June 2014

19. The LGA was mentioned **274 times** in Parliament in April, May and June 2014. This compares to 59 mentions over the same period in 2013.

Legislation

20. This quarter has seen the opening of the final session of Parliament before the 2015 General Election and the publication of the Government's legislative intentions for the next twelve months. Since the Queen's Speech, the Serious Crime Bill has been published and we briefed Peers ahead of the Second Reading in the House of Lords when a number of our messages were quoted. We also began working with individual Peers on specific amendments to explore whether local authorities who play a role in preventing of crime could receive a larger share of criminals' assets. In addition, we are seeking a new clause to be inserted into the Bill which would criminalise inciting and condoning FGM.
21. We briefed Peers ahead of the Second Reading of the Infrastructure Bill on those clauses related to reforming the Highways Agency, changes to the planning system, housing and development corporations and an extension of the powers of the Land Registry. Our messages were quoted within the debate and we are now working with supportive Peers to table amendments as required.
22. We have continued to work on the Deregulation Bill, which has been carried over from the last parliamentary session. This has involved briefing MPs during the final stages in the House of Commons on our amendments relating to taxi and private hire

vehicle reforms, Right To Buy, CCTV enforcement of parking and our desire for government to undertake a review of all licensing regulations placed upon local government. We also began briefing Peers, from across the political benches, on our concerns and desired amendments ahead of the Bill entering the House of Lords. As a result of our work, we have had some success on the issue of parking.

Select Committees

23. Over the last three months we have continued to give evidence to numerous Select Committee inquiries. Cllr Clyde Loakes (Vice-Chair, LGA Environment and Housing Board) gave oral evidence to the **Environmental Audit Committee as part of the Committee's inquiry into growing a circular economy. During the session, Cllr Loakes spoke about how satisfied residents are with recycling and waste services, councils' efforts to increase recycling over the past decade from 13% to 43%, and the recommendations within the LGA's *Wealth from Waste* report.** This followed a written submission which we sent to the inquiry in April.
24. Cllr Tim Moore (member of the LGA Environment and Housing Board) gave oral evidence to the Energy and Climate Change Committee inquiry into the Green Deal.
25. The Work and Pensions Committee published a report on Fraud and Error in the benefits system. The report echoed many of the concerns we raised in our evidence, including our concerns about centralising the Single Fraud Investigation Service in advance of setting up Universal Credit.
26. We submitted evidence to the Parliamentary Regulatory Reform Committee into the Better Regulation. Our submission included a call for each Government department to nominate a specific Minister to oversee deregulation.
27. In April we submitted a briefing on voter engagement to the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee to assist with their related inquiry. We also prepared and issued recommendations on potential future inquiries which the Communities and Local Government Select Committee could hold ahead of the 2015 General Election.

Further briefing activity

28. We briefed MPs ahead of a House of Commons debate on the localisation of council tax support. Our call for an independent review of the policy and our concerns that the tax is regressive were quoted by MPs.
29. In April we briefed Shadow Local Government Minister Andy Sawford MP (Labour Co-operative, Corby and East Northamptonshire) on the local government funding formula, the financial position of councils and the Local Government Pension Scheme. We also briefed Gavin Shuker MP (Labour, Luton South), Shebana Mahmood MP (Labour, Birmingham Ladywood) and Emma Lewell-Buck MP (Labour, South Shields) on the financial position of local government. We briefed Kerry McCarthy MP (Labour, Bristol East) on the financial challenges facing health and adult social care and the Earl of Lytton (Crossbench) on the work of the LGA/CIPFA Finance Commission. We also briefed the National Trust on how local authorities are maintaining public parks in the current financial climate.
30. We briefed Peers ahead of a House of Lords debate on the Government's decision to exclude councils from the Local Government Pension Scheme. Peers, including a

series of LGA Vice Presidents, highlighted local government's opposition to the proposal and supported our call for the decision to be reversed.

31. We briefed MPs ahead of a debate on the private rented sector. The debate called on the Government to legislate for longer-term tenancies; to make three-year tenancies the norm; to act on unpredictable rent rises, and to ban letting agent fees on tenants.
32. On housing, we briefed Vice-Presidents ahead of an oral question in the House of Lords on housing supply, resulting in Baroness Greengross (Crossbench) citing our call for removal of the housing borrowing cap and the need to recycle Right to Buy receipts into replacement homes. Ahead of related parliamentary questions, we also briefed Adrian Sanders MP (Liberal Democrat, Torbay) and Heidi Alexander MP (Labour, Lewisham East) on our position on the private rented sector and housing supply.
33. We briefed Cllr Richard Watts (Member, LGA Children and Young People Board) ahead of his participation on a panel session, organised by the Local Growth APPG in April, on whether local partnerships are ready to take on the challenge of tackling worklessness. We also briefed Baroness McDonagh (Labour) on the findings of our 'Totalling the Hidden Talent' report ahead of an oral question she had on tackling youth unemployment.

Other activities

34. We have now secured nearly 70 speaking opportunities (to date) for LGA members at the three major autumn Party Conferences. These opportunities include events being organised by, among others, the British Parking Association, Living Streets and the British Medical Association. We are also joining with the King's Fund, L&Q Housing Association and the British Property Federation as partners on their events on housing (all at no cost to the LGA).
35. Following the Queen's Speech, we published the *LGA 2013-14 parliamentary report*, which details all the achievements we delivered in the 2013-14 parliamentary session through our lobbying in both the House of Commons and House of Lords. The report was sent to all LGA Vice-Presidents and promoted through various communications platforms to both members and parliamentarians.
36. Throughout June we held four roundtable lunches in Parliament for our Vice Presidents'. These events were used as opportunities for us to update them on our current engagement with Parliament, the ideas in *100 days* and seek their support with influencing the 2015 general election manifestos.
37. We briefed Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe (Labour) on the LGA's 'Rewiring Licensing' work, and agreed to work with him on a Private Members Bill related to the project which would make public health a licensing consideration.
38. Finally, in respect to the ban on CCTV enforcement of parking which the Government is attempting to introduce through the Deregulation Bill, we prepared and published a template letter for councillors to send to their local Members of Parliament, asking them to support our campaign against DCLG's intention to ban CCTV enforcement of parking. We met with and briefed Freight Transport Association on our activities around parking, agreeing and sending a joint letter to the Department for Transport covering our shared concerns.

Digital communications

39. Website statistics April to June 2014

Visits: 345,603.

Unique visitors: 232,525.

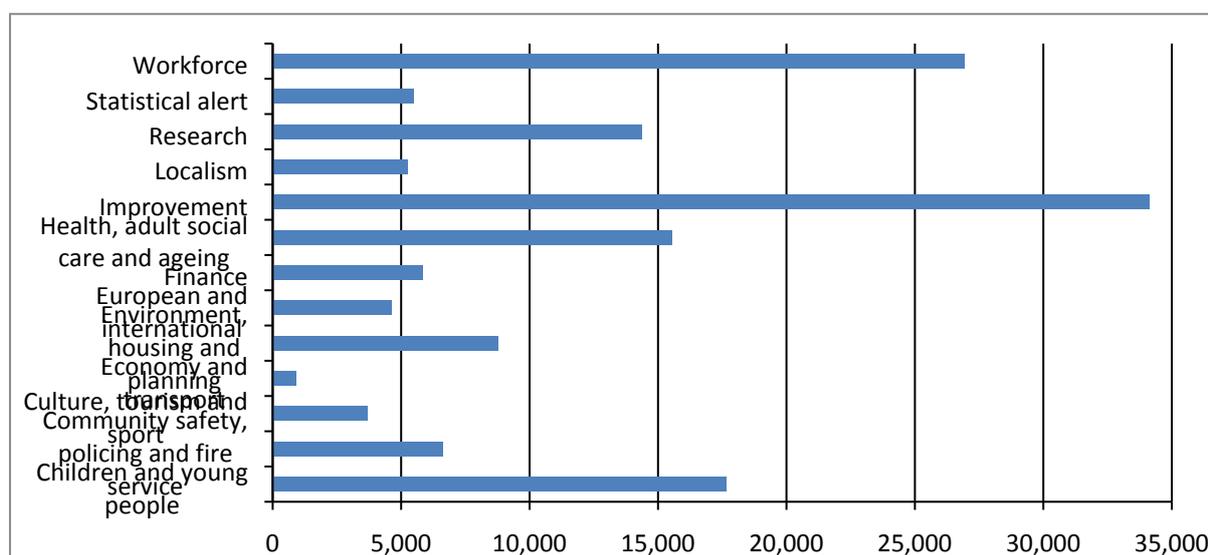
Page views: 1,229,094.

Number of page views up **15 per cent** on the last quarter (1,061,773) with a **25 per cent** increase in visits (275,048) and **27 per cent** increase in unique visitors (182,734).

A total of **57.8 per cent** of visitors were new to the website.

40. Bulletin subscriptions as at June 2014

Subscriptions went up for all bulletins with Workforce, Research and Environment and Housing receiving the highest increase.



Notes:

(1) Localism and Economy and Transport e-bulletins are relatively new and the percentage increase month-on-month is amongst the highest.

(2) The Improvement e-bulletin is an amalgamation of several previous e-bulletins that existed before the rationalisation, hence the large subscriber numbers.