

# Communications strategy

2017/18 – 2019/20

The national voice of local government

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Annual Conference 2017



LGA Vice-Chair Councillor Nick Forbes speaks at the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee

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LGA Chairman Lord Porter interviewed on Sky News



Bright Futures campaign for sustainable funding for children's social care

# Foreword

by **Lord Porter of Spalding CBE**,  
Chairman of the Local Government Association



The Local Government Association (LGA) has a clear purpose – to support and stand up for our member authorities and to act as the national voice of local government. In short, putting our members first.

Communications plays a key role in ensuring we deliver this effectively for the whole of local government. Over the last few years, we have changed and improved the way we communicate, ensuring we focus on the things that matter to our councils.

You have told us that providing up-to-date information, lobbying on your behalf, providing a single voice for local government and managing local government's reputation in the media are all important activities that we undertake on your behalf.

Over the next few years councils will play a key role in bringing certainty in uncertain times. To support this, on your behalf, we need to ensure we bring clarity and a clear purpose to everything we do and say on behalf of local government.

This strategy will form the basis of all of our communications activity over the next three years. It sets out ambitious plans to further improve our communications with a clear focus – delivering information that you will find helpful, useful and timely, delivering campaigns with clear objectives, measuring impact and outcomes, representing your voice in parliament and promoting and standing up for you in the media.

Our events and conferences programme is highly valued by our member councils, providing us with opportunities to share issues, concerns and solutions.

Our communications support and improvement work is helping to drive up standards across the whole of local government, contributing to the overall reputation of councils and the work they do. We will also ensure that we fully utilise the latest technology and best practice.

We have done much to raise the profile of local government and to get our voice heard in national debates. Our aim is to further develop our communications so that we are a powerful advocate for councils, councillors, the staff that work across local government and the residents you represent.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Porter of Spalding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lord Porter of Spalding CBE

# 1 Introduction

This is our second overarching communications plan, setting out the strategic direction for the organisation's communications effort over the next three years. It sets out progress since our last plan and seeks to build on the work and achievements over that period, setting out the opportunities and challenges and how we aim to maintain and improve our performance. It has a clear focus on supporting the organisation's strategic priorities (as set out in our business plan) and a strong and clear focus on our member councils.

Our aim is to deliver a first class, effective and efficient communications service that is highly valued and respected by local government and our stakeholders, helping to influence issues that matter to councils on behalf of their residents and their communities. **We put councils at the heart of everything we do.**

Since publication of our first strategy in 2012/13, the number of people feeling 'well informed' about the LGA and our work has increased by 14 per cent, contributing to increases in satisfaction in key areas such as 'satisfaction with the LGA's work on behalf of local government'. Over the same period, those who would 'speak positively about the LGA' has increased by 11 per cent.

Through our improvement and support work, we are helping raise the standard of public sector communications.

This strategy sets out our approach for the next three years.



Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive, speaking at Annual Conference 2017

# 2 Why is good communications important?

Working with colleagues across the organisation, effective communications contributes to raising the LGA's profile and enhancing our reputation with our member councils, parliamentarians, opinion formers, the media and increasingly, residents.

A clear, strategic plan will:

- improve and enhance our corporate reputation and build trust
- help to maintain and enhance the reputation of local government
- support the political leadership of the organisation
- demonstrate the value of the organisation to our member councils
- help to deliver the organisation's priorities
- improve communications activity in councils
- deliver savings, sponsorship and income
- develop our staff as part of our 'grow our own' culture.



# 3 Our brand

## The national voice of local government

Our previous communications strategy had a clear objective – to position ourselves as the credible, national voice of local government.

As a result of that work, **the Local Government Association brand is strong and recognisable** across the full range of our stakeholders. Our member councils, third parties, media and parliamentarians recognise the value of the LGA and over the period of our previous three-year communications strategy, our key measurements of success (our annual membership survey, survey of parliamentarians, feedback from events, relationship with the media and increasing positive digital engagement) have shown significant improvement.

As an organisation, through the work of our politicians we have a high national profile in the media, in Parliament and a strong digital presence – we are regularly referred to as the ‘highly respected and influential Local Government Association.’ In addition, on campaigning issues such as adult social care, lowering the drink-drive limit, school places, broadband and planning, the public now often recognise the LGA as ‘being on the side of the resident’ (as evidenced through the number of public telephone calls and emails of support on key public issues).

Our brand is further enhanced by our annual programme of conferences and events, in which we are market leaders.

We are seen as innovators in communications and a hub for sharing best practice across local government. We have high levels of credibility with key stakeholders. And we are a trusted brand, with integrity, providing a single, credible and strong voice for local government.

Our prime intention is clear – as a membership organisation we exist to support councils in England and Wales and our other member authorities. This takes the form of campaigning on their behalf, defending the reputation of local government and speaking as a ‘single voice for local government’.

We will put our member councils at the heart of everything we do and treat them in the same way that the best organisations aim to treat their customers – as partners and ‘shareholders’.

# 4 Our narrative and key messages

Our narrative and key messages have developed over the life of our last communications strategy and continue to be an important part of delivering our strategy.

**The LGA is now uniquely placed as ‘the national voice of local government’.** This is evidenced by the fact Government, partners, the media, think tanks and others come to us when contemplating joint working, formulating policy, improvement and support work, media comment and joint campaigning.

We have positioned councils as ‘the most efficient part of the public sector’ and the success of this is demonstrated through our polling. We have had considerable success in getting the phrase ‘councils are the most efficient part of the public sector’ into the collective consciousness and as the national voice of local government, we are often described as the ‘highly respected and influential Local Government Association.’

We achieved this through using the strict discipline of using this phrase in all our communications channels: media relations, briefing papers, publications, direct communications, speeches, email bulletins, one-to-one meeting and events.

Building on the results of our perceptions survey, residents’ tracker and research undertaken by other organisations, it is important we continue to present a strong narrative for local government.

Our research shows that local government is the most trusted part of government and that councillors are the most trusted elected politicians. It is important that this forms the basis of our narrative for local government as a whole.

We will now use this as a strong base for our communications work on behalf of councils and further develop it, focusing on the need to devolve more funding and powers to local areas. This will be particularly important in making the case for legislation post-leaving the European Union to devolve more powers and funding away from Whitehall to local areas. We will set this out in the context of ‘the part local government can play in the future prosperity of our nation’.

In addition, as we found from additional recent research, public awareness of what local government does is at best ‘patchy’ and at worst, is limited to understanding us as ‘collect the bins’. It is important we continue to focus on:

- What is local government and what does it do for local people?
- Why does it matter to me and my family?
- How can it help me and my family?

It is important we reflect both the scale and success of local government and all types of councils – counties, districts, London councils, Metropolitan councils and unitary authorities. In addition, we must also reflect its people – more than 20,000 councillors, more than 350 councils and 1.4 million workers providing nearly 800 different services locally to improve people’s lives. Councils have delivered significant savings and continue to deliver efficient, effective services.

Our new narrative is divided into two strands: 'the story for local government' and 'the role of the LGA'.

Two key narrative strands	
THE ROLE OF THE LGA	THE STORY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
The Local Government Association is the national voice of local government – working to support, promote and improve local government.	<b>Councils are leaders of place and know their areas and their residents best</b>  They are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• trusted over national government</li><li>• ambitious for their communities and local areas</li></ul> ... and given more freedoms and secure, sustainable funding can deliver much needed growth, make savings and improve services for local people, helping to change lives.

Our key messages are:

- we are a strong advocate for all parts of local government, campaigning on behalf of and standing up for councils
- we play a key role influencing the issues that are important to our councils
- we provide good value for money for our member authorities and make a difference
- we are the 'come to' organisation on all local government issues
- we are innovators for local government, helping councils to share best practice and improve.

All of our communications activity will reflect these key messages so we effectively 'tell our story'.

# 5 Communications objectives

Our high level, strategic communications objectives can be summarised as:

- representing the interests of local government to national government
- supporting councils to ensure the reputation of local government remains high
- demonstrating the effectiveness of the LGA as the 'national voice of local government'
- supporting councils to improve communications.

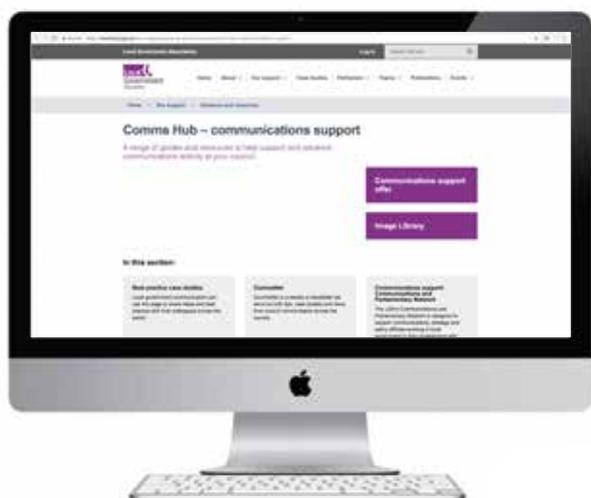
One of our popular email bulletins



Our annual local government finance conference 2018



A publication on adult social care



Our online hub for communications support

# 6 Our key principles and the ‘three pillars’

All of our communications activity will be delivered under three best practice principles or ‘communications pillars’:

- (i) Persuasion and influencing** – through our campaigning, lobbying, parliamentary, public affairs and media work on behalf of councils and our conferences and events.
- (ii) Improvement and support** – through our communications support and improvement work, supporting members through our work in councils, through our professional leadership of local government communications and conference and events.

- (iii) Commercial awareness** – we will work hard to ensure all of our communications, conferences and events are cost-effective, providing good value for money and driving efficiencies wherever we can. We will also seek to deliver additional income for the organisation, helping to support the LGA’s priority work on behalf of councils and to contribute towards keeping membership fees as low as possible.



Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, speaking in the 2017 Spring Budget debate

# 7 Who we are and how we work

We take an integrated, joined up and strategic approach to communications, with the team sitting as one central department, working together to deliver the full range of communications activities. This approach ensures we deliver integrated campaigns.

We place insight, measurement and evaluation at the heart of all that we do.

Our communications work has credibility with central government and we are increasingly working with government departments, such as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Cabinet Office and Department for Health (DH) on joint campaigns. Examples include the award-winning voter registration campaign for the EU Referendum and Mayoral Election campaigns.

We also lead activity during election periods on purdah guidance, working in partnership with central Government and others.

In addition, we have developed a close working relationship with central Government colleagues to ensure Ministers and key senior officials have a key role at our conferences and events, in particular, our annual conference.

**We regularly act as the lynchpin between central and local government in crisis communications**, for example by co-ordinating local, regional and government communications around flooding, adverse weather conditions, the migrant crisis and child sexual exploitation.

We also build support and consensus for our policy recommendations across Parliament and with a range of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors. This enables us to support local government to deliver positive messages that help bring change to policy and national legislation as it is being agreed in Parliament. In doing this we work with key strategic partners to deliver events, including at our own conferences and the autumn party conferences, which are important as they provide speaking platforms for our councils and demonstrate the consensus behind our policy recommendations.

Our communications support and improvement work is continuing to develop and is highly valued by our member councils, helping to raise standards across local government communications as part of our wider sector-led improvement offer. This ensures council communications teams have the skills needed to tell the story of what their council does, what it's achieved and what good local leadership looks like. This is helping to increase the standards of local government communications and contributes to the positive national narrative about local government.

Our work supporting colleagues helps to amplify the work that the LGA is doing in all areas.

The communications directorate delivers the following:

## Campaigns and digital communications

Over the period of the last strategy, our campaigning work has significantly increased. Our campaigns activity – coordinated across the communications directorate – has delivered wins on a number of the key issues our membership see as their priorities.

Our approach to campaigning work has been based on a clear methodology:

- insight and research
- clear and measurable objectives
- strategy
- implementation of tactics
- measurement and evaluation.

We have shifted our focus to ensure that the content we create is member focused as a priority. This is best illustrated in the redesign of the LGA website which was developed following in-depth interviews with our members. The website now focuses on providing them with the content they value the most: case studies, support, publications and information about events.



We have grown our audience significantly across all of our digital channels, including with our bulletins and on social media – **we now have more than 20,000 followers on Twitter.**

As well as focusing on campaigning and lobbying on behalf of our councils and supporting the sector, we have further developed our commercial awareness considerably reducing our spend on print and design and generating income where possible

## Media relations

Our media function is now positioned as the 'come to' place for national broadcast and print media on all issues which affect local government. Providing a 24/7 service, 365 days a year, we proactively sell in stories that highlight the good work of our member councils across the country and rebut any negative coverage for local government as a whole. We ensure local government has a say on the big issues of the day and our spokespeople, from councils up and down the country, are interviewed hundreds of times a year.

We have built effective relationships with key national journalists. During 2016/17, the LGA was quoted more than 71,000 times in national, regional, local and specialist trade media. That's on average 1,365 times a week or 194 times each day.

Working with our member authorities and trained spokespeople, we secured a number of national newspaper front pages and mentions on UK national television including interviews with our spokespeople on The Daily Politics, BBC Breakfast, Good Morning Britain, Sky News and The One Show.

Our national radio coverage includes regular high profile interviews on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, You and Yours, The World at One, BBC Radio 5 Live Drive and LBC.

Our proactive work on weekend 'consumer-style' stories (based on issues councils tell us are important to them) helps to keep our profile and that of local government high, seven days a week. More widely, they also support the work of our boards on issues that form part of their annual programme of work.

By supporting our chairman, group leaders and elected board members through media and select committee training, we will continue to ensure that we have a wide range of spokespeople available to explain to the media and national political audiences the issues that really matter to our membership.

We will continue to work closely with our policy colleagues and member council communications teams to ensure that we have a full and robust set of up-to-date case studies that illustrate the difference councils are making to the lives of local people. These will also be used to support our campaigning work.

Building upon this for the future, the team will continue to explore further relationships with journalists and horizon scan the daily news agenda to ensure the LGA and our members have a voice on the big stories of the day that affect local government.

Our daily news headlines service is highly valued and is now a seven-day-a-week service for all subscribers. We have further developed our use of digital media to support our media activity. Our Twitter account (@LGAnews) is often re-tweeted and quoted by journalists. It has received the official 'blue tick' status and continues to grow with more than 10,000 followers.

Clear measurement of our media activity helps to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of our media operation.



Media coverage raising the issues affecting local government

## Public affairs and stakeholder engagement

Influencing political debate in order to secure positive legislative change and policy commitments from national government that benefits our member councils is absolutely essential to what we do as an organisation. It is a key priority for councils as demonstrated by our membership survey in which 89 per cent of council leaders, frontline councillors and officers told us the LGA's lobbying on behalf of local government was important.

We will continue to work with colleagues across the LGA to shape legislation and policy by building our profile in Parliament and with stakeholder organisations. We will work with our vice-presidents and wider network of parliamentary supporters to highlight the issues facing councils, ensuring MPs and peers are proactively briefed, that we are tabling amendments to influence legislation and that we are providing high quality evidence to parliamentary committees.

It will also be crucial in the new Parliament to use our communications channels with MPs and Peers to support the LGA in influencing central government policy as it is developed through green and white papers.

To do this we will be prioritising building relationships with MPs, including the new intake of MPs, to brief them on our policies and to garner support across Parliament for our priorities. We will also regularly survey the opinions of MPs and peers to understand their concerns and priorities, and to inform our own communications activity.

Our Parliamentary and Communications Network provides a valuable forum for councils to raise issues and share good practice. We will continue to provide strategic advice to local government, helping councils engage with Parliament and the work of the LGA. We will seek to broaden our Parliamentary Network by developing our range of events, our online and digital marketing and by developing a bespoke package of support to local government.

## Conferences and events

Councillors and officers from our member councils have access to a range of free and paid for events, from small seminars to large residential conferences. Our member councils tell us that conferences and events are a key part of their membership of the LGA (64 per cent find out about the LGA and our work at our conferences and events).

Member authorities receive 42 per cent discount on our paid for events and 20 per cent discount on residential events that increases to 22 per cent discount on our annual conference – the flagship event for local government.

Our events also play a key role in developing policy, our influencing and campaigning and our commercial work, bringing in significant amounts of money through delegate fees, exhibitor fees and sponsorship. We will be looking to grow this over the next three years so that we can fund events for our member councils.



National Children and Adults Services Conference 2017

## Communications support and improvement

The team provides communications support as part of our sector-led improvement offer – ranging from in-depth reviews of council communications functions and activities to strategic communications support, crisis communications assistance and media relations advice. We are uniquely placed to offer support, advice, training and aim to play a leading role in developing communications best practice and to act as ‘thought leaders’ for public service communicators.

Over the last three years, we have supported nearly 100 councils. This support has ranged from seconding staff to councils to provide on-site support for high profile issues to full reviews of the council’s communications activity.

We have supported councils to develop their corporate narrative, communications strategy, provided interim heads of communication, supported the recruitment of heads of communications and supported the personal development of council communicators.

Our communications hub, hosted on our website, has provided councils with a range of information, guidance, good practice and case studies.

We produce a weekly communications bulletin – CommsNet – to give councils a platform for sharing best practice, connecting to other council communications teams and as a way for us to highlight current issues and raise awareness of new resources and insight.

Leading the industry through new tools such as the communications hub, photo library.

We will deliver practical support, which is of value to local government communicators and teams, helping to deliver good, strategic communications. This will be targeted and focused on those councils which most need communications support. These will be identified in partnership with colleagues in our improvement teams.

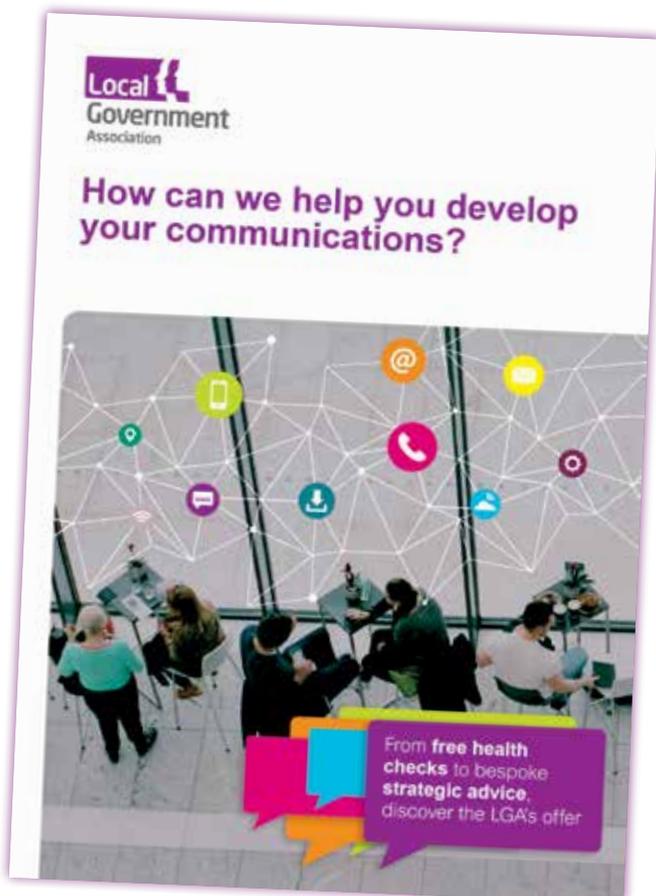
## Commercial awareness

We have a strong track record of delivering income and sponsorship through our events and conferences. This brings in significant income for the organisation, helping to fund work we undertake on behalf of our members councils. Over the last three years, we have further developed our commercial work, aiming to increase our income.

This has included the delivery of communications work on behalf of other organisations. We currently have three contracts to deliver media relations support and have commercial arrangements in place to deliver paid for digital work and events (through events management fees).

We have further developed our income and sponsorship work to include sponsorship of party conference events, advertising and maximising the use of ‘first’ magazine.

The next phase of developing our commercial offer will be to better join up ‘packages’ which span all of our commercial opportunities and to develop and enhance our long-term, strategic partnerships.



## Internal communications

Although the LGA is a relatively small organisation, internal communications is an important part of our communications activity.

We will approach our internal communications activity in a way that ensures all communications staff consider internal messaging ahead of any external communications work. In addition, through the annual staff conference, staff forums, the Wire and internal bulletins, we will ensure that our staff are kept up-to-date with the latest information.

The Director of Communications sits on the staff sounding board as the Strategic Management Team (SMT) representative, ensuring staff issues are fed back to senior colleagues.

We will measure our success through regular, annual internal communications surveys.

# 8 Summary of performance 2012/13 – 2015/16

Over the last three years, we have seen significant increases in satisfaction – both amongst our member councils and key stakeholders such as MPs and peers. The 'how well do you feel informed about the work of the LGA' key driver of satisfaction has seen an increase of 14 per cent in satisfaction over the period.

Based on the priorities of our member councils, our integrated campaigns have supported the delivery of a number of significant 'wins' for local government. We have changed and stopped a significant number of pieces of legislation and Government proposals, prevented additional cost burdens being placed on councils and helped to achieve additional funding. The most significant of these was £2 billion additional (new) funding for adult social care in the 2017 Budget.

Our conferences and events have continued to be highly rated by our member councils and we have further developed our regional programme, to cover all of our membership.

Over the last three years, our communications support and improvement offer has progressed to being an integral part of our overall communications offer and our corporate sector-led improvement programme. Over this period, we have supported nearly 100 councils to varying degrees and developed a new communications best practice hub.

Commercial activity is now a key component of our work. Each year, we have increased our challenging income targets, delivering more than £2 million in income in 2016/17.

## Learning lessons

In developing our strategy for the next three years and as part of our evaluating our work, we have also considered things which did not work so well. Examples include:

- We previously secured more than 100 speaking opportunities for our councillors at the autumn party conferences. Some of these were seen by members to be peripheral to the LGA's key priorities and required lot of resource. We now focus our resources and better utilise our digital channels to promote our work at the conferences.
- Having developed a programme of weekend media stories to keep our profile (and that of local government) high, we have worked to ensure they focus on our priorities and cover the issues that matter to our members councils.
- When developing our communications support offer, we provided support to all councils which asked for help. As our offer has developed, it has become clear that we need to prioritise that support for those councils who most need it. This is reflected in our new strategy.
- We worked closely with the Innovation and Improvement Board, which asked us to develop a campaign to improve the public reputation of local government. The campaign concept was developed with rigour, based on research and tested with communications officers in councils. When the concepts were presented to the board, there were mixed views and as a result, the campaign concept was dropped.

- As part of helping to cover our events costs, we introduced a small administration fee for people who registered for a free event and then did not attend. As this was proving more costly to collect than money received, we have now changed our approach.

The following sets out the core drivers of reputation:

Question	2012	2013	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	change from 2012
How well do you know the LGA?	61%	72%	73%	73%	75%	+14%
Understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government	89%	91%	92%	94%	89%	0%
I would speak positively about the LGA	63%	73%	72%	75%	74%	+11%
Satisfied with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector	62%	70%	75%	76%	73%	+11%
How well informed do you feel about the work of the LGA	69%	77%	79%	83%	83%	+14%
How useful are the following LGA activities to your council or local government as a whole?						
Providing a single voice for local government	90%*	94%*	91%*	87%	89%	-1%
Lobbying on behalf of local government	90%	92%	92%	90%	89%	-1%
Managing local government's reputation in the national media	90%*	93%*	91%*	83%	83%	0%
Providing advice and information through the political group offices	72%	78%	78%	78%	76%	-2%

# 9 Our priorities for 2017/18 – 2019/20

Our aim over the next three years will be to maintain our position as the national voice of local government, supporting our member councils.

Based on feedback from our member councils, and looking ahead to the challenges and opportunities we and local government will face between now and 2020, our communications activity over the next three years will support the following strategic priorities:

## Persuading and influencing

1. **Supporting and engaging with our member councils** – this is our key priority, underpinning all that we do.
2. **Funding for local government and fair funding** – reform of the finance system, fair funding, reform and localisation of business rates so councils raise more funds locally, have confidence their financing is sustainable and fair, and greater ability to promote collective working across local public services.
3. **Economic growth, jobs and prosperity** – councils are recognised as central to economic growth. Our focus will be on skills, jobs and housing.
4. **Adult social care** – our focus will be on funding and also the long-term structure and sustainability of social care and health.
5. **Children’s social care** – as local government is faced with increasing cost pressures in children’s social care our focus will be on sustainable funding.

6. **Leaving the European Union** – now that Article 50 has been triggered, we will ensure local government is at the heart of any negotiations to ensure appropriate powers and funding are devolved to local areas.
7. **The reputation of local government** – we will help to maintain and enhance the reputation of local government.

## Improvement and support

8. **Council communications support and improvement** – we will play a leading role in helping to improve public sector communications and be a role model for local government communications professionals. Our communications activity will support our pivotal role in improvement and innovation in local government through our sector-led improvement programme.

## Commercial awareness and value for money

9. **Commercial awareness** – we are committed to being more effective and efficient than ever. We will ensure we take a ‘commercially aware’ approach to our communications activities. This will help to ensure we are able to fund the key activities our members say are important to them.
10. **Developing a communications service fit for the next decade** – What will be different?

Our vision for communications at the LGA is:

**To deliver first-class communications in ways that our members want, based on robust, measurable evidence.**

The next few years will see significant changes. We will be operating in a post-Brexit, post-devolution, integrated public services environment where local government is self-funding. It is likely that more powers and funding will be transferred from national to local government, where local public service will be delivered and commissioned very differently. Public expectations will also be different.

**Our re-shaped narrative reflects the changes that the country will face post-Brexit.** Over the period of this strategy, national government will be almost wholly focused on negotiating the UK's exit from the European Union. As 'leaders of place' councils are in a unique position to be able to change lives and our narrative and communications will reflect this, making the case for more powers, more funding and more sustainability for local government. In return, councils will deliver improved services, public sector collaboration, growth, a skilled workforce, jobs and the homes needed for their residents.

To ensure we are continually raising our professional standards, we are committed to developing our staff and will continue to 'grow our own', providing opportunities to undertake new roles and skills so that we have a clear succession plan for the future. This will also ensure we are well placed to support member councils with the latest thinking and innovative communications practices.

The public service workforce more widely will also need to adapt and will look and feel very different. Local government will need to 'tell a different story' and have different conversations with their residents, businesses and other stakeholders.

Our challenge is to ensure that councils deliver excellent communications to help meet future challenges on issues such as housing, education, inward investment, health inequalities and so on.

More specifically, good communications will need to support the changes to public sector service delivery. We will need to support local government in the delivery of strategic, effective communications which helps them to meet these challenges. This will need to go beyond the communications department so that it is embedded as a key strategic priority for the leadership of councils.

Increasingly, we will also need to adapt and support council communicators to further develop their commercial agenda.

In terms of our own communications activity, on behalf of our member councils, we will need to ensure local government has a strong and united voice in national and international discussions, negotiations and in the development of policy and legislation. We will play a key role in working with colleagues across the organisation to help to inform the strategic direction of the organisation and in developing and shaping policy.



This will be done through an evidence-based approach utilising a range of metrics and information such as our polling, feedback from key stakeholders, of which our member councils will be our prime stakeholder. We will continually test this out with stakeholders and adapt and amend as necessary.

Based on our priorities, we will also further develop and use our 'retail' offer (which is often in the shape of single issue communications activity to support issues of concern to our member councils). These often take the form of Saturday media stories, single-issue digital activity or comment pieces. This will help us build out policy and secure legislative change.

We will take a content-focused approach not channels, joining-up our communications effort strategically. Working across teams, our campaign work will involve the full range of communications disciplines. Digital will drive all of our activity and be central to our approach. We will ensure digital awareness is strong across the whole of the communications team and we will develop a 'multi-skilled' approach through the development of our staff.



LGA Communications and Parliamentary Network 2017



# 10 Our communications targets at a glance

Measure	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Key drivers of reputation</b>			
1 Member authority satisfaction (with the LGA)	70%	70%	70%
2 Member authority advocacy rating (for LGA)	75%	75%	75%
3 Member authority informed (LGA)	75%	76%	77%
<b>Persuading and influencing</b>			
4 Episodes of media coverage (all)	45,000	46,000	47,000
5 Episodes of media coverage (national)	2,000	2,000	2,000
6 Proactive media coverage	80%	80%	80%
7 Advocacy rating with MPs	50%	52%	54%
8 Effectiveness rating with MPs	55%	55%	55%
9 Advocacy rating with Peers	53%	54%	55%
10 Effectiveness rating with Peers	60%	60%	60%
11 Positively influence new legislation (number of changes secured)	3	3	3
12 Positively influence parliamentary inquiries/select committee reports (number of changes secured)	10	10	10
13 Quality of campaigns delivered (% of campaign targets delivered)	75%	75%	75%
<b>Improvement</b>			
14 Priority councils supported	75%	75%	75%
15 Councils supported	25	25	25
16 Full communications peer reviews delivered	7	7	7
17 Increase visitor numbers to website	2%	2%	2%
18 Reduction in bounce rates	2%	2%	2%
19 Increased average time spent on web pages	5%	5%	5%
<b>Commercial awareness</b>			
20 Income and sponsorship	£2.012m	£1.4m	£2m
21 Reduction in print volumes	5%	5%	5%
22 Percentage of commercial events	40%	40%	40%

# 11 Our approach

Our approach to delivering effective communications will:

- focus our work on delivering successful, proactive, high quality communications, led by our programme of campaigns
- ensure we are using the full range of communications tools and channels
- focus on outcomes not outputs
- put insight, measurement and evaluation at the heart of all that we do, effectively utilising our programme of research and evaluation to measure the impact of communications activity
- target our communications to the appropriate stakeholders
- use a sector-led improvement approach to help improve local government communications.

Our approach will be to deliver proactive communications which aim to improve the reputation of local government, so that we can win new powers, freedoms and resources for our member councils.

We will put our energies into being proactive, setting the agenda and wherever possible, influencing decisions before they are made. Our aim is to ensure 80 per cent of communications work is proactive and planned with the remaining capacity for responding to events and announcements. We will do more than just issue press statements in response to government departments. We will deliver our work through campaigns which are a series of linked activities working to achieve specific objectives.

All of our communications will include our narrative and at least one of the key messages from our campaigns. Our narrative will help maintain our profile and build support for our objectives. We will continue work with the political group offices and the programme teams to develop efficient and effective corporate approach. The Communications Team will provide the professional leadership to determine communications strategy, channels and approach.

Understanding our audiences remains crucial to delivering our strategy and we will continue to base our work on customer insight. We will base decisions on which communications channels to use on what our stakeholders tell us. For councillors, first magazine remains the most popular way to receive information about the LGA, what we're doing and issues for local government and the public sector more widely.

We will respond to the increasing demand for personalised, mobile electronic communications, rather than paper-based materials. Over the last three years, we have delivered significant savings by focusing on our stakeholders' needs rather than producing printed material 'for the sake of it' or to simply demonstrate ongoing work. It will be produced 'with a purpose'.

Our new website, developed following extensive research with users, provides a more personalised approach, allowing us to better target our communications. This provides a better user experience.

We will continue to develop our approach to digital communications, using more sophisticated measurement and evaluation to determine success, moving away from measurement such as the 'number of users' or number of followers'.

By supporting our Chairman, group leaders and elected board members through media and select committee training, where appropriate **we will ensure we have a wide range of spokespeople we will be able to present our range of issues to the media and to national political audiences in a compelling and professional way.**

We will work with our colleagues to ensure that we have a full and robust set of case studies that document the difference councils are making for local people which can also be used as evidence to support our lobbying work.

In the last three years, the introduction of measurement and evaluation has allowed us to benchmark, measure and track performance. This was based on volume (amount of media coverage, number of website visitors, number of mentions in parliament and so on). This provided the right approach to position us as 'the national voice of local government'. Looking ahead, we have developed more sophisticated measures to allow us to further enhance our evaluation of performance.

Finally, we will ensure there is a commercial focus to all that we do, capturing all opportunities to deliver extra income or reduce costs. This will allow us to continue to deliver the things that our member councils tell us are important.

## Campaigns

Our focus on proactive communications will be through our campaigns programme, which will be delivered through integrating all of our communications activity.

The results of our membership perceptions survey show that our member councils value our campaigning activity (89 per cent).

The difference between running a campaign and lobbying is that campaigns have specific time-bound objectives. Lobbying is ongoing in support of campaigns and is often 'behind the scenes'. A campaign also mobilises support, should capture popular attention.

We will ensure our campaigns are highly visible to our membership.

All of our campaigns will take a rigorous and planned approach, following an agreed model:

- **research and insight** – before we launch any of our campaigns, we will undertake research and insight to benchmark current positions so that we can clearly measure outcomes
- **objectives** – a clear set of measurable objectives
- **strategy** – a clear plan setting out how we will achieve our objectives
- **implementation** – the tactics and channels we will employ
- **evaluation and measurement** – did we achieve our objectives?

Before undertaking a campaign we will ask ourselves the 'why?' and 'how?' tests. Why should we undertake this campaign? (Are we best placed? Is this a priority for our member councils? Are we likely to win?) How will we undertake the campaign? (What techniques we will use? Do we have the resources? Is there a clear objective and strategy?)

We know from experience that a successful campaign should:

- have specific and smart objectives
- have a consistent message
- have senior political and management buy in
- mobilise sufficient resources to support of the campaign
- be relevant in the political and economic climate
- have a start and finish point.

There will be a communications lead for each campaign who will put together an organisational wide campaign team bringing in all relevant parts of the organisation and develop individual campaigns plans. They will be delivered using defined, measurable outcomes on which effectiveness can be measured.

We will ensure all of our campaigns are:

- agreed by Leadership Board (political sign off)
- have specific targets
- effectively targeted to appropriate audiences
- measurable and evaluated against targets
- well communicated to staff.

#### **How will we measure the success of our campaigns?**

- annual membership survey
- achievement of campaign objectives
- survey of parliamentarians and recall of key messages/campaigns
- tone of media coverage (positive, neutral, negative)
- member surveys (including first)
- our brand awareness.

## Digital

Our digital offer is central to all of our overall communications activity and campaigning.

Our recently launched website was developed to be member-focused and is the result of extensive consultation and research with councillors and officers. It sets out the model for all of our digital communications – personalisation of communications which can be tailored to individuals.

The increasing use of tools such as video and gifs has increased engagement through our digital channels and has helped to build an 'on-line community' of supporters.

The introduction of 'EventsForce' for on-line delegate booking for all our events and conferences has improved the experience for users and delivered efficiencies for the organisation.

#### **How will we measure the success of our digital activity?**

- annual membership survey
- achievement of campaign objectives
- our brand awareness
- increase visitor numbers to website
- reduction in bounce rates
- increased average time spent on web pages
- 'click throughs' from e-bulletins

Although developing our online presence was a key facet of our previous strategy, as with our other activity, we will develop more sophisticated metrics to move us away from measurement such as followers or subscribers.

## Parliamentary activity, public affairs and stakeholder engagement

Our proactive parliamentary engagement will influence the political agenda and help us shape policy both before it comes before Parliament and once it is being scrutinised by MPs and peers. We will do this by providing speaking notes and briefings to our network of parliamentary supporters, including our vice-presidents, and by managing proactive engagement with parliamentary inquiries.

By lobbying on legislation, influencing parliamentary committees, and by bringing together councils, MPs and peers at key parliamentary events, we will continue to make strong representations on behalf of local government.

The next three years will also need to see a different approach to our lobbying and influencing activity. As the Government will be almost wholly focused on negotiating the UK's exit from the European Union, new legislation is likely to be limited. This will require us to work differently. For example, focusing on secondary legislation, private members bills, backbenchers and other ways to ensure local government has what it needs to deliver its ambitions.

We will continue to publish on-the-day briefings on key legislation affecting local government and ensure our lobbying achievements are communicated to our members.

We will continue to support senior elected councillors and officers to appear before select committees.

To ensure we have a joined up offering that benefits councils, the Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement team will coordinate contact with MPs, peers and parliamentary staff linked to our campaign activity and aim to create opportunities for leading members to meet senior government and opposition figures. This will ensure there is no duplication of effort and we maximise all opportunities.

We will organise meetings with parliamentarians, draft parliamentary questions, Early Day Motions, amendments to primary legislation and secure Westminster Hall debates on priority issues.

In doing this we will work across a number of channels, digital, media and our website, to ensure that the local government messages are promoted widely.

The core activities undertaken are:

- supporting our campaigns through public affairs activity
- influencing and working with other key organisations
- influencing parliamentarians and other national political figures
- speechwriting

- public affairs events (including party conferences)
- services to LGA members (such as preparation for select committees and briefings for key meetings)
- providing political analysis including polling, and parliamentary monitoring to help shape and inform our campaigning activity
- identifying and meeting stakeholders and national political audiences
- relationship building – identifying and coordinating political and influencer relationships to ensure that messages are consistent and resources are maximised (to avoid duplication of effort)
- regular communications to local government, including the chairman, chief executive and parliamentary bulletins and our annual reports on the LGA's engagement with Parliament our legislative explainers.

## Working with other organisations

The LGA brand is strong and as a result we have connections to numerous external organisation – professional bodies, member organisations, think tanks, national and international brands, advocates and others – many of whom help to enhance our brand. This can help to strengthen our voice in Parliament.

Where working with other organisations will support our aims and objectives we will develop joint approaches to events, publications (this includes co-badging documents with central government) or commissioning research from other organisations and think tanks.

## Public affairs events (including party conferences)

We will ensure our councillors have key speaking slots at all the main party conferences. We will aim to secure commercial sponsorship of our party conference events, reducing the costs to the organisations.

We will host at least two rounds of our highly-regarded vice presidents' lunches a year and use our annual parliamentary reception to cement links with parliamentarians and showcase our work in parliament to council leaders and chief executives.

### How will we measure the success of our parliamentary activity?

- annual membership survey
- achievement of campaign objectives
- advocacy rating with MPs
- effectiveness rating with MPs
- advocacy rating with Peers
- effectiveness rating with Peers
- the number of Bill amendments achieved
- influence on select committee reports on behalf of local government
- recognition of key LGA policy priorities in parliament.

## European activity

As the UK government negotiates our exit from the European Union we will continue to work closely with our European office.

## Media relations

We aim to set the political agenda and speak in the national media on the issues that matter to our members. Over the last three years, we have become the 'go to' organisation for comment on all issues affecting local government.

We have achieved this by building strong relationships with key journalists in both broadcast and print media.

We will ensure we cover issues which matter to all parts of our membership. As well as stories to support our priority campaigns, we will also continue to develop our programme of highly successful proactive 'weekend stories', which are more 'consumer' focused. These have helped to keep the LGA and local government's profile high in the media.

Having introduced tracking and measurement for our media activity, we will now aim to develop more sophisticated metrics aimed at tracking key messages.

### How will we measure the success of our media relations activity?

- annual membership survey
- achievement of campaign objectives
- episodes of media coverage (print and broadcast)
- tone of media coverage (positive, neutral, negative)
- quarterly residents' reputation tracker
- programme of weekend 'consumer' stories

## Our spokespeople

Our approach to always having spokespeople available has helped put us into a strong position. As the national voice for local government it is important that we accept proactive opportunities for media interviews so that we are able to effectively set out our view. In the case of broadcast media, it is important that we are also seen as 'the face of local government'.

All spokespeople will receive the appropriate media training and we will follow the agreed communications protocol when deciding who should represent the LGA in media interviews.

## Conferences and events

Our members rate our conference and events as an important part of our membership offer (64 per cent find out about the LGA and our work through attendance at conferences and events).

So that we can keep membership fees low and continue to fund activities that are important to our membership, Leadership Board approved more commercial approach to events agreeing that 40 per cent of our events programme will be commercial (60 per cent being 'free-to-attend events for our member authorities).

We also work to ensure events are held in different parts of the country to reflect the geography of our membership.

Over the last three years we have reduced the costs of running conferences and events and increased the income through sponsorship and advertising. As well as maintaining the high quality of our events and the free programme for our members, we will focus on developing our commercial events programme.

### How will we measure the success of our conference and events programme?

- annual membership survey
- achievement of commercial and free-to-attend events targets
- overall satisfaction with all events
- number of attendees at all events
- achievement of our income and sponsorship target

## Communications improvement and support

Our communications support and improvement work is now a highly valued part of our sector-led improvement offer. We will concentrate our resources on working with those councils that have been identified as most in need of wider improvement support from the LGA.

As well as undertaking the full range of review work for those councils most requiring support – one-day communications 'health checks', full communications reviews, strategic communications support, support to develop a corporate narrative, place-branding, crisis communications and media relations advice – we will also further develop our best practice hub. This work will be expanded in the next three years to place us as the leading voice in developing best practice in public sector communications.

### How will we measure the success of our communications improvement and support offer?

- annual membership survey
- annual heads of communication survey
- level of support offered to priority councils
- take-up of best practice

To ensure our communications improvement support offer remains on the 'cutting edge of best practice' and is viewed as being of strategic value to councils, we will further develop our relationships with professional partners such as the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), Government Communications Service (GCS), LGcommunications, the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA), the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and others which will help us to deliver our aims.

## Supporting our members

Communications plays an important part in our membership offer to councils. How well we communicate with our members can influence their views about the organisation as a whole. Evidence shows that those who feel well informed about our work and activities are consistently more positive about us and our work. Currently, 83 per cent of our members feel we keep them well informed.

First magazine remains the key communications channel for councillors (76 per cent overall for councillors and chief executives).

This figure increases to 92 per cent for front-line councillors). The other key channels are our media work (67 per cent), conferences and events (64 per cent), our website (59 per cent), bulletins (47 per cent) and face-to-face contact (39 per cent), which is increasing in importance.

As an organisation which is politically-led it is important to recognise the role of the political groups in supporting our members. As the first port of call for councillors and national political parties the political groups are a resource for the whole of the LGA. This means the groups must be involved at the beginning of any new project for political clearance rather than at the end once a report or publication is produced. We work closely with all of the political groups.

In addition, we will ensure we fully support fire and rescue service priorities through the full range of communications activity.

## Other stakeholders

Over the last three years, we have increasingly involved other stakeholders and third parties. This support and endorsement has helped to amplify our messages and for example, played a key role in helping to get social care to the top of the political and news agenda – ultimately leading to significant additional funding from government.

We will continue to work closely with a variety of stakeholders including special interest groups, partners, think tanks, charities, trade bodies and so on to ensure we:

- get third party endorsement for key campaigns
- secure speaking opportunities for our councillors and senior officers at conferences, events and debates organised by stakeholders (bringing in speaker fees where we can)
- identify commercial opportunities, such as our annual conference and party conferences, for stakeholders wishing to engage with local government.



Lord Porter, Meg Hillier, MP, and Marcus Jones, MP, at our Parliamentary reception, 2017

# 12 Our main communications channels

Our approach will be to put content at the heart of everything we do, integrating all of our channels. These include:

Method	Audience	Frequency
Member Authorities		
First magazine	All councillors and chief executives	Monthly
Daily news headlines	All councils	Daily
Chairman's bulletin	Leaders and group leaders	Weekly
Chief executive's bulletin	Chief executives	Weekly
On the day briefings	Leaders, chief executives vice presidents, parliamentarians and others as required	When required
LGA bulletins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brexit</li> <li>• Children and Young People</li> <li>• Community Safety</li> <li>• Culture, tourism &amp; sport</li> <li>• Employment Law</li> <li>• Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Fire and Rescue</li> <li>• Health, adult social care and ageing</li> <li>• Improvement</li> <li>• LGA research</li> <li>• LGA statistical alert</li> <li>• Workforce</li> </ul>	Councillors, officers, partners	Monthly
Parliamentary briefings	Vice presidents and parliamentarians	When required for debates, PQs and parliamentary business
Parliamentary bulletin	Parliamentary network and other councillors and officers	Weekly (when parliament sits)
Events bulletin	Subscribers and past delegates	Monthly
Direct marketing	Relevant targeted audiences	When required
Press releases	National, regional and trade press	When required
CommsNet	Heads of communications and others (including chief executives)	Weekly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twitter</li> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Linked In</li> <li>• YouTube</li> </ul>	Followers (including members, commentators and media)	Daily

# 13 Audiences

Our primary audience is our membership. We will place them at the heart of all our communications activity.

## Leaders and chief executives

There are 350 council leaders and chief executives who provide the political and managerial leadership of local government. In addition there are around 700 group leaders. We engage with them through numerous formal and informal networks (including events, annual conference and social media). Our formal channels include our chairman's and chief executive's bulletins, first magazine and e-bulletins.

## Portfolio leads, directors and heads of service

Our e-bulletins are our primary focus for communicating with portfolio leads, directors and heads of service. In addition, our consultations are a key point of contact for us.

## Other councillors

There are about 16,000 front-line councillors who fall outside these key audiences. This is an important audience for us to communicate with. Consistently over the last three years, this has been one group requiring further work. We will continue to develop and improve the way we communicate with front-line councillors with a clear focus on maximising the use of first magazine, which is the favoured channel through which to receive information about the LGA and our work.

## Other officers

There are numerous other council officers, mainly those with specialist professional expertise. They are important as we can provide them with the latest relevant policy information and best practice. Our new website will be utilised to ensure we are able to reach the wider council officer group.

## Government ministers

There are approximately 120 government ministers. They matter to us because we wish to influence their policy direction and legislation in a way that supports local government. The primary way we influence them is through one to one meetings with our elected members and senior staff.

## National politicians – shadow ministers, peers and backbench MPs

There are approximately 1400 national politicians. This is an important group for us as a way to influence wider areas of policy and legislation such as party manifestos. This group will also include members of select committees all party parliamentary groups and inquiries. Our primary ways of influencing them is through on-the-day briefings, face-to-face meetings and invitations to our events

## Vice-presidents

Our vice-presidents are our 'parliamentary champions'. As well as operating on both Houses as advocates for local government, they will also table amendments to Bills on our behalf. We hold regular events with them and provide them with briefings on key issues for local government.

## Whitehall civil servants

Relationships with civil servants in government departments are important, particularly in influencing proposed policy at the earliest stages.

## Think tanks and opinion formers

By this we include local government and other public service orientated think tanks. We also include media and political commentators that help set the political agenda. Increasingly we target our media work on influencing comment and editorial pieces.

## Private, public and third sector partners

We work with this group as not only do they influence national politicians but we seek to undertake joint work with other national bodies in order to help develop new policies and relationships that will benefit our member councils. This is an area we will seek to develop as the future model for local government will require wider engagement outside the sector.

## The public

The public is an increasingly important audience as it is their opinion that matters most in terms of the reputation of councils. Strong public opinion can also drive legislative change. We have very little direct contact with the public as an organisation although over the last three years, our media work has prompted public engagement on a wider range of issues from planning to psychoactive substances.

## Our staff

Through events such as our annual staff conference, staff forum, Pas briefing and use of the Wire, we will ensure our staff are engaged with our key priority work, maintaining a focus on our membership.

# 14 Professional development and learning

We need to future-proof our workforce so they are able to face the challenges of working in a new political landscape, new technology and new ways of working. Moving even further away from channel-based communications activity to integrated, content focused communications will be at the heart of all that we do.

The key to maintaining a first-class communications function is to ensure we have the highest quality staff. We will ensure our professional communications staff are equipped to be able to deliver a professional service and be able to look ahead to latest and future developments.

Our focus on developing our staff and 'growing our own' will continue. We have a number of staff in managerial/team leader position who were promoted from within the team. We will aim to extend this.

As well as more formal training, we will continue with a programme of mentoring, coaching, peer-to-peer learning, secondments, Future Leaders' Programme, membership of professional bodies and access to extensive networks. We will also ensure every member of the team plays a role in our communications support and improvement work, spending time in and with councils and council staff.

In addition, we will have a core programme of continuing professional development (CPD). All communications staff will be expected to build a strong digital awareness and be able to work across disciplines, whilst retaining their specialisms.

All colleagues in managerial positions will be encouraged to undertake mentoring.

We will continue to build on our links with the Government Communications Service (GCS) and professional bodies such as LGcomms, the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA), Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) and the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) encouraging development across the public sector, at both national and local levels.

# 15 Grid of key activity

Set out below is a grid of key activity that represent important yearly milestones for the LGA and will inform our work.

Announcement	Date	Purpose/opportunity	Activity
LGA finance conference	January	Bring together members, finance directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>
Local government finance settlement debated and voted on in Parliament	February	Brief our LG finance lines into Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-the-day briefing</li> <li>• Parliamentary work</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> </ul>
DCN conference	February	Brief LGA support for districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> </ul>
Spring Statement	March	Opportunity to restate our lines on the public finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-the-day briefing</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> </ul>
LGA public health conference	March	Bring together members, directors of public health and stakeholders to discuss public health policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>
Fire conference and exhibition	March	Set out our policies on fire safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>
Culture, tourism and sport conference	March	Set out our policies for CTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>
Queen's Speech	(Due May 2019)	Brief on legislation and set the organisation's legislative priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-the-day briefing</li> <li>• Parliamentary work</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> </ul>
Annual schools workforce, policy and employment law conferences (x2)	June	Set out vision for schools policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>
LGA Parliamentary reception	June	Bring together leaders, CEXs, MPs and peers. Update on the work of the LGA and local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with MPs, peers, vice presidents, council leaders, CEXs</li> </ul>

Announcement	Date	Purpose/opportunity	Activity
LGA annual conference	July	Launch of our annual conference publication, policy documents and campaigns. Chairman's speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Support and improvement</li> </ul>
Autumn party conferences	September/ October	Opportunity to promote LGA priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentary work</li> </ul>
NCAS conference	October	Bring together members, directors of children services, DASS. Set out our vision for the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>
Annual teachers pensions conference (x2)	October	Discuss key issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> </ul>
Budget	November	Opportunity to make the case for key finance and policy announcements. Deadline for submissions September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-the-day briefing</li> <li>• Parliamentary work</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> </ul>
CCN conference	November	Brief LGA support for counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>
Local government finance settlement	December	Brief on key changes on local government finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-the-day briefing</li> <li>• Parliamentary work</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> </ul>
Sport and physical activity conference	December	Set out our public health and CTS policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event</li> <li>• Media activity</li> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>

# 16 Communications action plan 2017/18

Putting our members first				
Key aims	Tactics/action	Key audiences	Measurement	Date
<b>1 Ensure our member councils are well informed about the LGA and our work: regular communications activity throughout the year</b>	<b>1.1 first</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure first is used as our primary channel to communicate with councillors</li> <li>Further develop first to ensure it is relevant to our membership</li> <li>Continue to improve how we use first as a way to promote other work and publications produced on behalf of our membership</li> <li>Interpret media stories for our membership audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councillors and officers (with a focus on front-line councillors)</li> <li>Communications officers</li> <li>Professional bodies</li> <li>Fire and rescue authorities</li> <li>Other authority members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results of annual membership survey</li> <li>Informal feedback throughout the year</li> <li>90 per cent positive rating for events organisation</li> <li>Delivery of commercial events income target</li> </ul>	April 2017
	<b>1.2 Digital communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further develop the LGA website so that it has compelling content structured around users</li> <li>Promote our new website to our membership</li> <li>Review, develop and improve our use of social media</li> <li>Further develop use of video, gifs and so on</li> <li>Review and maximise use of our bulletins</li> <li>Launch an LGA Facebook page</li> </ul>			April 2017
	<b>1.3 Involve and inform our member authorities on the LGA's media work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widen distribution of daily news headlines</li> </ul>			April 2017
	<b>1.4 Keep our member authorities well informed about the LGA's parliamentary activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widen distribution of our annual 'LGA in Parliament' publication</li> <li>Increase/widen membership of the parliamentary network</li> <li>Increase the number of subscribers to the weekly Parliamentary bulletin</li> <li>Utilise all available channels to promote our work in parliament to our membership</li> </ul>			April 2017
	<b>1.5 Membership packs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further review and improve membership packs</li> </ul>			September 2017

## Putting our members first

Key aims	Tactics/action	Key audiences	Measurement	Date
	<p><b>1.6 Ensure our conference programme is interesting and relevant to our membership (and seen as a key member benefit)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop our conference and events programme, based on results of our membership survey and other direct feedback</li><li>• 60 per cent of our events to be free-to-attend for member authorities</li></ul>			April 2017

Persuading and influencing					
Key aims	Tactics/action	Key audiences	Measurement	Date	
<b>2 To influence national politicians and opinion formers to shape policy and legislation affecting local government</b>	<b>2.1 Develop and deliver a series of proactive campaigns under our key priority themes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government ministers, shadow ministers, MPs, peers and departmental officials</li> <li>Partners, think tanks, opinion formers and other stakeholders</li> <li>Business</li> <li>The media</li> <li>Our member councils</li> <li>The public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of campaigns against agreed objectives</li> <li>Results of annual membership survey</li> <li>Proactive media coverage</li> <li>Episodes of media coverage</li> <li>Three appearances in non-news/current affairs media</li> <li>Ensure the LGA has lines on all issues affecting local government and making lead members available for interviews 95 per cent of the time</li> <li>Advocacy rating with MPs</li> <li>Advocacy rating with peers</li> <li>Effectiveness rating with MPs</li> <li>Effectiveness rating with peers</li> <li>Positively influencing new government legislation</li> <li>Positively influencing select committee reports</li> <li>Number of stakeholders supporting key LGA campaigns</li> <li>Deliver programme of conference and events (60/40 free-to-attend/commercial)</li> </ul>	Ongoing from June 2017*	
	<b>2.2 Develop proactive media grids to support key campaigns</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Selling in' news stories with national broadcast and print media, trade and specialist journals, regional and local media</li> <li>Increasing involvement of local government in current affairs broadcast media</li> </ul>	Ongoing from June 2017*
	<b>2.3 Use our parliamentary networks to influence our campaigning work</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise use of briefings with vice presidents and other key parliamentarians</li> <li>Develop contact programme with ministers, MPs and peers</li> <li>Use opportunities in Parliament to support our campaigns (PQs, debates, select committees and so on)</li> <li>Ensure all councillors and officers who give evidence to parliamentary committees are briefed/trained</li> </ul>	Ongoing from June 2017*
	<b>2.4 Support all campaign work through innovative use of digital communications</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further develop use of video, gifs and so on</li> </ul>	Ongoing from June 2017*
	<b>2.5 Ensure the LGA is communicating effectively with all stakeholders to maximise support for key campaigns</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a full stakeholder map</li> <li>Ensure all stakeholder distribution lists are current</li> </ul>	Ongoing from June 2017*
	<b>2.6 Deliver a programme of high quality events to support our key priorities</b>				April 2017

Persuading and influencing				
Key aims	Tactics/action	Key audiences	Measurement	Date
<b>3 Protect and enhance the reputation local government</b>	<b>3.1 Develop proactive media grids to enhance the reputation of local government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Selling in’ news stories with national broadcast and print media, trade and specialist journals, regional and local media</li> <li>• Increasing involvement of local government in current affairs broadcast media</li> <li>• Placing features in all relevant media</li> <li>• Profile pieces on leading local politicians and others</li> <li>• Involvement of local government in other areas of the media (such as lifestyle, children’s and so on – the One Show, Any Questions, Question Time, Desert Island discs)</li> <li>• All leading members, Board chairs and other spokespeople to be fully media trained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council members and officers (with a focus on Leaders, CEXs, communications teams and professional bodies)</li> <li>• Government ministers, shadow ministers, MPs, peers and departmental officials</li> <li>• Partners</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• The Public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership survey</li> <li>• Quarterly residents’ reputation tracker</li> </ul>	April 2017
	<b>3.2 Utilise events to maximise the LGA’s (and local government’s) reputation and promote our narrative, key messages and key priorities</b>			Ongoing from April 2017
	<b>3.3 Effectively ‘horizon scan’ the political and media landscape to maximise proactive opportunities, effectively rebut negative media stories and respond to political and other events</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan parliamentary debates, committees and PMQs to gather information about key issues affecting local government</li> <li>• Horizon scan media coverage to identify possible future policy lines</li> <li>• Further develop relationships with ministers and government officials to determine future policy direction</li> </ul>			Ongoing from April 2017

Improvement and support					
Key aims	Tactics/action	Key audiences	Measurement	Date	
<b>4 Develop excellence in public sector communications</b>	<b>4.1 Work with LGcomms, PRCA, CIPR and central government to develop best practice in public sector communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council communications teams</li> <li>• Leaders</li> <li>• Chief executives</li> <li>• Professional bodies</li> <li>• Government officials</li> <li>• Partners</li> <li>• Business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership survey</li> <li>• Heads of communication survey</li> <li>• Support 75 per cent of priority councils</li> <li>• Deliver at least 20 communications reviews</li> </ul>	Ongoing from April 2017	
	<b>4.2 Further develop our communications best practice hub</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate narrative</li> <li>• Crisis communications</li> <li>• Measurement and evaluation</li> </ul>	March 2018
	<b>4.3 Support our priority councils</b>				March 2018

Commercial awareness				
Key aims	Tactics/action	Key audiences	Measurement	Date
<b>5 Raise commercial awareness in the communications directorate</b>	<b>5.1 Maximise income</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve income target of £2,012,000</li> <li>• Achieve income target of £2,012,000</li> <li>• Achieve 40 per cent commercial events target</li> <li>• Reduce print volumes by 5 per cent</li> <li>• Achieve income target of £2,012,000</li> </ul>	March 2018
	<b>5.2 Reduce costs</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively work to identify all commercial opportunities</li> <li>• Deliver an increase in commercial events</li> <li>• Reduce print volumes</li> <li>• Reduce costs for events and conferences</li> </ul>







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