

**The Chartered Institute for Public Relations
Local Public Services Group**

Influence for Impact

The new challenges for
public service communicators
in the age of austerity

Report and Findings

**#CIPRinfluence
@ciprlps**



Manchester
Metropolitan
University



CIPR

LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Contents

1	Introduction
2	Executive Summary Methodology
3	The current context of public service communications
4	Influencing – employee engagement
5	Influencing - digital transformation
6	Influencing - resilience
7	Influencing - commercial awareness and value
8	Influence for impact
9	Training and development
10	Conclusions Next actions for CIPR Local Public Services Group
11	Acknowledgements
12	The Chartered Institute of Public Relations Local Public Services Group

Introduction

The CIPR Local Public Services Group launched this research project in recognition that public services have been challenged and reshaped like never before. We wanted to find out how communications professionals were coping, adapting and reinventing themselves in a context of budget cuts and increasing expectations.

We have sought the views of organisational leaders and PR practitioners at operational and strategic level across the public services, undertaking focus groups and one to one interviews to provide qualitative feedback on the state of the profession.

This research has highlighted the challenges and opportunities faced by PR practitioners across local public services, operating in a dynamic networked environment.

There was a time when public service decision makers may have thought their PR teams could control their communication and reputation. This model has now changed beyond all recognition. Today, they are likely to have more realistic but high expectations around effective and consistent messaging, influencing and evaluation.

This is a sector where the democratisation of information through the digital revolution has had high impact. With social media the whole concept of control itself has disappeared. Communication teams are at the epicentre of this power shift.

Instead, public service communicators now need to harness and influence the vast array of communicators in communities. It is clear that done well, official communications practitioners remain relevant and valuable. Done badly or treading along the same path of communicators of the past, they become irrelevant and ignored.

To achieve this, influencing a vast array of communication, both official and unofficial, emerged as the key area for communicators currently engaged in public service communications. Our challenge is not an easy one. Networks and relationships are needed more than ever to magnify and multiply our impact. Influencing internal, external and overlapping communities is crucial.

Local public services are on the front line, making significant changes and taking difficult decisions with local accountability.

The CIPR Local Public Services Group will be taking on these principles of listening, learning and sharing in supporting public service PR practitioners.

For us to have real impact, practitioners need to be able to influence our activity and the support we provide. This research project has connected with communicators from local government, the NHS, police, fire and rescue services in locations spanning the UK. The main findings will begin to shape our work.

Our work is ongoing and the CIPR Local Public Services Group will be collaborating locally with public service PR practitioners in the year ahead to address each of these areas.

We are grateful to all those involved with this project. This includes all of the participants, many of whom have agreed to be included in our Acknowledgements, and colleagues at Manchester Metropolitan University and Sheffield Hallam University. I hope that this project will ignite conversation – the chief engine of change – and that if you are reading this, that you will join this dialogue to help build understanding and strengthen the PR services that support local public services at this critical time.

As we move forward, the CIPR Local Public Services Group will be taking on this dialogue and providing all those working in public service communications with help and advice.

Wendy Moran MRes, Dip CIPR, MCIPR
Senior Lecturer in Public Relations
Manchester Metropolitan University Business School
Chair of the CIPR Local Public Services Group



Executive Summary

1. The experiences of those working across local public services is varied and communicators working in local government, health, fire and rescue services are experiencing challenges unique to each of these particular areas and their own organisations.
2. Across these service areas, regions and for practitioners operating at both operational and strategic levels, influencing emerged as the key skill demanded in a shared context of reduced resources and heightened expectations.
3. Digital transformation is at the heart of these raised expectations for all local public service communicators. The new environment demands engagement and influence rather than attempting to control communication and reputation.
4. Public service communicators have faced unprecedented change and there is more to come. Personal resilience was identified across all service areas, regions and operational levels as essential. Communicators have highlighted the need for recognition of this.
5. Commercial awareness and being able to demonstrate long term value is critical to the existence of service areas through austerity. These skills and expertise must be developed within communications teams.
6. With reduced resources and heightened expectations, communicators need to have practical frameworks in place to help explain to employees across the organisation what the communication priorities are for the organisation.
7. Evaluation, which provides the business case for the existence of service areas, is challenging for public service communicators in a context of reduced resources.
8. Public service communicators are operating in a context where training and development budgets have been reduced or are non-existent. Many communicators are investing in themselves for both professional development and membership of professional bodies.

Methodology

The CIPR Local Public Services Group Research Project was undertaken in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University in July - August 2015. The aim of the project was to explore the current challenges for public service communicators in the age of austerity and their training and development needs.

Following a review of academic and industry literature examining local public service communications, which included findings from the CIPR State of the Profession Survey 2015 and the LGA's Heads of Communications Survey 2015, areas for further examination were identified.

Regional focus groups were held comprising of a mix of public service communications staff from

local government, health, police and fire and rescue services and a series of telephone and face to face interviews with organisational leaders and Heads of Communications. Opportunistic sampling was applied and ethical clearance was secured from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Thematic analysis, based on a model by King (2004)*, was used to identify the main themes for the report from the qualitative data.

Sheffield Hallam University undertook a national survey and a series of face to face and telephone interviews with Heads of Communications. These findings are presented in the chapter 'The current context for public service communicators.'

* King, N (2004) 'Using templates in thematic analysis of text.' In Cassell, C and Symon, G (ed) Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research. London: Sage pp 256-271'

The current context for local public service communications

Carmel O'Toole and Adrian Roxan of Sheffield Hallam University offer some early insights from their research with local public service communicators.

The Local Government Association's Heads of Communications Survey 2015 identified that 71 per cent of councils were planning measures to make savings or generate income in 2015/16 and that the picture significantly varied among different types of local authorities. Austerity combined with the changing digital landscape is having a mixed impact on councils across the country.

Early findings from our research, due to be published later in the year, reveal that all communication functions have been affected by cuts in some way, but the way in which councils have responded has varied.

Responses have been based on the initial position councils found themselves in when the Coalition Government's "austerity" measures began in 2010. The relative financial 'health' of each council, how the cuts on budgets have fallen and the political response from elected members are amongst the key factors.

Our findings are still developing as our conversations with senior public service communicators continue. But there are some significant trends emerging.

- One multi award winning local council with a strong reputation for pro-active campaigning predicts further budget cuts will force them to slice back to a reactive media response service. In another authority the communication team has been cut from 18 FTE roles to just seven over the past three years.
- Across the board there's a general picture of stretched resources, cuts in communication tools such as public polling, and the scrapping altogether or changed focus and reduced production quality for citizen publications.

- The sector recognises the challenge to better understand and exploit changes brought by social media.
- There is an overall sense that austerity cuts and digital transformation have forced radical communications overhauls, with an increased emphasis on social media and customer care.
- Many of those interviewed made the connection between cuts in their own budgets and cuts in local and regional media. One outcome was that journalists were becoming ever more reliant upon 'oven-ready' PR supplied content.
- With fewer journalists on the ground, public sector teams were much less likely to see active and experienced journalists scrutinising their organisations.
- This uneven picture is further complicated by the status of communication as a function and a strategic role in each authority. Where councils had already put 'communications at the top table', the reductions in resources where these occurred were less radical. In councils where communications was not at the centre of the council's function, the impacts of any cuts in resources were more keenly felt.

So the challenge being thrown down to communicators within local public services is not a consistent one. Some face larger spending reductions, some face different priorities depending on the size and nature of the authority whilst almost all communicators face the challenge of bringing their organisations into a more modern communication landscape with social media, online communication and an ever changing local media. Reduced resources and heightened expectations through digital transformation present an agenda for radical change.

Influencing - employee engagement

Key findings

- Engaging with staff across the whole organisation is critical in securing knowledge and understanding through this period of significant transformation.
- Communication is being devolved within public service organisations.
- The role of the communications professional is to engage and enable staff rather than to try and control the whole conversation.
- Communicators must present accurately the challenges and opportunities of organisational change and aim to win the hearts and minds of staff.
- Chief Executives have stated that they expect communications professionals to challenge them and the organisation.
- Staff engagement is a key component of enabling change and influence.



Ian Ratcliffe
Stockport Council

“Today’s new agenda requires every single employee to be an effective communicator of the organisation’s challenges and its response.”

1. The delivery of communications across organisations has radically changed. With budget cuts, corporate communication teams have been reduced in size and are expected to deliver more with fewer resources. Communications are now often being created and delivered by non-specialists in service areas.
2. The challenge for communications staff is to deliver the interpersonal, leadership and team building skills to lead beyond authority. This may often mean delivering beyond rigid job descriptions.
3. The ability for the communications teams to influence staff across the whole organisation is crucial. Communicators recognise the value of face to face communication in staff engagement.
4. With reduced communications teams and the widespread proliferation of social media the communications team must trust staff to communicate directly with their audiences through the range of channels available. The communications team’s focus should be on the strategic and corporate direction of the organisation with a focus on key messages rather than prescriptive narrative. This changed emphasis involves a greater need to manage risk.
5. Public service communicators recognise that they are able to add value by acting as an antenna for the organisation. They should be able to inform senior management of the temperature internally and put forward pragmatic recommendations for helping employees through challenging periods of transformation.
6. Chief Executives say they expect communications staff to challenge and speak the truth, often about difficult situations.
7. Through ongoing change and transformation in the public services, effective communication throughout the organisation is now crucial in changing organisational culture. Finding ways to create feedback loops from employees is critical.

Influencing - digital transformation

Key findings

- Organisational leaders expect communicators to be deeply knowledgeable about the ways in which to engage with the public at a hyperlocal level
- Digital has introduced new ways of segmenting and directly targeting audiences to potentially make communication more effective
- Communications delivered in this targeted way can contribute towards behaviour change, making long term savings for the organisation and contributing to one of the primary objectives of public service organisations.
- With reduced resources and often smaller teams, communications professionals need to be able to hand the reins of tactical social media to the service areas whilst maintaining a strategic communications lead for the organisation.
- The hand over period is challenging – influencing public service employees in organisational key messages is essential and communications professionals need to let go.



Mark Rogers
Chief Executive and Director of
Economy at Birmingham City Council
and President of Solace.

“We need progressive communicators who understand digital and the plethora of ways of engaging with the public, as technology penetrates communities like never before.”

1. Organisational leaders recognise the potential of technology in engaging with communities. Previous one-way communication models have been superseded by many to many.
2. Digital communication provides opportunity to increase the effectiveness of communications work. Analytics provide the insight tools to identify customers and to tailor messages and content which directly engages with their specific needs.
3. As the public directly communicates with public service organisations through social media, professional communicators need to delineate their work. With reduced resources this should not involve the management of customer service interaction.
4. Communicators who have often established the organisation’s online presence must now let go. Their role is to influence and provide guidance throughout the organisation to support service areas as they directly engage with their audiences.
5. Across organisations, there are the polarities of those who are afraid to publish online to safeguard individuals and those that set up their own Facebook pages or Twitter accounts without giving it much thought. As reputation managers, communicators have a duty to influence the messages and perceptions.
6. The public service communicator’s role must be to manage tone of voice, style and personality of the organisation rather than prescriptive narrative.
7. New protocols and ways of working are emerging. There must be a co-ordinated approach through all media, digital and traditional. Shared practice, which would be of benefit to public service organisations, are often frustrated by the competitive environment in which they now operate.

Influencing - commercial awareness and value

Key findings

- Public service organisations with reduced budgets and under enhanced scrutiny must be financially viable.
- Although experiences vary amongst public service communicators, many have already been stripped back to the core in terms of staffing and spend.
- Many public service communicators recognise they must themselves deliver income generating activity and add value over the long term.
- In local authorities, many services areas are now competing for business and communicators need to reconsider their role and skills in this changing landscape.
- Commercial awareness is essential operating within this environment



Ashley Wilcox
Head of Communications and Marketing,
Medway Council

“In the future communications needs to become more commercial. As you become more senior you must have the business acumen to drive that forward, be challenging and be innovative to ensure commercial success.”

1. Public service communications teams must, like all service areas, improve efficiency and that means people and financial resources.
2. Although experiences vary amongst participants in this research project, many report being stripped back down to the essentials in terms of staffing levels and budgets. In this context being able to demonstrate ROI for campaigns and communications activity is critical.
3. Local authority communicators report that they are now considering or are delivering revenue generating activity, in addition to demonstrating long term savings and value.
4. This includes activity from running major events to running their team as an agency. In local authorities, this has involved treating service areas as clients and being commissioned by other public service organisations to deliver communications.
5. As public service organisations operate as businesses, local authority communicators are reconsidering their relationship with other service areas, which are now tasked with selling their services and competing against other organisations outside the council.
6. This shift in delivery demands commercial awareness. Many Heads of Communications have identified the value in developing business and strategic marketing skills within their teams.
7. Communications has a role to play in transforming the business of public service organisations. To do this, communicators are identifying commercial awareness combined with the traditional expectations of creativity and innovation.

Influencing - resilience

Key findings

- Communications itself is a profession, which necessitates flexibility. Communicators need to adapt to different personalities, different staff levels and different issues.
- Budget cuts and growing expectations in an already demanding work environment have placed even greater pressures on public service communicators.
- Communicators need to set the agenda for what communications can deliver and contribute towards the strategic direction of the organisation.
- The challenge is in drawing up these boundaries and communicating these at all levels across the organisation.
- Other frontline services receive personal resilience training and support. Organisational leaders should consider extending this to communications staff.



Amanda Coleman
Head of Corporate Communications at
Greater Manchester Police and Chair of
the Association of Police Communicators

“Working in public service communications you have to be resilient. We haven’t got big money, we haven’t got loads of people, but what we have got is passion.”

1. In the turbulence of budget cuts throughout public service organisations, the professional requirements of adaptability have been heightened. Communicators must communicate organisational changes internally and externally in addition to being directly affected by these changes themselves. Restructuring and job losses are therefore impacting two fold on communications staff.
2. The increasing expectations of digital transformation and dwindling resources demand that communicators respond and calibrate new ways of working.
3. Communicators are identifying ways of managing workload by introducing practical frameworks to guide where efforts and resources are channelled. These boundaries support their explanations across the organisation when requests are made for communications support. These frameworks also guide communicators in making those decisions.
4. Communicators need to have those difficult conversations with senior management and frontline staff. Chief Executives state that they expect honesty. Communicators need to be robust to challenge all levels of staff within the organisation.
5. Public services are subject to scrutiny. Digital channels deliver criticism directly to public services; and communicators, as part of reputation management, must respond.
6. It is recognised that front line staff dealing with traumatic incidents need support and personal resilience training. Many communicators are also exposed to these cases in order to negotiate and communicate through the crisis. Making ethical decisions is part of the role. At present, support is either limited or non-existent.
7. Communications staff recognise that the complex mix of demands and pressures that they now face, necessitates the need for support themselves. This is exacerbated for those working as the sole communications practitioner. Many public service communications staff are joining front line colleagues on personal resilience training and support programmes.
8. Organisational leaders must recognise the increasing demands being placed on the communications team and consider providing that support.

Influence through impact

Key findings

- There is a drive within the communications industry for measurement to be an integral part of the planning process, underpinning PR programmes. However, communicators themselves recognise that there is no silver bullet.
- The increasing wealth of information available through digital analytics enhances the insight available for communication planning and evaluation. Organisational leaders expect communicators to harness this information to segment, understand, engage with and monitor change among audiences.
- Communication teams recognise that measurement is the best way to demonstrate the value of their work and make the business case for their existence.
- Many public service communicators state that resourcing measurement in terms of time and budget is a challenge.
- With reduced resources, the work of many public service communicators is reactive.
- Many public service communicators admit that research expertise is lacking. Shared practice of resource effective measurement techniques, led by those with practical experience should be shared between organisations.
- Undertaking evaluation and measurement of practice from a range of sources outside of the organisation is recognised as being more important than ever in the evolution of public service communications through this period of change.



Bridget Aherne
Head of Corporate Communication and Administration, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and Chair of Fire PRO

“Evaluation is critical in proving the value of our work. Though challenging, we must find ways of demonstrating our impact.”

1. There is a drive within the communications industry to move further towards the integration of measurement in the planning and delivery of PR programmes and in developing that expertise among practitioners. Communicators themselves recognise that evaluation of communication is notoriously difficult.
2. Digital analytics have the potential to provide further insight into understanding audiences and organisational leaders state that they expect communicators to be able to access, identify and interpret the information available to segment, understand, engage with and monitor change among audiences.
3. Communicators recognise that data brings respect. Evaluating the impact of their work presents the business case for what they do. In a climate where there are even more budget cuts to come, the importance of evaluation has never been more important.
4. Many public service communicators, with reduced staff and increased demands, are delivering a reactive service. They are frustrated by the lack of time to plan, set measurable objectives and evaluate, which they recognise will deliver cost savings for the organisation in the long term. They are caught in a labour intensive reactive cycle.
5. Communicators need time to plan and evaluate to prove the effectiveness of their work and to prove the team's worth. They recognise that evaluation builds trust and respect. Evaluation provides indisputable evidence for their existence.
6. Emergent analytic and effective evaluation tools applicable for the digital transformation of public service organisations can be resource intensive. Experiences need to be shared between organisations and support and training accessed.
7. Evaluation of communications practice from outside of the organisation, is recognised by many public service communicators, as being more important than ever. Many state that this is a priority, in a context of dramatic internal change. Awards, case studies, training and development, peer reviews and professional networking are cited by practitioners as invaluable opportunities to define what 'good' looks like.

Training and development needs

Key findings

- Local public service communicators need to commit to investing in themselves, even when the organisation they work for is unable to do this.
- Training and development budgets have been reduced or are non-existent.
- Sharing learning across communication teams and across the organisation increases value and impact.
- Training and development needs to be delivered locally or regionally in response to demands on time and lack of funding.
- Membership of professional bodies is for the majority, self-funded and must deliver development opportunities which can be accessed locally.
- Professional networking is recognised across all the local public services as one of the most valuable aspects of training and development.
- Coaching and mentoring is recognised as a powerful mechanism to share the skills and expertise emerging through the years of austerity.
- Qualifications and Continued Professional Development are acknowledged as demonstrating commitment and credibility within the communications industry and the organisation.



Ross Wigham
Head of Communications and Marketing Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

“There needs to be continuous development otherwise we're not progressing, just surviving the dynamics of change.”

1. The new challenges of austerity outlined in previous chapters have increased expectations and reduced resources for local public service communicators. It is recognised that practitioners themselves must fund and initiate training and development opportunities.
2. Training and development budgets within local public services have been reduced or are non-existent. Those funded by organisations must provide value and immediate impact to the communications team and beyond.
3. Communicators are disseminating learning across their team and where relevant across the organisation. Many communicators identified 'training the trainers' as a skills gap.
4. Training and development opportunities need to be accessed locally or regionally to reflect the demands on time and budget. Professional bodies need to be delivering activity for local public services regionally.
5. Networking, which was identified as one of the most powerful aspects of training, many believe is enhanced when these activities are delivered in the local areas in which public service communicators work. Sharing learning and experiences with other public service communicators is critical to continued professional development.
6. Communicators recognise the skills and expertise, which are emerging through these challenging times. This tremendous wealth of knowledge could be harnessed cost effectively through mentoring and coaching within and between public service organisations.
7. Qualifications are recognised by senior leaders as one of the contributing factors towards credibility within an organisation. Communicators themselves, that have undertaken industry specific qualifications, recognise the practical value that they have had on their work.
8. Continued Professional Development is recognised as demonstrating ongoing commitment to progression and to updating skills, which are needed more than ever in the dynamic environment in which public service organisations are operating.

Conclusions

1. In times of adversity the challenge for communicators is to embrace the severity of the situation and to develop a new model of communication. This shift within local public services is moving away from prescriptive narrative towards a new paradigm of influencing.
2. Influencing is more important than ever before, as digital transformation and reduced resources have disseminated communication activity throughout the organisation. Staff engagement is crucial as communicators let go of the reins of communication.
3. The personal resilience of communications staff is a prerequisite as they must communicate organisational changes in addition to being directly affected by these changes themselves. This has largely gone unrecognised and many communicators are themselves seeking support.
4. With increased demands and fewer resources, communicators must identify practical mechanisms and ways to explain communication priorities which contribute towards organisational aims and objectives. Shared experience would support communicators in developing these within their own organisation.
5. Commercial awareness and demonstrating long term value demands those with business acumen. With reduced recruitment, developing these skills among team members is essential.
6. Evaluation and ways of demonstrating the value of communications activity is being frustrated by the lack of time and reduced resources. The sharing and development of expertise among public service communicators is a priority.
7. Public service organisations have reduced training and development budgets and communicators are investing in themselves in order to continue their professional development. Training and development in the immediate term should reflect this and be delivered locally or regionally and at low cost.
8. Membership of professional bodies are for the majority of communicators self-funded. Engagement with organisational leaders in building recognition of the professional status and value of communications must continue to be developed.

Next actions for CIPR Local Public Services Group

This research project has connected with local public service communicators, organisational leaders and representative bodies across the UK.

In response to this feedback, the CIPR Local Public Services Group will:

- Deliver a refreshed programme of training and development reflecting the top priorities identified by public service communicators: influencing through digital transformation, employee engagement, personal resilience, commercial awareness and impact.
- Deliver training and development regionally, by partnering with the CIPR regional groups to ensure local and cost effective solutions.

- Continue to stand up for the profession.
- Engage with public service leaders to champion the professionalism of the industry and the continued development of practitioners.

This report and the project itself will act as a platform for us to work with local public service communicators, organisational leaders and representative bodies, to further develop the support and training available for communications practitioners, in the ongoing and challenging age of austerity.

Acknowledgements

In bringing together this research project the CIPR Local Public Services Group would like to thank all the participants, many of whom have agreed to be included in the acknowledgements below, and colleagues at Manchester Metropolitan University and Sheffield Hallam University.

Jack Adlam, Senior Communications Manager, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

Hilary Allison, Head of Public Affairs, Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire, CIPR LPS Committee Member

Bridget Aherne, Head of Corporate Communications and Administration, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Vanessa Andrews, Marketing and Communications Manager, North Somerset Council

Michelle Atkinson, Corporate Communications Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Jessica Baldwin, Communications Manager (People), Essex County Council

Joe Ball, Assistant Public Relations Officer, Bristol City Council

Elaine Barclay, Communications Manager, Gateshead Council

Damian Beaumont, Digital Marketing Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Christine Birchall, Corporate Communications Manager, Norfolk County Council

James Bladon, Corporate Communication Manager, Avon Fire & Rescue Service

Tim Borrett, Service Manager - Public Relations, Bristol City Council and CIPR LPS Committee Member

Steph Bowen, Service Manager – Corporate Communications, Bristol City Council

Nicola Bulbeck, Chief Executive, Teignbridge District Council

Alexis Burnett, Communications Manager, NHS Lothian

Daniel Cattermach, Acting Communications Manager (External), Bath & North East Somerset Council

Amanda Coleman, Head of Corporate Communications, Greater Manchester Police

Gill Cook, Principal Press & PR Officer, Halton Borough Council

Sian Corrigan, Corporate Communications Manager, Cheshire Fire Service

Mark Cotton, Assistant Director, Communications and Engagement, North East Ambulance Service

Martin Couper, Media Relations Officer, Police Scotland

Ryan DeAth, Media Relations Manager, Suffolk County Council

Danny Dickinson, Policy and Communications Officer, Newcastle City Council

Leanne Ehren, Media and Communications Officer, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

Gemma Fear, Press and Communications Officer, PHE South West

Lynda Fothergill, Communications Manager, Warrington Borough Council and CIPR LPS Committee Member

Martin Garvin, Media Manager, London Councils and CIPR LPS Committee Member

Donna Hall, Chief Executive, Wigan Borough Council

Jeanette Hedley, Senior Manager, Communications and Engagement, North Tyneside Council

Andy Highton, Communications Officer, Warrington Borough Council

Trevor Holden, Chief Executive, Luton Borough Council

Claire Holm, Customer and Corporate Communications Manager, North Devon Council

Suzie Izzard, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue

Hannah Jones, Communications Assistant, Warrington Borough Council and PR student at Manchester Metropolitan University

Adam Kearney, Press and Communications Officer, Luton Borough Council

Dr Martin King, Principal Lecturer, Manchester Metropolitan University

Jan Leslie, Principal Media and Social Media Officer, Warrington Borough Council

Hayley Lewis, Head of Communications, Croydon Council

Lindsay MacLean, Communications Officer, the City of Edinburgh Council

Phil McCusker, Communications Associate, East of England LGA and Vice Chair CIPR LPS

Kate McLoughlin, Policy and Communications Officer, Newcastle City Council

Lesley McPherson, Head of Communications City of Edinburgh Council

Claire Melia, Stakeholder Communications Manager, Essex County Council and CIPR LPS Committee Member

Wendy Moran, Senior Lecturer in Public Relations, Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, and Chair of CIPR LPS

Leona Murray, Senior Communications Officer, Brentwood District Council

Michelle Osborne, Press & PR Officer, Halton Borough Council

Carmel O'Toole, Senior Lecturer, Sheffield Hallam University

Megan Page, Internal Communications Manager, Croydon Council and CIPR LPS Committee Member

Steve Park, Assistant Director Policy, Communication and Performance, Newcastle City Council and member of CIPR LPS Group

Mandy Pearse, Seashell Communications and Vice Chair CIPR LPS

Nick Pearson, Head of communications and corporate affairs, NEW (Northern, Eastern and Western) Devon Clinical Commissioning Group

Ian Ratcliffe, Stockport Council

Jenny Renyard, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

Sarah Roberts, Corporate Communications Manager, Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Candice Robinson, Communications Officer, Chelmsford City Council

Jane Robinson, Chief Executive, Gateshead Council

Mark Rogers, President of Solace and Chief Executive and Director of Economy at Birmingham City Council

Adrian Roxan, Senior Lecturer, Sheffield Hallam University

Theresa Rugman Jones, Principal Multimedia Officer, Durham County Council

Sarah Jayne Smith, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

Kevin Snow, Head of Communications, Three Rivers District Council

Georgina Stanton, Chief Communications Officer, Central Bedfordshire Council

Nick Stephen, Press Officer, East Devon District Council

Alison Stoneham, Communications Manager, South Hams and West Devon Councils

Martin Surl, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire

Tina Sutherland, Communications Officer, the City of Edinburgh Council

Sara Turnbull, Communication Manager, Cumbria County Council

Abha Thakor, Non Stop News UK and CIPR LPS Committee Member

Sally Webster, Communications Manager, Essex Coalition of Disabled People

Jon Wells, Head of Community Development and Partnerships, Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Ross Wigham, Head of Communications and Marketing, Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

Ashley Wilcox, Head of Communications, Marketing, Medway Council

Craig Wyna, Digital Service Manager, Warrington Borough Council

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations Local Public Services Group

We represent communicators working in or supporting local public services. Whether you work for councils, police, health, fire and ambulance services, we are a voice for you at national level and within the Chartered Institute of Public Relations. If you have issues, concerns or just want to shout about your work we are here to help you.

The research project provided us with the opportunity to connect with public service communicators throughout the UK. We invite those of you that have taken part in this project, reading this report and those wanting to make a contribution to the profession to join the committee.

The history of the CIPR Local Public Services Group

'Local government officers were the 'driving force' and the nucleus behind the setting up of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in February 1948. Sir Stephen Tallents, who became the IPR's first president, had attended an earlier NALGO conference of 500 local government officers and commented on both their 'keenness' and also their isolation and loneliness' (L'Etang, 2004).

The 'municipal group' formed the IPR's first special interest group and had a key influence in promoting their views of professionalism and public ethos within the IPR. '(Brown, Gaudin and Moran, 2013)*

The Local Government Group, which gave rise to the CIPR itself, made the transition to the CIPR Local Public Services Group in 2008, led by the Chair Mike Brown. This move was made in recognition that the boundaries between local public service providers were breaking down.

The CIPR Local Public Services Group continues to support practitioners across the local public services.

Our main aims are to:

- promote good practice and encourage professional development and standards
- support local public services to continue to deliver great communications during a period of significant cuts in the public and not-for-profit sectors
- promote the benefits of partnership working
- promote the role of council and other public services communications as effective tools to engage with residents and other stakeholders.

We are committed in the year ahead to delivering a series of regional events which address the areas identified by this project.

CIPR Membership

Through membership of the CIPR you will be able to join 5 sectoral, regional and discipline groups including the Local Public Services Group.

You will also be able to access:

- designatory letters and membership logos (for ACIPR, MCIPR and FCIPR grades)
- online PR resources – webinars, skills guides, case studies, toolkits and reports
- CIPR CPD online continuing professional development scheme
- meeting rooms, lounge and library at 52 Russell Square
- business resources – including a free legal helpline and a template contract

Continued Professional Development (CPD)

CIPR CPD is a free online resource to help you manage and record everything you do to develop your skills and knowledge.

CIPR CPD is designed to be flexible enough to meet everyone's needs and goals. But whatever your CPD looks like, you'll be setting yourself apart.

We think every CIPR member should complete CPD, every year. It's part of being a professional and it's an essential part of becoming a CIPR Accredited or Chartered PR Practitioner.

Reading and considering this research report is recognised as CPD activity, contributing towards your annual number of points.

For further information on the CIPR Local Public Services Group visit cipr/lps.co.uk, our blog at localpublicservicecomms.org or email LPS@cipr.co.uk

*Brown, J, Gaudin, P and Moran, W (2013) PR and Communication in Local Government and Public Services, Kogan Page, London.

