

local government

reputation campaign

delivering for
people and places

www.lga.gov.uk/reputation

devolution



Local Government Association



fact: people value their local council far less than the services the council provides

Local government plays a huge role in people's lives and, according to the Treasury, is the most efficient part of the public sector making £2.6m a day in savings. So why is it that public satisfaction of council services is improving, but the public perception of councils is not?

Together, we can tackle this problem by concentrating on the grassroots issues that affect all our residents: local environmental services and strong two-way communication.

That's what the Reputation Campaign is all about – 12 core actions, tried and tested, proven to raise the standing of councils in

their local communities. You may already be doing these, or some of them. But ask yourself are you doing them well enough?

Reputation underpins many of the main issues for local government today and in the future. The new Local Performance Framework proposed by the LGA, which will replace CPA, will increasingly be informed by public satisfaction, so residents' perceptions of us are ever-more important. Raising our reputation is also crucial to making our case in CSR07, and for securing the devolution of powers as the LGA has set out in *Closer to people and places*.

Good communication is central to this vision. It is essential to reinvigorating local democracy through getting closer to people. So please commit your council to the 12 core actions, and sign up to the campaign if you haven't already done so. Delivering them, and delivering them well, is the first step along the road of working together to enhance the reputation of local government.

Lord Sandy Bruce-Lockhart

Chairman, Local Government Association



“Authorities can bring about a positive change in the way the public values their services.”

John Williams

Leader, Darlington Borough Council

Picture supplied by Northwest Regional Development Agency

the research

To start off the Reputation Campaign, in the Spring of 2005, the LGA commissioned MORI to hold a series of focus groups across England and Wales in a range of authorities including several 'excellent' performers. They showed that, despite improved council services, public perceptions of local government generally remain where they were decades ago. Most people see their council as remote, low profile, bureaucratic and inefficient.

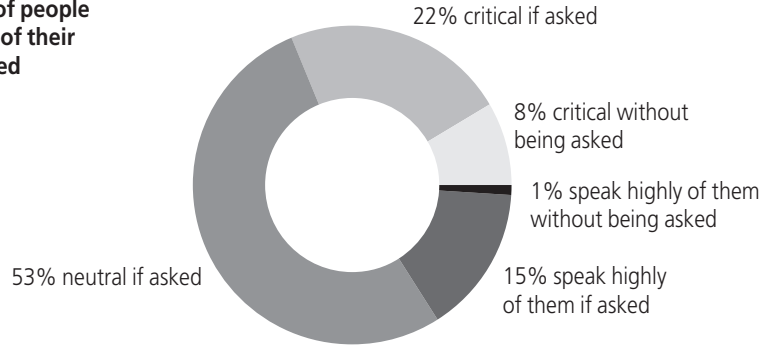
Further MORI research revealed that, at the moment...

- just one per cent of people would talk highly of their council unprompted
- only five per cent know a great deal about what their council does

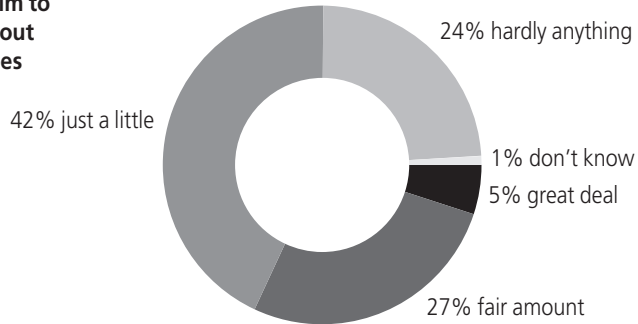
MORI went on to analyse hundreds of its residents surveys from across Britain. From these they identified a number of key services and issues that have the greatest impact on how local people judge their authority. With councils that excel in each of these areas, MORI then identified 12 core actions that all councils can adopt.

The following pages set out these core actions.

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Only five per cent claim to know a great deal about what their council does



“The Reputation Campaign is about doing well on the liveability agenda and linking everything you do for residents back to the council, rather than hoping residents assume it was you. None of this means neglecting schools or big ticket services. It does mean getting the credit for services which the whole population values most.”

Ben Page

Chairman, Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute

the **environmental** core actions

These are the core services that affect everyone... they will make all your residents value you more:

- adopt a highly visible, strongly branded council cleaning operation
- set up one phone number for the public to report local environmental problems;
- know your grot spots – and deal with them
- aim to remove abandoned cars and fly-tipping within 24 hours
- win a Green Flag award for at least one park
- ensure no gaps or overlap in council cleaning and maintenance contracts
- educate and enforce to protect the environment

MORI research up and down the country shows that these, along with the communications actions on page 8, are drivers of our reputation.

Please send us your case studies. Follow the link at www.lga.gov.uk/reputation or call 020 7664 3131.

“It’s not a complicated project. There are a dozen things we need to do, simply because residents want them to be done, and because they work. Easy as that. The actions make sense to politicians of all persuasions, they don’t cost a fortune, they are easy to implement, and all the research shows they make a real difference.”

Simon Partridge

Leader, North Norfolk District
Council

Picture supplied by West Sussex County Council



the **communications** core actions

These are the core actions that tell people what you can do and are doing for them... they show your residents what they get for their money:

- manage the media effectively to promote and defend the council
- provide an A-Z guide to council services
- publish a regular council magazine or newspaper to inform residents
- ensure the council brand is consistently linked to services
- good internal communications – make sure staff and members are informed

MORI research up and down the country shows that these, along with the environmental actions on page 6, are drivers of our reputation.

Please send us your case studies. Follow the link at www.lga.gov.uk/reputation or call 020 7664 3131.



“We’ve been carrying out much of this reputation work already, but by signing up to the 12 core actions, we are taking up the challenge of making further improvements and targeting the areas where we still have a job to do. The campaign has been a useful prompt to complete the tasks that weren’t taking place – and has been enthusiastically received by members and officers alike.”

Eber Kington

Chairman, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

raising our reputation in the national media

Local government has a low profile in the national media – which is strange considering the facts that councils spend £85 bn a year, employ around 2m workers and are at the cutting edge of often controversial public policy.

The sector also gets a mostly negative press (39 per cent negative vs 10 per cent positive overall) and, whilst we will never be able to avoid negative stories, we should be working to counterbalance them with good news stories about the work we do: human interest stories; case studies about unsung heroes; residents whose lives have been changed and council staff pioneering unique approaches.

That's why the LGA has set up CommsNet – a service for council communications teams in England and Wales. It's about creating better links with councils around the country so that together we can generate more positive stories in the national media.

There is now a dedicated LGA media officer for each region, and they are developing links with council communications teams through regular visits and e-bulletins. Together we are identifying human interest stories for the national media, illustrating them with case studies from across the country, and getting widespread coverage about the

extraordinary things councils are doing for ordinary people – from building hospitals to tackling drink driving during the World Cup; from increasing voter turnout to stopping lollypop rage!

Plus, through greater co-operation, the LGA team is providing advance warnings to councils about upcoming events on the national agenda.

To find out more about CommsNet, visit www.lga.gov.uk/commsnet and select your region.



“Members and officers all have a stake in local government’s reputation. We share a motive and a responsibility to do all we can to improve its standing and values. The task of improving local government’s reputation will not be achieved overnight, but I think this approach is important. In signing up to the core actions we can make an impact fairly quickly and relatively cheaply. We all stand to gain from its success.”

Pam Challis

Leader, Castle Point Borough Council

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Sign up now or send us your case studies at
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or call 020 7664 3131 to find out more.

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