

Communications – quarterly report – July to September 2014

Purpose of report

To outline communications activity between July and September 2014.

Summary

Since December 2012, and following the publication of 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 July to September 2014 are:

- National media mentions up 43 per cent year-on-year from **305** in the same period for 2013 to **438** in 2014.
- August saw us exceed the total national media coverage for 2013 - **1113** episodes of coverage (as of 30 September)
- **88 per cent** of coverage was through pro-active media work against our target of 75 per cent.
- **89 per cent** of our national coverage was positive.
- Our media work around the launch of our 100 days campaign at Annual Conference has received **75** national media mentions so far. The 100 days document has been downloaded more than **5,500** times.
- More than **277,000** website page views by nearly **178,000** unique users.
- **229** mentions of the LGA in Parliament from April to June.

Recommendation

That the Leadership Board notes the communications activity for the period July to September 2014.

Action None.

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Background

1. Our three year Communications Strategy sets out our key targets, which includes 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 – July to September 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.

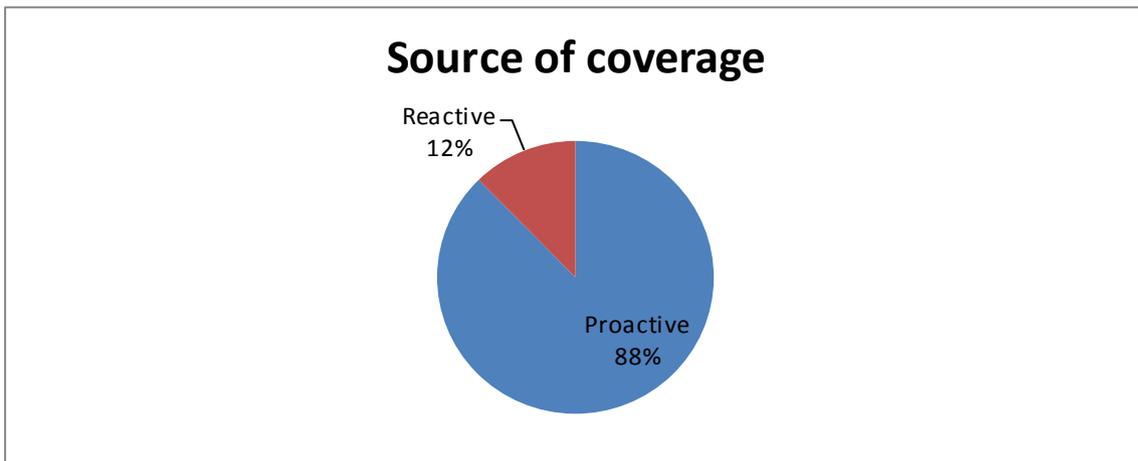
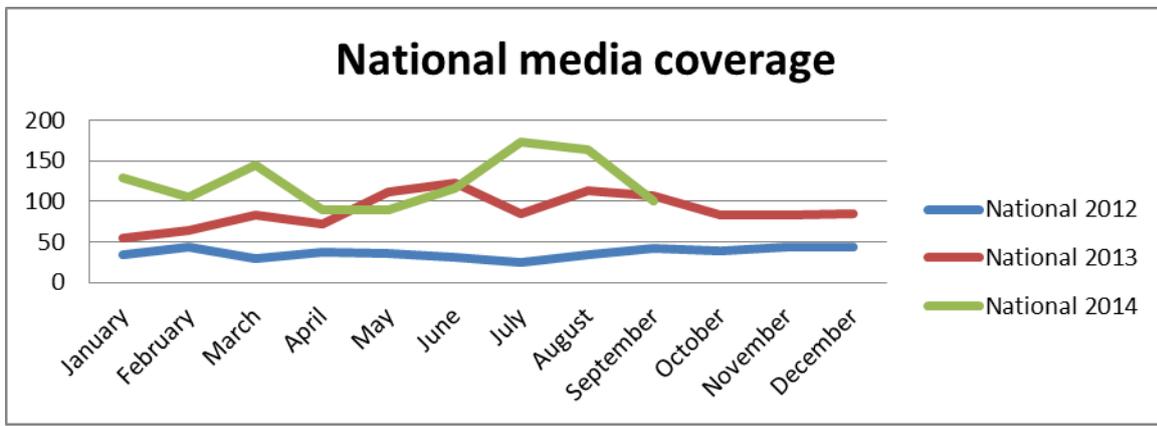
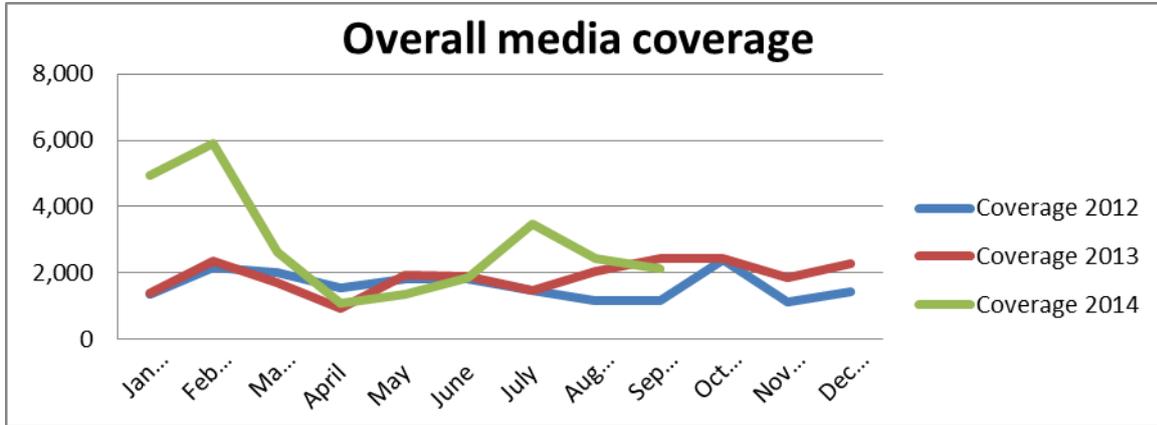
	July – September 2014	July – September 2013	July – September 2012
Coverage (all)	8021	5938	3789
National (Print, online, broadcast)	438	305	101

4. This quarter has seen a rise in national media coverage year-on-year. This has been driven by a proactive media campaign for 100 days and successfully using the traditionally quiet news month of August to push our lobbying and wider issues on behalf of local government.

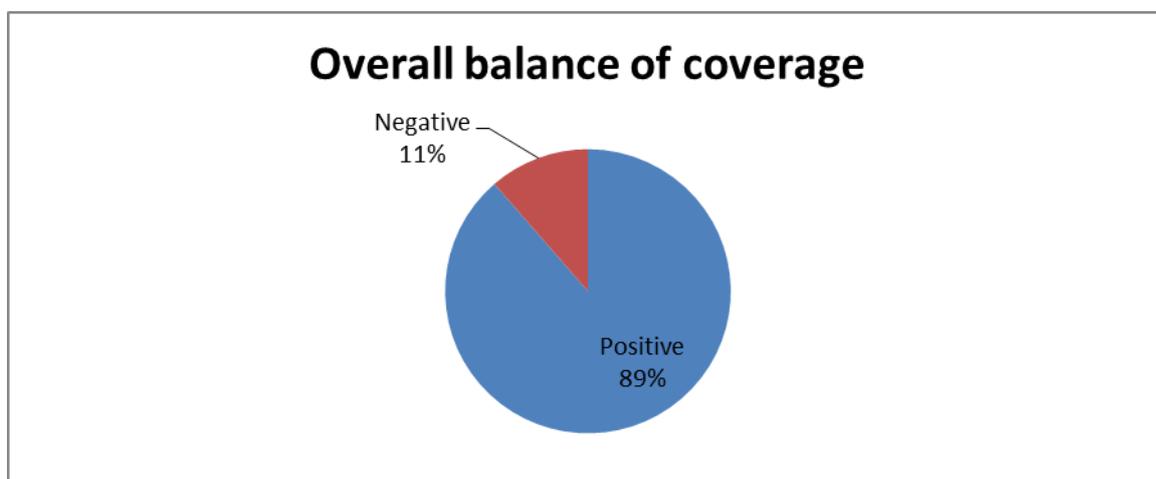
Year-to-date

	March to September 2014	March to September 2013	March to September 2012
Coverage (all)	14936	12345	10976
National (Print, online, broadcast)	878	694	236

5. All media coverage increase by 20 per cent year-on-year to date with national coverage up 26 per cent during the same period.



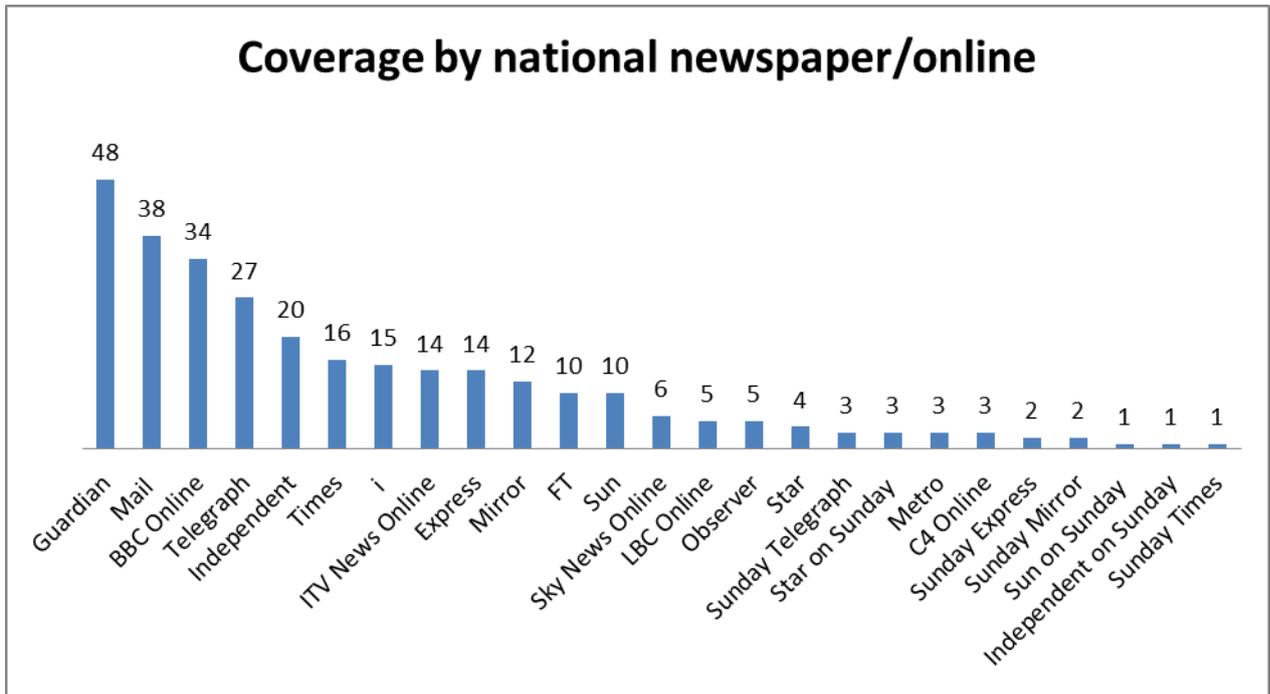
6. **88 per cent** of media coverage this quarter was through pro-active work. This is up from **85 per cent** in the previous quarter (March-June 2014). This has been led by our work on the 100 days asks around obesity, housing, education, council tax discounts and roads funding. Other pro-active work has been on free school meals funding, school places and calls for devolution following the Scottish referendum.
7. As a result, **89 per cent** of our coverage this quarter was positive. This is up from **79 per cent** in the previous quarter (March-June 2014).



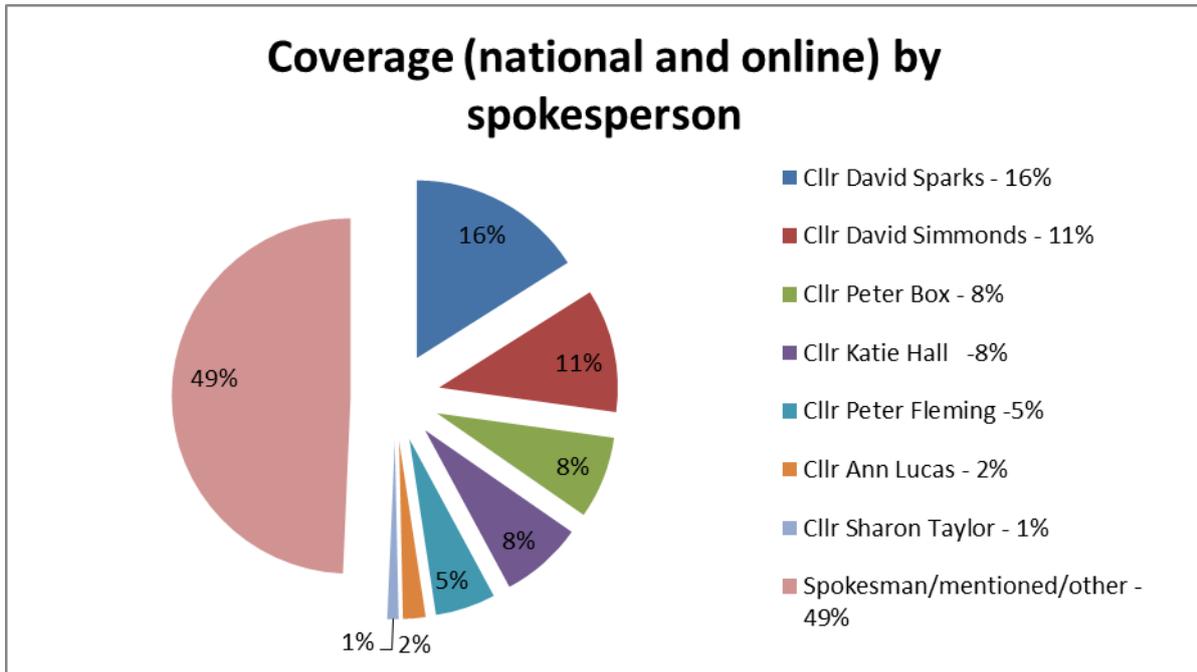
8. Proactive releases this quarter included:
 - Councils forced to divert money to pay for free school meals (**36 episodes of media coverage**)
 - Scottish referendum 'no' vote – consequences for England (**34 episodes of media coverage**)
 - Councils warn of £1bn shortfall in funding for new school places (**32 episodes of media coverage**)
 - Laughing gas – national public health warning issued (**31 episodes of media coverage**)
 - Invest fuel duty to allow councils to fix our roads (**25 episodes of media coverage**)
 - Councils face £5.8 billion funding 'black hole' (**14 episodes of media coverage**)
 - Councils warn lack of funding could jeopardise Care Act reforms (**9 episodes of media coverage**)

Print and online media

9. The following sets out national newspaper and online coverage for the period July to September 2014.

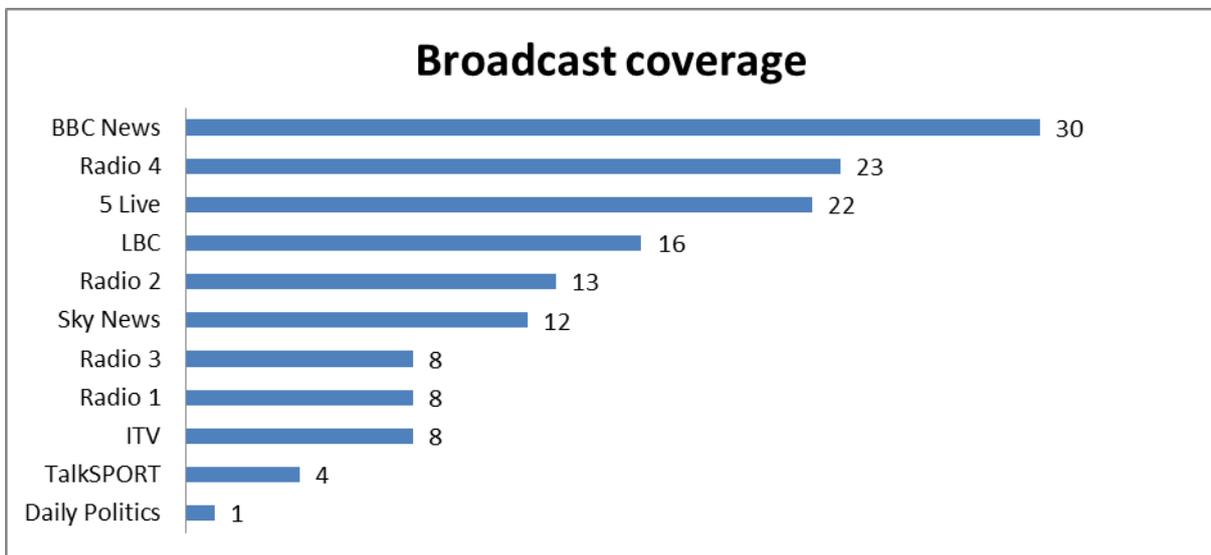


10. The LGA appeared in **25** daily and Sunday titles during this quarter – up from **21** in the previous quarter. This includes EVERY daily newspaper for the second quarter running. We featured in the **Guardian** most with **48** mentions while the **Mail** (**38** mentions) and **BBC** (**34** mentions) covered stories ranging from devolution to free school meals.

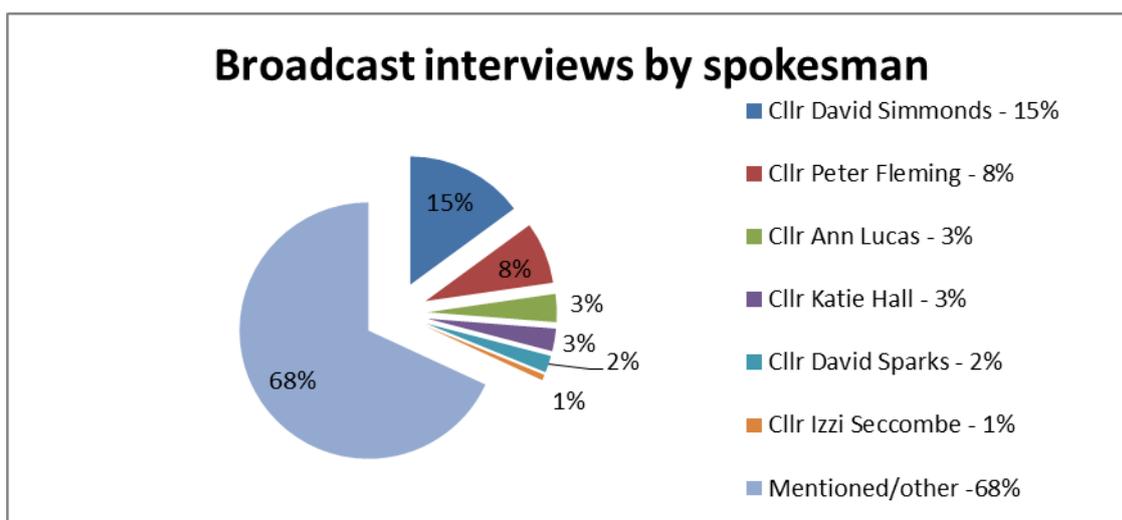


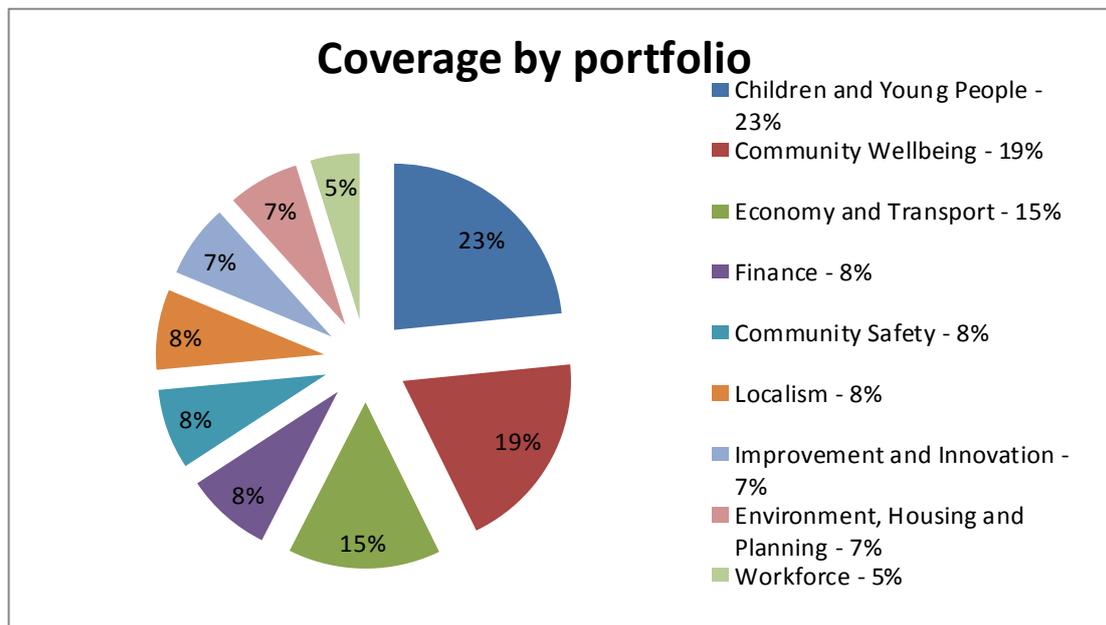
Broadcast media

11. The following sets out our broadcast activity for the period July to September 2014.



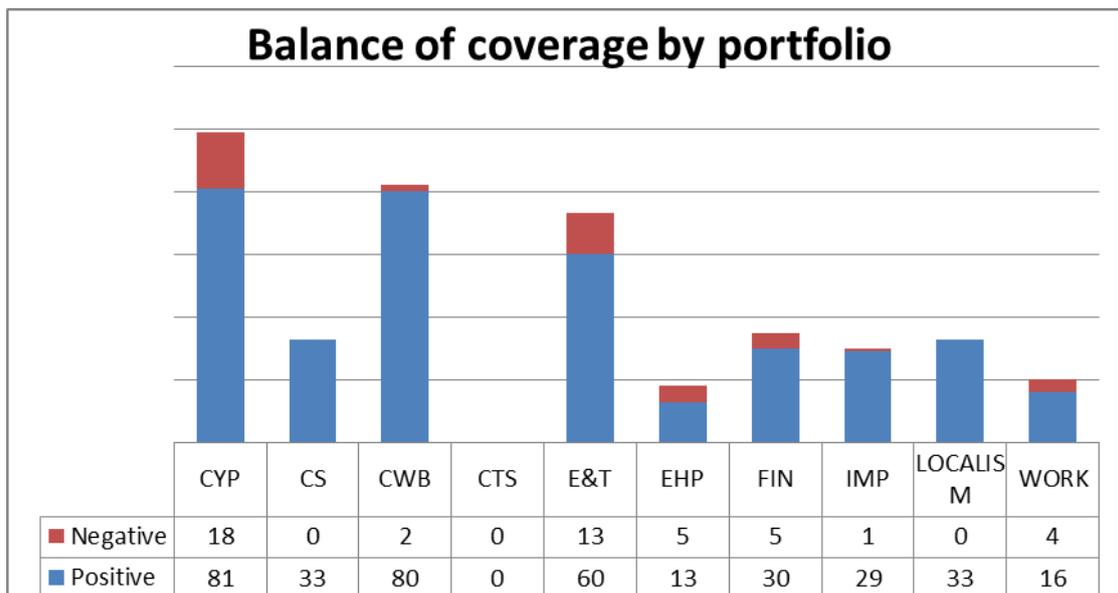
12. Our media work saw **145** episodes of media coverage on national TV and radio this quarter – up from **94** on the previous quarter. This includes **59 episodes** over **11** different channels and programmes in July and **57 episodes** in August.
13. Cllr David Sparks appeared on **BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 Live** and **LBC** to call for more local powers for England following the Scottish referendum ‘no’ vote on **September 19**. A set-piece interview to announce Cllr Sparks as LGA Chair ran on **BBC Radio 4’s Today** programme, **Radio 2, 3** and **5 Live** on **July 3**.
14. Cllr David Simmonds discussed our research on free school meals funding on **Good Morning Britain** and **LBC** on **August 19**. This was followed by a number of interviews on subsequent LGA research on school places on **August 27** on **Radio 4’s Today** programme, **BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Breakfast, Sky News, ITV News** and **Good Morning Britain**.
15. Health warnings about the growing use of laughing gas were set out by Cllr Peter Fleming on **BBC Breakfast, Sky News, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC News** and **BBC Radio 4’s Today** programme on **August 9**.





(NB. For the purpose of this report, breakdown by previous LGA board structure)

16. Negative **Children and Young People** coverage came from criticism by the Education Select Committee and Barnado's on care leavers being placed in B&B accommodation, youth services cuts and calls for foster parents to be given greater access to information on young people they take in, while in **Community Wellbeing** it was on the progress of the Winterbourne View Joint Improvement Programme.
17. In **Economy and Transport**, it was criticism around parking charges and the link between streetlights being switched off and road accidents while reports on recycling confusion generated negative coverage in **Environment, Housing and Planning**.
18. Negative **Finance** stories included the annual Town Hall Rich List published by the TaxPayers' Alliance and criticism about council cuts to funding for lesbian, gay and transgender voluntary groups.
19. The local government pay offer and strike action generated negative coverage for **Workforce** while a report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life warning that misconduct by councillors could go unpunished generated the solitary piece of negative **Improvement** coverage.



(NB. For the purpose of this report, breakdown by previous LGA board structure)

Public affairs activity, July- September 2014

Summary

20. The LGA was mentioned **229** times in Parliament between July and September. During this time the House of Lords and House of Commons met for 50 sitting days which means that on average we were **mentioned 4.5 times** each day Parliament was sitting.
21. The autumn party conferences were held in the last quarter and we contributed to **141 fringe events and roundtable debates**. This is approximately **12 per cent** of all events held across the three main conferences.

Legislation

22. In the last quarter we have been working on the Serious Crime Bill, the Infrastructure Bill, the Deregulation Bill and the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill. Further amendments will be tabled for debate in the autumn parliamentary session.
23. **The Serious Crime Bill** had its Committee Stage in the House of Lords in July. During the Committee's deliberations our call for a greater share of the assets recovered from offenders to be reinvested in the communities and neighbourhoods affected by the criminal activities, for clarification as to whether the offence of participating in the activities of an organised crime group could apply to the activities of local government

and our concerns over the incitement to commit Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) for religious reasons were quoted by Peers. Having received the reassurances we were looking for relating to our concerns about organised crime, we are now working to table a new clause to be debated in the Report Stage of the Bill in the House of Lords which

would seek to criminalise inciting and condoning FGM. The Bill will return for its Committee Stage on the 14 October 2014.

24. We briefed for **the Infrastructure Bill** Committee Stage in the House of Lords. Our position on the clauses relating to the proposed reforms of the Highways Agency, the Land Registry, planning, the transfer of public sector land to the Homes and Community Agency and the establishment of development corporations by councils were all quoted by Peers during the debate. The final day of Committee is being held on 14 October 2014 when the House will discuss the Government's proposals in relation to fracking. We will be arguing that the Bill provides a good opportunity to put the community benefits scheme for fracking on a statutory basis. Once Committee Stage has finished we will be preparing amendments to be debated at Report Stage, after which the Bill will go to the House of Commons for scrutiny.
25. **The Deregulation Bill** had its Second Reading in the House of Lords in 7 July. Working closely with Parliamentarians in both Houses, we have raised concerns about the addition of new Clauses which may have unintended and negative consequences. We have also called for new proposals to reduce the burdens on local government. During the House of Lords Second Reading debate Peers highlighted our support for measures that seek to remove burdens on local government, called on the Government to consult with us on the provisions in the Bill relating to parking and taxi reform and called on the Government to use the Bill to lift the housing borrowing cap and reform Right to Buy. We are now working with Peers to table a series of amendments to be debated at Committee Stage.
26. **The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill** had its Second Reading in the House of Commons in July. We briefed MPs ahead of the debate, highlighting our support for enabling more small businesses and voluntary sector organisations to bid for public sector tenders. We also sought clarification to ensure that the Government does not intend to use the powers in the Bill to centralise procurement, which will not work for local government and small businesses who are interested in providing goods and services within their local area. We also raised concerns about the potential unfair consequences of the proposal on public sector exit payments. We will seek a deletion of the procurement clause to ensure that the proposals support the work of councils in procuring goods and services.
27. We published **Get in on the Act: The Care Act** which summarises the key features of the Act for local government and highlights how we successfully influenced the legislation.

Party conferences

28. We hosted a fringe debate on our '100 Days' campaign and an evening reception at the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat conferences. Lead members contributed to **141 fringe events and roundtable debates** (approximately 12 per cent of all fringes held across the three main party conferences).
29. To achieve this we worked with stakeholders such as the British Chamber of Commerce, British Property Federation, the National Housing Federation, NHS Confed, Kings Fund, Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, the RCN, the BMA, the TCPA, Living Streets, British Parking Association, Action 4 Children, Crisis and the Mental Health Policy Group to secure these opportunities.
30. For the first time, we produced a guide to each of the party conferences. These were downloaded **5732 times**, with the Labour guide downloaded on 4202 occasions, the Conservative guide downloaded on 844 times and the Liberal Democrats guide downloaded on 686 occasions.
31. We used Twitter during the party conferences to maximise our reach. Up to **3.8 million** people had the opportunity to view our content. This included tweets from our events, tweets from stakeholders and our wider campaigning tweets.

Select Committees

32. We have provided written evidence to a variety of Select Committee inquiries. This includes evidence to the **Education Committee** inquiries into Affordable Childcare and apprenticeships for 16-19 year olds, evidence to the **Transport Committee** inquiry into motoring of the future, evidence to the **Culture, Media and Sport Committee** inquiry into tourism, and evidence to the **Communities and Local Government** inquiry into litter. We anticipate being called to give oral evidence to these Select Committee inquiries in the autumn quarter. We are also working with members to prepare for oral evidence sessions on Child Sexual Exploitation, Affordable Child Care and the future of devolution across the UK.
33. **The Transport Committee** published a report into rural bus services calling for action to improve passenger transport services for isolated communities and highlighted the importance of passenger transport for providing access to education, healthcare and employment in all kinds of isolated communities. We called on the Government to fully fund subsidised bus travel to keep up with growing demand and cost as councils will be unable to protect bus routes and services.

34. **The Public Accounts Committee** published a report on adult social care, arguing that the Government "does not know whether the care system has the capacity to become more efficient and spend less while continuing to absorb this increasing need for care." The report made a number of helpful recommendations such as a call for greater co-operation between government departments and a quantification of the new burdens the Care Act will introduce for local authorities alongside a realistic timetable given the financial constraints.
35. **The Environmental Audit Committee** published a report following its inquiry into 'Growing a Circular' economy. We provided written and oral evidence to the Committee and its report cites our publication, 'Routes to Reuse'. The Committee has made several recommendations that are of interest to local government.
36. **The Public Accounts Committee** published a report into maintaining roads. This argued that The Department for Transport's "piecemeal and stop-go approach to funding for road maintenance in recent decades has made it difficult for highways authorities to maintain roads cost-effectively." They also said that the unpredictable and fluctuating budget for road maintenance has put value for money at risk.

Further briefing activity

37. In July MPs discussed housing supply in an opposition day debate led by the Labour **Party. We briefed MPs ahead of the debate to highlight our housing recommendations** in the 100 days report and to push our position that if a devolved model for public services in the next parliament, local government could build half a million homes so people can find a place they can afford.
38. We briefed MPs ahead of a House of Commons debate on learning disabilities and care in the community. The debate referenced Winterbourne View and the work of the Joint Improvement Programme, which the LGA is part of alongside NHS England. A debate in the House of Lords in July discussed how to ensure people with learning disabilities inappropriately placed in hospital are able to move to community-based support also noted the Winterbourne View joint improvement programme.
39. An All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) was established to facilitate discussion on reform, decentralisation and devolution in the United Kingdom. We are working with the Group to highlight the important role of devolving power to councils and their local communities.

Other activities

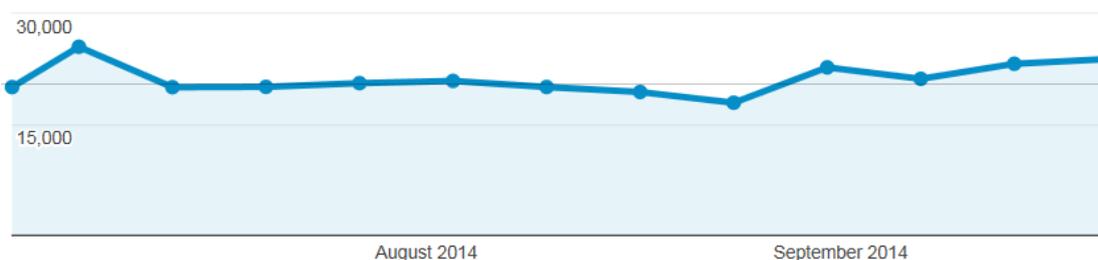
40. We continue to support LGA members working on public affairs issues with our Parliamentary Network and our weekly parliamentary bulletin when Parliament is sitting.

Events

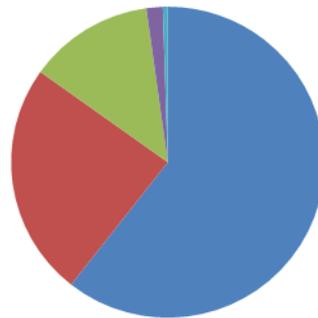
41. We held 33 events between June and September on topics ranging from school workforce policy and employment law, community triggers, the transfer of public health commissioning responsibilities for 0-5 year olds to local government.
42. 54 per cent of these were held in the regions with events taking place in Manchester, Leeds, York, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Chester, Oxford, Bournemouth and Newcastle. The vast majority - 81 per cent - were free to attend for our member councils.

Digital Communications

1. More than 20,000 people visit www.local.gov.uk every week. Between July and September, the website had 277,167 visits from 177,966 unique users.

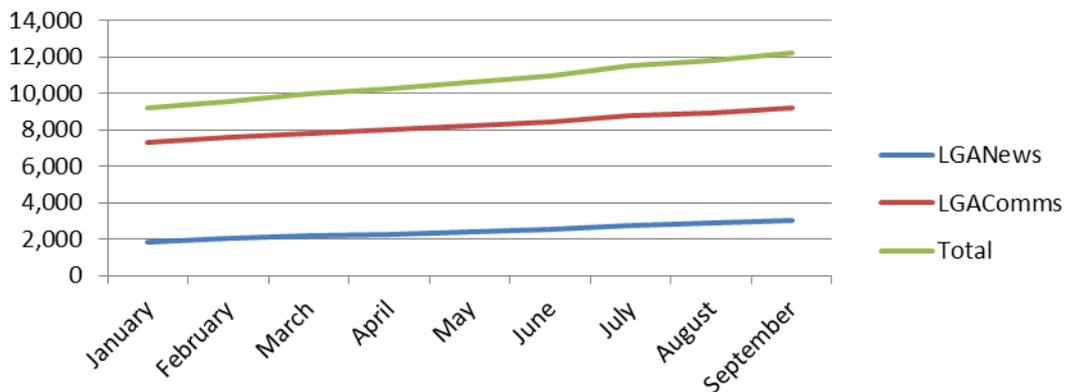


43. Once on the site, the average user visits **3.74** pages (a 9.74 per cent increase on the same period last year).
44. Users come to our website through a number of different channels. Sixty per cent of the visitors come through search engines (organic search), 24.29 per cent by typing our website address (direct), 12.94 per cent through a referral, 1.68 per cent through social media and 0.51 per cent after selecting one of our bulletins' links.

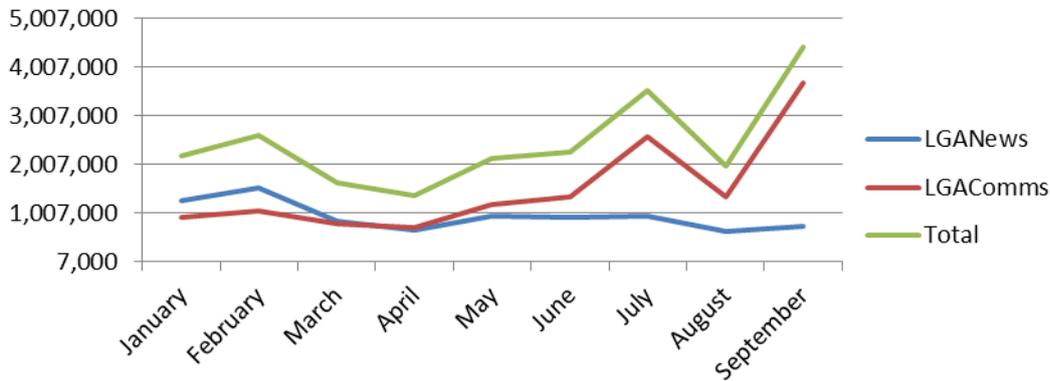


■ Organic Search ■ Direct ■ Referral ■ Social ■ Email

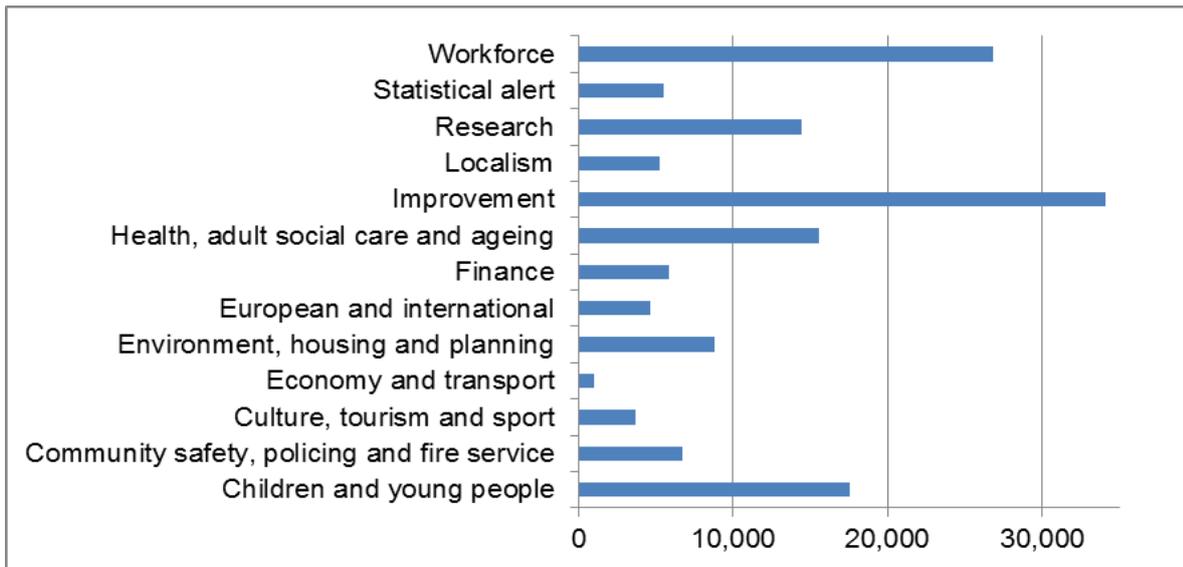
- 45. The most popular section is our publications section followed by our homepage and the care and support reform implementation page.
- 46. The audiences for the our two corporate twitter feeds have continued to grow this quarter. Currently, 12,221 people are following our @LGAComms and @LGANews accounts.
- 47. @LGAComms followers have increased by 9 per cent (745) whilst @LGANews followers have increased by 20 per cent (502) over this quarter.



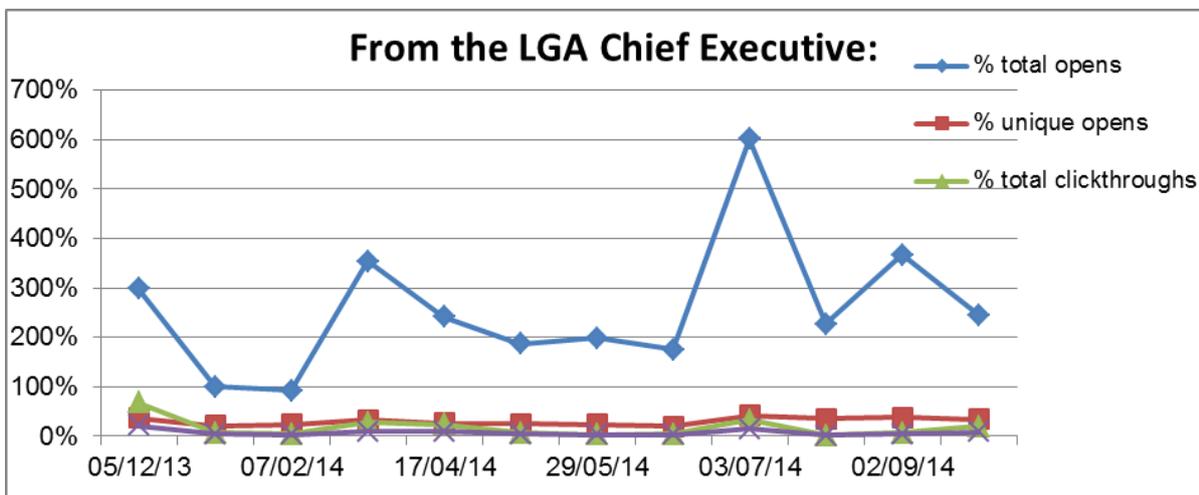
- 48. The growth in our audience has also driven an increase in the potential number of people we're reaching with each tweet. This quarter saw our 624 tweets reach a potential audience of over eight million people. There was a dip in outreach in August due to the summer period but, party conferences have seen more tweets and engagement via Twitter in September.



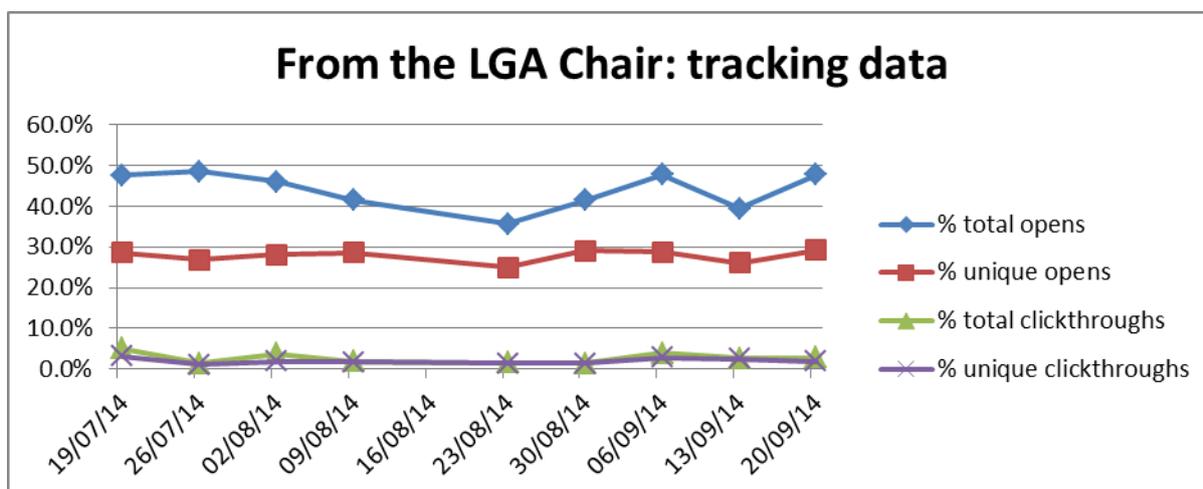
49. Subscriber numbers for programme bulletins have varied over the recess period with Community Safety and Economy and Transport seeing increases and Children and Young People and Health Adult Social Care and Ageing seeing decreases. The rest were static.



50. This quarter has seen an increase in the open rates for the Chief Executive's bulletin.



51. Following his formal election as LGA Chair at Annual Conference, we have sent out a bulletin on behalf of Cllr David Sparks every Saturday morning to leaders and group leaders of LGA member councils. This has had a steady open and readership rate with just slight dips during two periods of Parliamentary recess.
52. The Chair's bulletin continues to be well read with slight dips during two periods of Parliamentary recess.



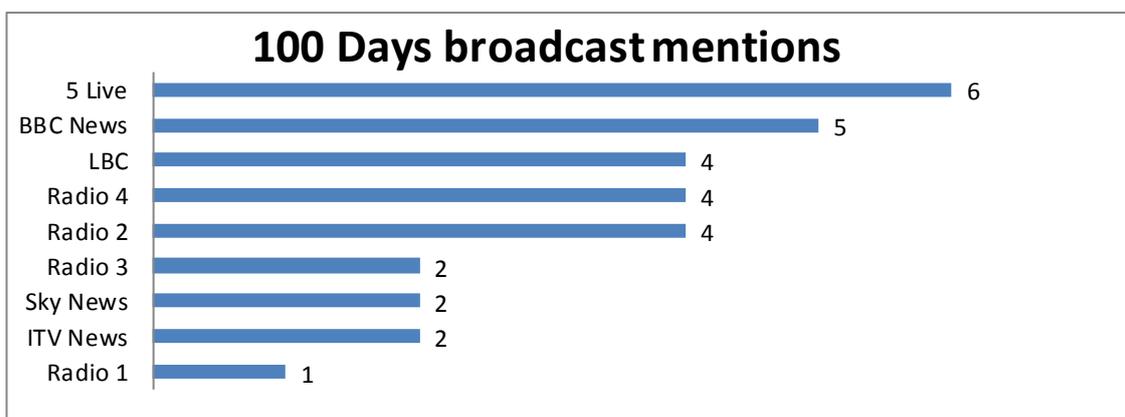
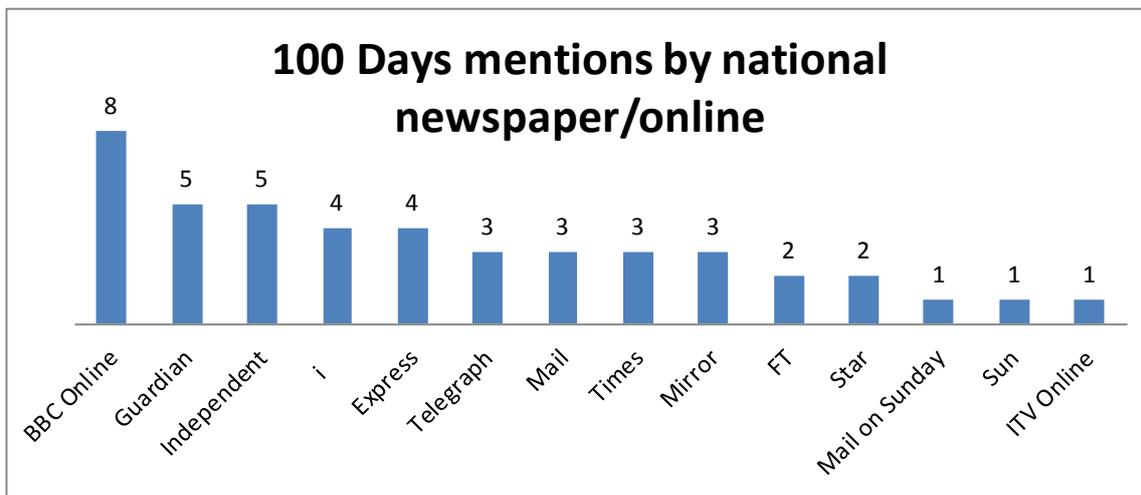
N.B. Total opens appears higher than unique opens when emails have been opened a number of times either by the original recipient or when the emails have been forwarded on.

100 days campaign

53. 'Investing in our nation's future: the first 100 days' campaign successfully launched at Annual Conference at the beginning of July. The campaign has been gaining traction since launch with varied activity to engage councils, work with stakeholders and to open debate about the themes in the media and online.

Media

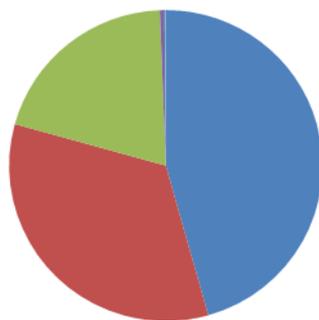
54. Policy asks within 100 days have received **75** national media mentions so far. This includes **45** episodes in national newspapers/online and **30** broadcast episodes.



Story	National media hits
100 days/Potholes	25
100 days/Sugar tax	19
100days/Council tax discounts	15
100 days/Youth unemployment	9
100 days/Housebuilding	8
100 days/Education Trusts	4

Campaign

55. The 100 days document has been downloaded more than **5,500** times from the LGA website and microsite and around **3,500** hard copies have been distributed to members at events and at the party conferences.
56. The campaign film has been viewed more than **900** times.
57. The campaign microsite, developed to host all content relating to the campaign, has had **17,500** page views and **6,600** unique users.
58. The microsite features a tool to enable local users to create their own infographic, displaying how each of the 100 days 'issues' – housing, roads, health and skills – affects their local areas. This section is the second most visited section of the microsite. **Three thousand** users have visited this part of the microsite to date and feedback suggests that councils are finding this function useful.



■ Referral ■ Direct ■ Social ■ Organic Search ■ Email

Social media

59. Social media has been a strong channel for communicating 100 days messages to our members and stakeholders. A 'thunderclap' tweet, timed to coincide with the end of the Chair's speech at Annual Conference reached a potential audience of **77,000** and, over the course of the conference **1,600** tweets were sent, resulting in the conference's hashtag (#LGACnf14) trending nationally on twitter.

Stakeholders

60. As part of the 100 days campaign, a wide-reaching stakeholder engagement programme has been put in place. As well as meetings with relevant organisations, we

have worked with stakeholders to provide a short article to sit on the campaign microsite about what they would like to see from the next government in the first 100

days. This has been very successful with **20** stakeholders submitting their views to date. Views are published to coincide with wider Parliamentary and media activity. These have included:

Action for Children	NatCen
Alcohol Concern	National Federation of Builders
Asphalt Industry Alliance	National Trust
CentreForum	Ramblers
CentrePoint	Royal Town Planning Institute
CLGF	Scope
Federation of Master Builders	The Kings Fund
Guide Dogs	Universities UK
Home Builders Federation	Water UK
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	Woodland Trust

61. This stakeholder engagement has also expanded our potential audience on social media with each of the organisations tweeting about their ‘thoughts on 100 days’ article, directing their followers to our website. Some of these ‘retweets’ included:

- Universities UK which tweeted a link to 40,000 followers
- The Kings Fund which tweeted a link to 54,000 followers