



The Communities and Local Government "Connect to your Council" Take-Up Campaign

**Campaign Review and Recommendations for Future Local Authority Campaigns**

**(Bursts 1-3)**



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## Section 1. Executive summary

### **1.1 A three-burst advertising campaign to raise awareness and usage among Internet users**

This report examines the response to the three advertising bursts of Communities and Local Government's "Connect to your Council" Take-Up campaign.

Burst 1 has already been reviewed in detail in the Communities and Local Government report published in October 2006 (details of which are listed in Section 2.1 below). In this report we have been able to add new data sources and the results of the subsequent two bursts. This review also seeks to identify the longer-term effects of the advertising activity, outside the immediate results of any individual burst, as well as to provide recommendations regarding the options available to Local Authorities (LAs) wishing to continue such activities on a more local basis.

The first burst of the "Connect to your Council" Take-Up campaign was launched in England in May 2006 with a £3.4m media spend. Creative executions were designed to build public awareness and encourage usage of Local Authority (LA) online services, which have seen a continuous programme of improvement and development.

Targeted at existing Internet users, the group most able to make use of such online services, the advertising encouraged visitors to access LA websites directly or to use the campaign website and locator page [www.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil](http://www.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil)

The activity in May-July '06 was followed by two smaller bursts – a second in September-October '06 and a third in June-July '07, with media spends of £944,000 and £940,000 respectively. This advertising activity was also supported by an ongoing PR campaign, which has continued after Burst 3.

Burst 1 promoted 16 types of available online LA services, whilst Burst 2 concentrated on 10 subject areas, with an emphasis on schools and schools admissions, and Burst 3 promoted 4 subjects, including new content about planning applications.

### **1.2 High campaign recall and changes in awareness and behaviour**

Pre-and post-campaign research by TNS shows that Burst 1 was recalled by 38% of the target group. Campaign recall for the lower-spending Bursts 2 and 3 was recorded at 28% and 15% respectively.

Research by Dynamic Logic (for Burst 1) also identified markedly higher awareness among those exposed to the online campaign, confirming the value of this channel in both awareness and response generation.

This same research confirmed an increase in awareness during each advertising burst – of council services in general, as well as of those available online. Although awareness levels began to decline after each burst had ended, there is nevertheless evidence of a residual impact over the whole period, with awareness levels of a number of different online services higher at the beginning of the final burst than prior to Burst 1.

Respondents also demonstrated a higher intention to make use of these services and a significant number took action as a result of the campaign. Moreover – although this was not the primary objective of the campaign – the campaign also supported a gradual migration to online contact with the council away from 'traditional' forms of contact (such as telephone or in person).

### **1.3 Identifiable increases in web traffic**

Visitors were able to reach individual LA websites through a variety of routes – directly, through search engines (regularly confirmed as a key channel), or by following the relevant links after accessing the Directgov, Local Directgov and mycouncil web pages. Central to the activities was the emphasis on the LAs themselves as the focal point of the campaign, subsequently reflected in the widespread use of search engines to access individual websites.

During the national and regional phases of Burst 1 the mycouncil domain and other local government pages of the Directgov website attracted an estimated 1.3 million visits, 2/3 of which were attributable to the online campaign alone. Traffic volumes into these sites were up markedly (+32% May vs April '06), as was the use of search engines to find campaign websites, generic council terms and specific LA services.

The independent organisation Hitwise, reporting on the share of total visits originating from a sample of around 1/3 domestic Internet Service Providers (ISPs) also recorded uplift in the share of "all LAs" of UK Internet traffic during each campaign burst. Although the total share of "all LAs websites" was the same at the end of Burst 3 as it was during Burst 1, it should be remembered that this represents a markedly greater number of actual visitors overall, given the continuing increase in both the number of UK citizens accessing the Internet and the time spent doing so. (For reasons of confidentiality, the Hitwise service reports shares of the total visitor universe rather than actual visits).

Data from SOCITM (another independent organisation) shows a steady increase in traffic to LA websites between February 2006 and August 2007, with peaks of traffic during each burst. Meanwhile an exit poll conducted by SOCITM identified that 10% of visitors to LA sites during the campaign attributed the source of their visit to either the campaign's mycouncil website or to another page in the Directgov domain.

It is also worth noting the service-led quality of Directgov referrals to local authority sites, representing deep-linked visits to specific service pages rather than general site visits.

#### **1.4 A strong foundation for future development**

Given the public's generally sporadic interest in council services<sup>1</sup>, advertising would not be expected to attract audience attention easily unless its subject matter was of interest and relevance at the time.

There is clear evidence that Burst 1 succeeded in raising the profile of a range of subjects covered in LA services<sup>2</sup>, that Burst 2 generated particularly marked increases regarding schools (over and above the usual seasonal interest) and that the introduction of the new subject of planning applications and planning permission also stimulated a clear uptake in the use of online as an supplementary channel in Burst 3.

Meanwhile, continuing PR activities organised by Government News Network (GNN), such as the "Pride of Place Poll" and "Doorstep Challenge" provide further opportunities to ensure online LA services remain visible at a local level.

With continuing usage and familiarity, supported by the ongoing development of the services and interactivity available from individual LAs, even at this relatively early stage, there is also clear evidence of a gradual migration from more traditional (and more costly) means of access to key services, such as face-to-face and by telephone.

#### **1.5 Key learnings and future recommendations**

It is therefore clear that advertising has increased awareness and site visits across a range of different online interactions. Without advertising support, awareness and site visits do decline, although there still remains a residual effect over the longer term.

<sup>1</sup> Market research commissioned for the Campaign from TNS shows that 67% of citizens contact their council one or more times a year.

<sup>2</sup> Described in more detail in section 3 below.

Where budgets permit, and by taking advantage of the free campaign toolkit of licensed creative materials available to local authorities<sup>3</sup>, continued communications activity using local media such as press and outdoor (and supported by a presence in relevant mailings and other literature) can help maintain the momentum achieved by the national activity, and would therefore continue to increase the visibility and usage of such online services. This may be particularly effective when used around the ongoing local PR activities organised by GNN. Such increased web traffic may also deliver savings against more costly methods of contact.

In planning such communications across an increasingly wide range of end-users, it is important to target messages most appropriate to each audience (such as parents, garden owners or motorists), and with the most appropriate media for that message and audience. As usage of the Internet grows, these audiences will include a wider range of socio-economic and age groups, with differing levels of familiarity and confidence.

It will also be worthwhile to consider wider collaborative activities and to take advantage of lower cost media covering a wider catchment area than an individual LA. This may include national online marketing and search engine activities, or regional co-operation around a local radio footprint.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.productshare.org.uk/pp/publication/projects.asp?id=6056>

## Section 2. Campaign objectives, content and media

### 2.1 Raising awareness and usage

Against a background of continuous improvement and development in online LA services, the core objectives of the Take-Up campaign were to raise awareness among the English public that they are able to interact with their Local Authorities (LAs) online and to encourage greater access through web and email – as a new, easy and useful channel which facilitates greater choice and improves access for information, to notify their LA of problems and complaints, or for more complex transactions.

As a broad-based campaign, the bursts targeted an all adult audience who are comfortable with technology across all media and creative executions, and online-enabled – a group which tends to have a younger and more upmarket profile.

Burst 1 was reviewed in the Communities and Local Government report *A review of Communities and Local Government Take-Up Campaign: Burst 1, May-July 06*<sup>4</sup> (referred to in this document as the “Burst 1 review”). The findings of that report are summarised or referred to in this review, to which we have added new data sources and the results of the subsequent two bursts.

### 2.2 Highlighting the range of services covered, and emphasising key subject areas

The LA services promoted were as follows (example executions are included in the Appendix)

Burst 1 had a general focus and promoted 16 subject areas:

- Information about school term dates
- Information about school holiday schemes
- Information about before- and after-school childcare
- Information about the disposal of garden waste
- Information about how to pay parking fines
- Information on ways to pay council tax
- Information about domestic bins
- Renewing a library book
- Reporting an abandoned vehicle

<sup>4</sup> Ref: 06 LGME 04172 published in October 2006 and available at: [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/153379](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/153379)

- Reporting fly tipping & dumping
- Reporting a graffiti problem
- Reporting a pothole
- Reporting a street light problem
- Reporting a pavement problem
- Reporting a noise nuisance
- Applying for a job at the local council

Burst 2 had a narrower focus, promoting 10 subjects, with a particular emphasis on schools:

- **New:** Find out about school admissions
- Find out about school term dates
- Renew a library book
- How to pay parking fines
- Find out about domestic refuse collection
- Find out about disposing of garden waste
- Report fly tipping
- Report a pothole
- Report a problem with a street light
- Apply for a council job

Burst 3 had a narrow focus, specifically promoting 4 subjects:

- **New:** Find out about planning applications and information
- Finding out about disposing of garden waste
- Reporting fly tipping
- Renewing a library book

### 2.3 Use of different media for each burst

The details of each burst and the percentage spend on each medium were as follows:

#### Burst 1

- Total Media Spend £3.4m
- 9 weeks: 8th May – 8th Jul 06 – nationally in England for the first month (8th May – 7th Jun), then regionally (8th Jun – 7th Jul)

- Press & Advertorials: 31%; Radio: 19%; Online (plus search optimisation) 34%; Outdoor: 16%; followed by localised campaign activity

#### Burst 2

- Total Media Spend £944k
- 7 weeks: 4th Sept 06 – 22nd Oct 06
- Press & Advertorials: 32%; Radio: 58%; Online (plus search optimisation): 11%; plus localised campaign activity

#### Burst 3

- Total Media Spend £940k
- 5 weeks: 4th Jun – 3rd Jul 07
- Press: 60%; Radio: 19% Online (plus search optimisation): 21%; plus regional PR and localised campaign activity

### 2.4 Local presence

LAs were able to reinforce the local message regarding selected services, and to place greater emphasis on those services of most relevance to the local population while using the same creative executions (provided in the creative toolkit).

LAs could also direct the public to those particular services on their websites which had been fully developed to handle access and interactivity. The London Borough of Lewisham, for example, chose to concentrate solely on paying parking tickets online, described in more detail in Section 4.7.3 below.

It is worth noting that continuing local activity can also ensure a lower level but more continuous presence between the national/regional bursts. This is important, as public response to many of the services featured are likely to be “situation-dependent” and may therefore have more saliency at a time when such a service is needed (eg on the occasion of some fly-tipping).

### 2.5 Campaign evaluation data

A number of different sources have helped to assess the impact and effectiveness of the campaign, both the individual bursts and the campaign as a whole. These include:

Consumer surveys:

- TNS pre- and post-burst surveys (Burst 1, 2 and 3)
- SOCTIM website visitor exit polls (ongoing)

Web traffic volumes, sources and destinations:

- SOCTIM – LA samples (Burst 1, 2 and 3)
- Revenue Science – Directgov (Burst 1)
- Hitwise – LA and Directgov traffic (Burst 1, 2 and 3)
- Speedtrap – Local Directgov deep page traffic (Burst 3)

Online campaign research:

- Dynamic Logic (Burst 1)
- Carat Digital – supplier site click-throughs and landings (Burst 1, 2 and 3)

## Section 3. Response to the campaign: Awareness and attitudes

### 3.1 TNS Market research

#### 3.1.1 Quantitative pre- and post-campaign surveys

Market research agency TNS conducted pre-and post-burst omnibus surveys among a sample of 800 adults who have online access (at home, work or elsewhere) for each campaign burst.

#### 3.1.2 High campaign awareness

Total advertising recognition (seen or heard any advertising) was at its highest after Burst 1 (at a very respectable 38%), reflecting its markedly higher media spend. Burst 2 and 3 achieved 28% and 15% respectively.

Radio in particular proved to generate good advertising recall for Bursts 1 and 2, when it featured prominently.

**Table 3.1.2:** Advertising recall by media

	<b>Burst 1</b>	<b>Burst 2</b>	<b>Burst 3</b>
Radio	16%	21%	9%
Online	13%	n/a	3%
Posters	9%	n/a	n/a
Press	7%	10%	5%
Ambient (Pizza boxes)	6%	n/a	n/a

Source: TNS

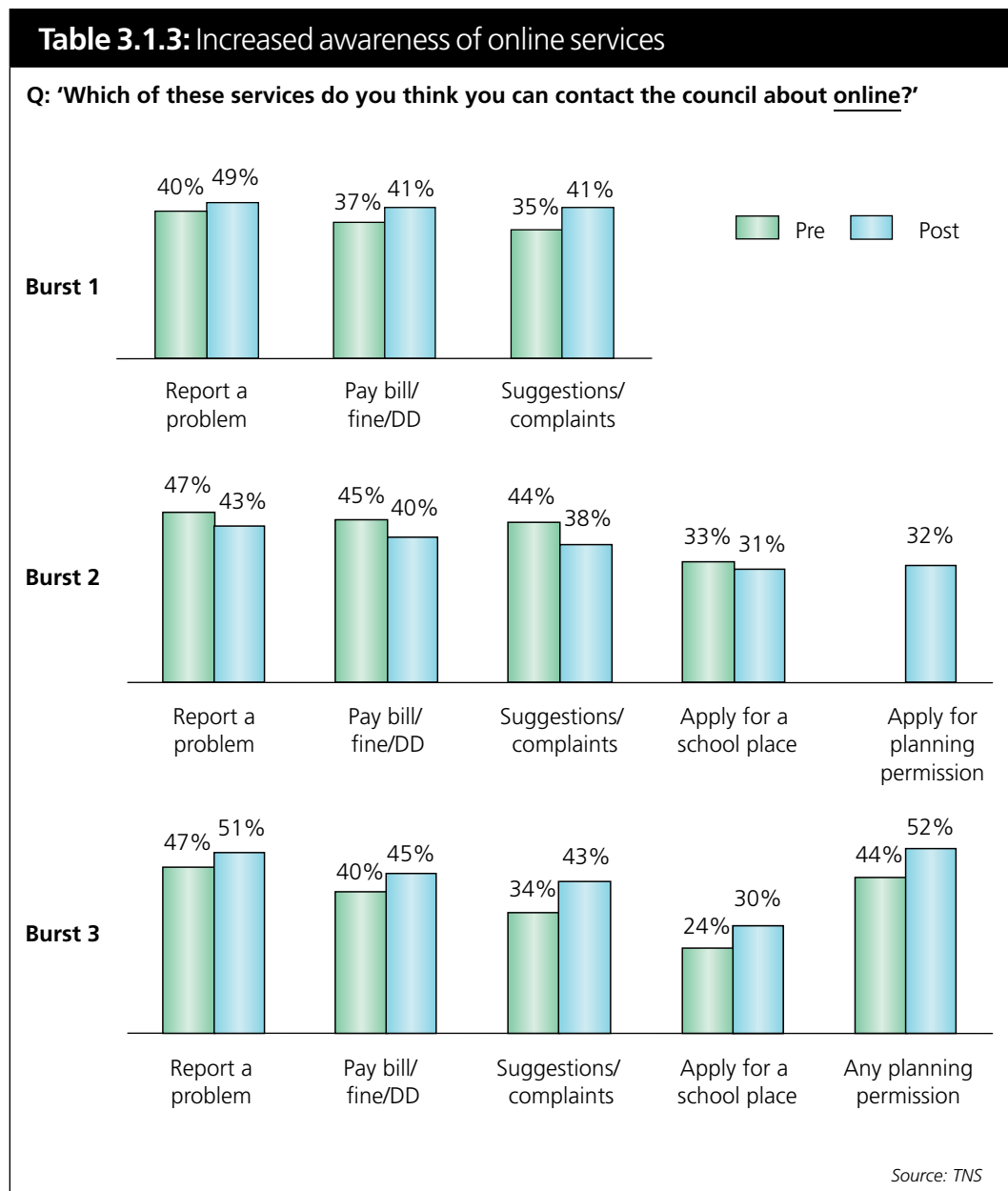
Unless the public have encountered a specific problem, LA services (and related communications) can be expected to command relatively low levels of interest. As such, the reported numbers of survey respondents who were able to recall the advertising campaign represents a very acceptable level of recognition. As a point of comparison, the Directgov brand awareness campaign in March '06 achieved 11% post-campaign recall of its radio advertising among Directgov users and 6% recall of press advertising, within a media spend of £1.8m (a markedly higher spend than for Bursts 2 and 3).

This, along with other indicators in the TNS data, also suggests the value of increasing the visibility of the "Connect to your council" message strapline within future offline creative executions.

### 3.1.3 Increased awareness of Local Authority services

Numbers claiming they had "ever contacted their local council" were also reported up by between 5-7% over the period, likely to be a direct result of the campaign. (It is also worth noting that, despite its generality, this question has clearly elicited a response which is driven by recency and ad awareness).

The TNS research also identified an increase in respondents' awareness of the services about which they are able to contact their council during Burst 1 and 3 of the campaign, as illustrated in Table 3.1.3 below.



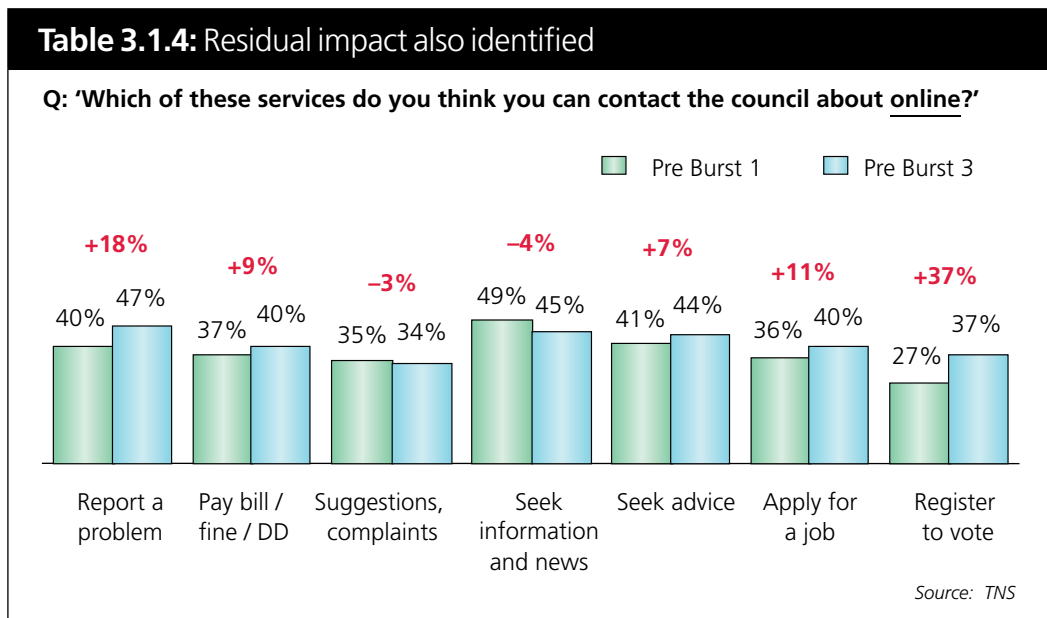
In particular, Burst 1 saw a 23% increase in awareness about reporting problems, reflecting the focus of the creative content. In comparison, Burst 3 resulted in an increase of 18% in awareness of online planning permission, again reflecting the focus of that particular burst.

A recorded fall in awareness following Burst 2 is more likely to be the result of a number of “research effects” than any actual fall (and this will be noted for future surveys). There was a delay between the end of the burst and the survey period, so the latter would have occurred during the post-burst drop-off. There was also a very marked seasonal (pre-Christmas) fall in general interest in LA services, also clearly reflected in the web traffic data at this time of year. (The addition of the “planning permission” questions may also have also added to respondent’s perceived workload).

### 3.1.4 Identified residual impact

By comparing pre-burst awareness levels of online council services before Burst 3, we are able to exclude the immediate short-term effects of that last advertising burst, and thereby make a longer-term comparison with the pre-Burst 1 levels.

Such comparisons demonstrate that over the course of the entire campaign there have been net gains in awareness – as seen in Table 3.1.4 below. For example, awareness of the ability to report a problem online was at 40% prior to Burst 1 and had risen by 18% to 47% prior to Burst 3. Gains were also evident in awareness of the ability to pay a bill/set up a direct debit, to seek advice, to apply for a job, and to register to vote online.



### 3.2 Online campaign awareness survey

Over the course of Burst 1 only, research company Dynamic Logic examined the effects of the online campaign in driving awareness. The survey was conducted over May-June '06 among 900 Internet users, having tracked their Internet usage to identify who had been exposed to online advertisements. The research was therefore able to compare the responses of those who’d seen the online advertisements (irrespective of any offline advertising) with a control sample who hadn’t.

The results demonstrated significantly higher awareness of all listed online council services among those who had been exposed to the websites featuring the advertisements, as illustrated by Table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2:** Awareness of online services

<b>Named Online Service</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Exposed</b>	<b>Difference (% Points)</b>
Information on ways to pay council tax	58%	68%	9.9
Finding out about household rubbish collection	52%	62%	9.5
Finding out about disposing of garden waste	48%	57%	8.5
Applying for a job at the Local Council	45%	60%	15.1
Information about how to pay parking tickets	34%	44%	10.1
Finding out about school term dates	32%	39%	6.7
Reporting an abandoned vehicle	32%	37%	4.6
Finding out about school holiday schemes	29%	35%	5.5
Reporting illegal rubbish dumping	29%	38%	9.3
Reporting a pothole	26%	34%	7.9
Reporting a problem with a pavement	26%	36%	10.4
Reporting a noise nuisance problem	25%	32%	7.4
Finding out about before & after school childcare	24%	34%	9.7
Reporting a graffiti problem	23%	34%	10.6
Reporting a problem with a street light	23%	37%	13.8
Renewing a library book	19%	26%	6.5

Source: Dynamic Logic

Council tax, refuse and recycling, and applying for jobs all scored highly as the services respondents are most interested in.

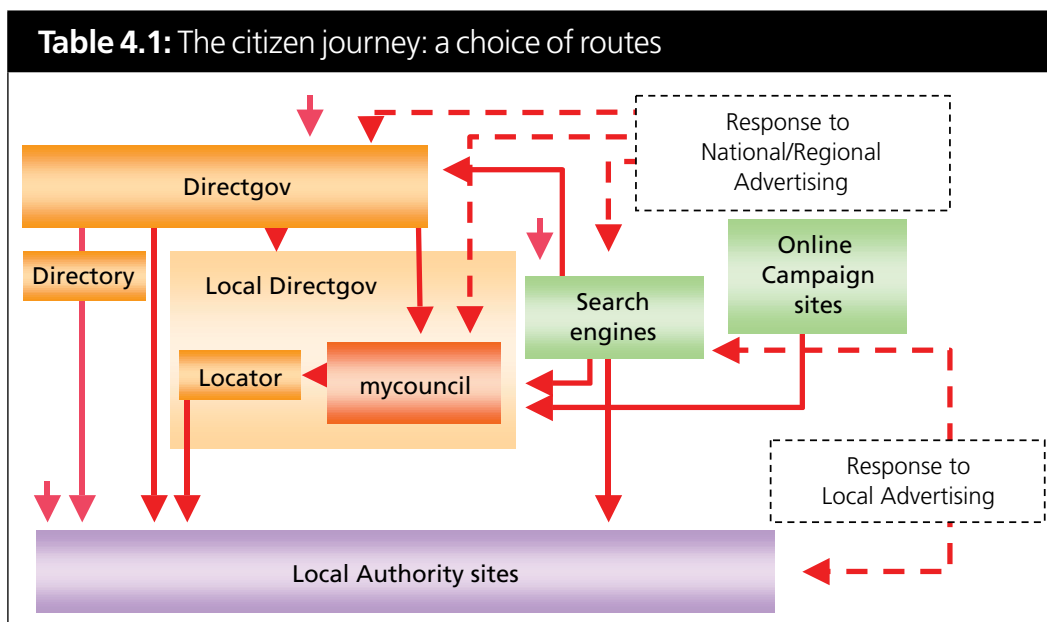
Women, reported at lower awareness levels in the control sample, appeared to have responded better to the campaign, catching up to the same levels as men among those exposed to the online advertising.

Dynamic Logic also identified that although there was little difference in awareness between younger and older respondents, a markedly higher proportion of under 35's declared their intention to actually make use of such services online.

## Section 4. Response to the campaign: Web Traffic to Local Directgov and local authority websites

### 4.1 Options for visitor access

Described in more detail in the Burst 1 Review, the single dedicated, nationally-accessible URL [www.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil](http://www.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil) enabled visitors to then access the relevant pages in the appropriate LA website. Directgov, Local Directgov, and mycouncil web pages provided a range of subject-related click-throughs, promotional boxes, a postcode-based locator page, and an A-Z directory of local authorities by which visitors are able to access the relevant pages of LA websites.



There were therefore a number of ways by which the public could respond to the advertising campaign and/or separately access LA services online, according to their experience and confidence with online services.

Where possible, we have sought to identify traffic volumes against the different routes by which visitors have accessed national and local sites – for the campaign period as a whole and during individual bursts.

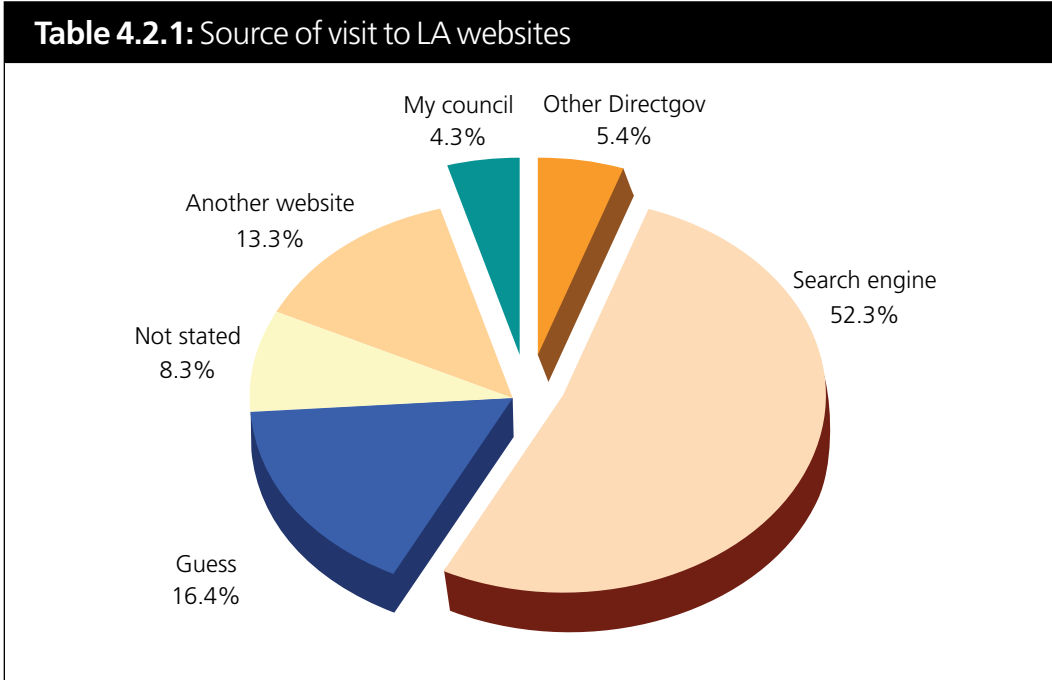
### 4.2 SOCITM visitor survey and LA website sample

Compiled and co-ordinated by The Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM), a random sample of visitors to LA websites are invited to complete an online survey once they have completed their visit, which includes visitor recall of the source of their visit as illustrated in table 4.1.2 below for the Burst 1 months of June and July '06. (Due to a change in the question format, comparable data is not available for the other bursts).

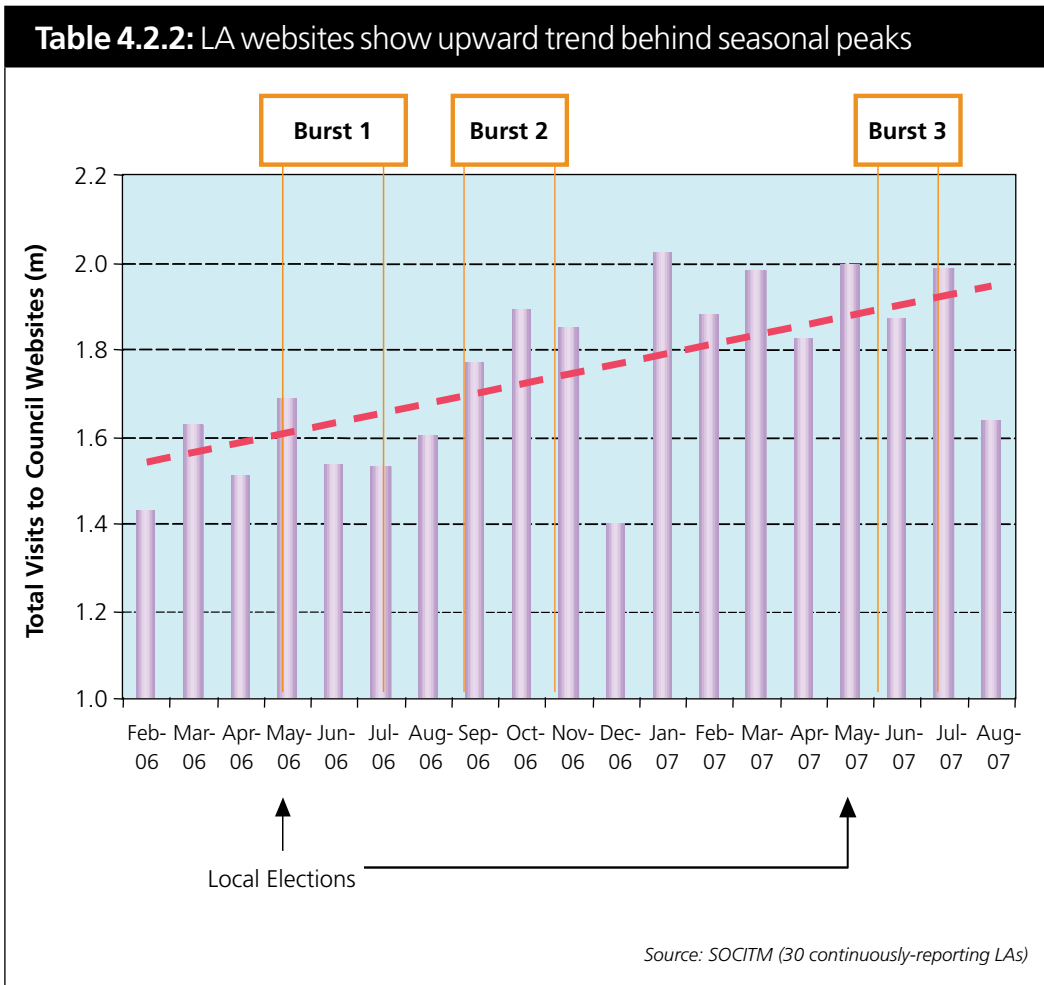
Given the complexity of the possible routes followed by online visitors, there will be differences between visitors' recollection and other web traffic measurements. Nevertheless, the data highlights some key elements in those routes.

Search engines clearly play a dominant role in how visitors access LA sites – accounting for over half of all visits. Of these, many are likely to have been prompted by the advertising campaign, as has been supported by more detailed data within the TNS research.

Meanwhile, public awareness of the mycouncil and Directgov sites is also clear – accounting for nearly 10% of attributed visits. This conforms closely with that from a separate Hitwise analysis which also reported Directgov accounting for a peak of 10% of visits to council sites data in June 2006.



SOCTIM also record the total web traffic to a sample of co-operating LA websites, from which we have identified visits to a sub-sample of over 30 LA websites which have reported continuously over the period of the campaign (ie from February '06 to July '07). Illustrated in Table 4.2.2, the SOCTIM sample report an upward underlying trend in visits to LA sites, with evident peaks during the three advertising bursts. Website visits were up 39% in July 2007, compared to February 2006.



### 4.3 Share of website visits within a growing market

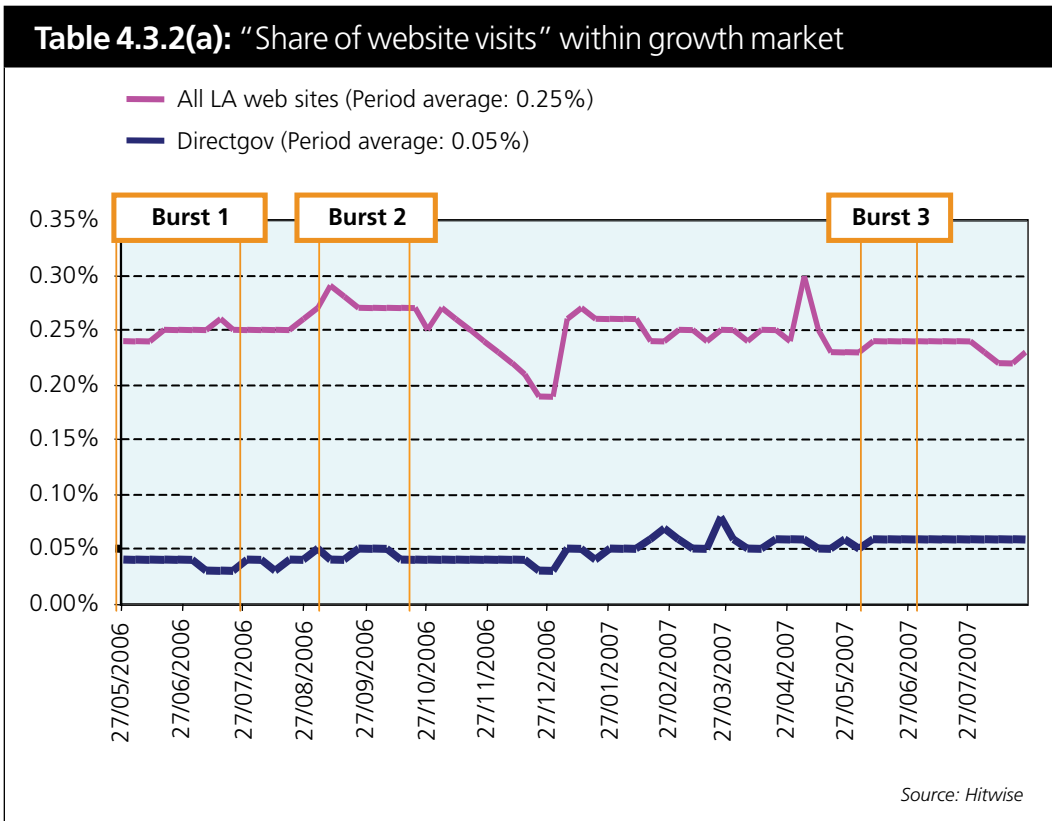
#### 4.3.1 Growth of Internet access

The number of people with Internet access is increasing, and 61 % of households now have access – an increase of 1 million (7%) from 2006. Usage of the Internet is also increasing, with 32m UK adults claiming to have accessed the Internet “in the last three months” – an increase of 3.8m (14%) from 2006. 45% of adults now access the Internet every day or nearly every day.

It should be noted that future activities will need to address the needs of this wider range of target audiences, including those with relatively low current awareness, familiarity and confidence.

#### 4.3.2 Share of website visits

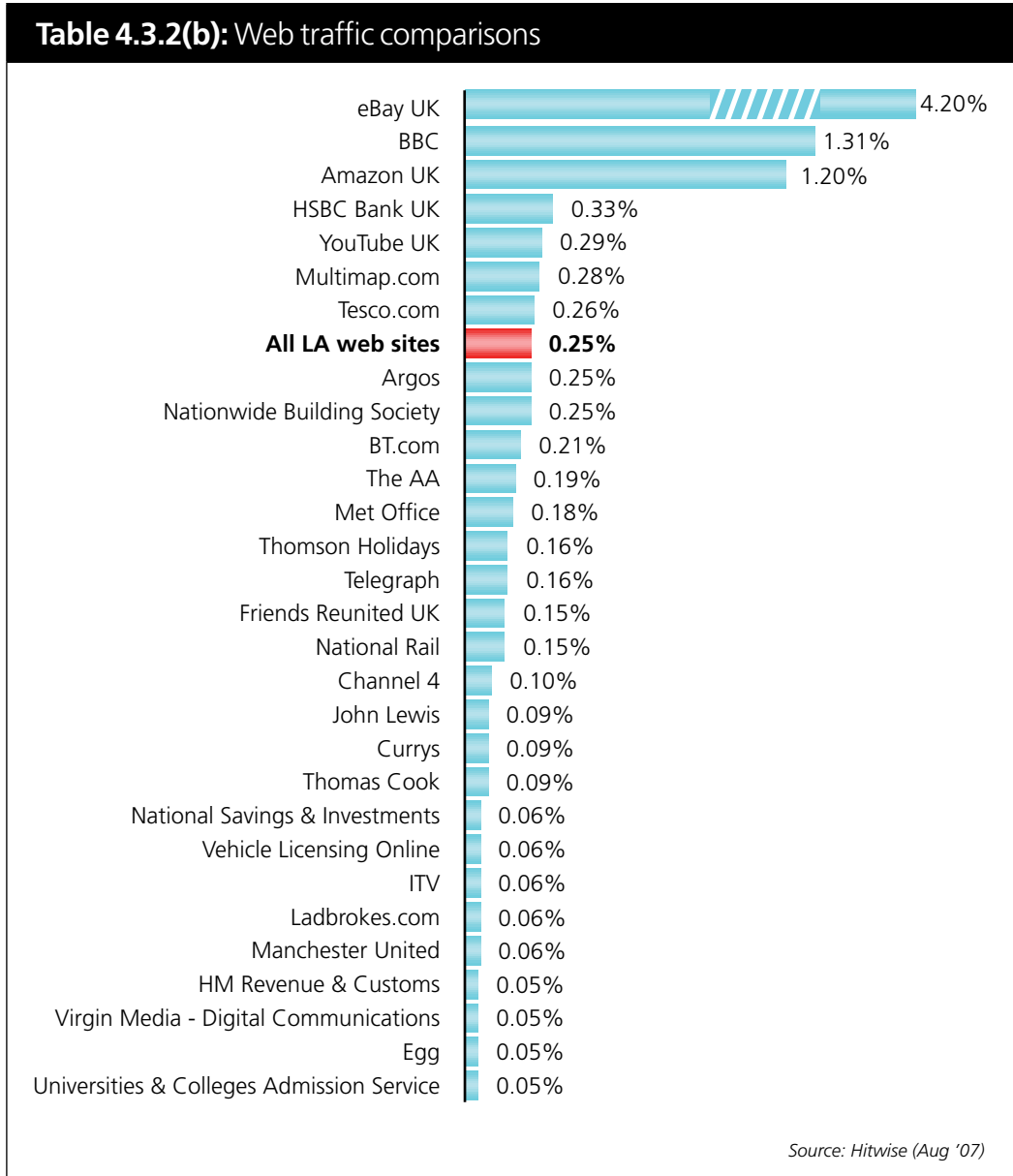
Hitwise provides information on the per cent share of visits by UK citizens to individually identified website URLs. Data has been amalgamated for every LA website in England, to enable us to evaluate visitor behaviour over the period of the campaign, for the universe of LA websites as an aggregated whole, as illustrated in Table 4.3.2(a) below.



Overall, the share for LA websites remained the same at the end of Burst 3 as when data was first collected midway through Burst 1, with an average share of 0.25% for the period as a whole. This consistent share of a dramatically growing universe is a marked achievement, especially given the increasing range of entertainment-based websites driving much of this general growth. Moreover, during each burst there was an identifiable uplift in the share of LA websites.

There was also an increase in total Directgov share from 0.04% to 0.06%, which continues to grow in recognition as an important portal by which visitors can access a wide range of government services.

To put this data into context, the 0.25% of UK visits for the aggregate of LA websites is on a par with the number of visits to the Tesco website, illustrated in Table 4.3.2(b)'s web traffic comparisons.

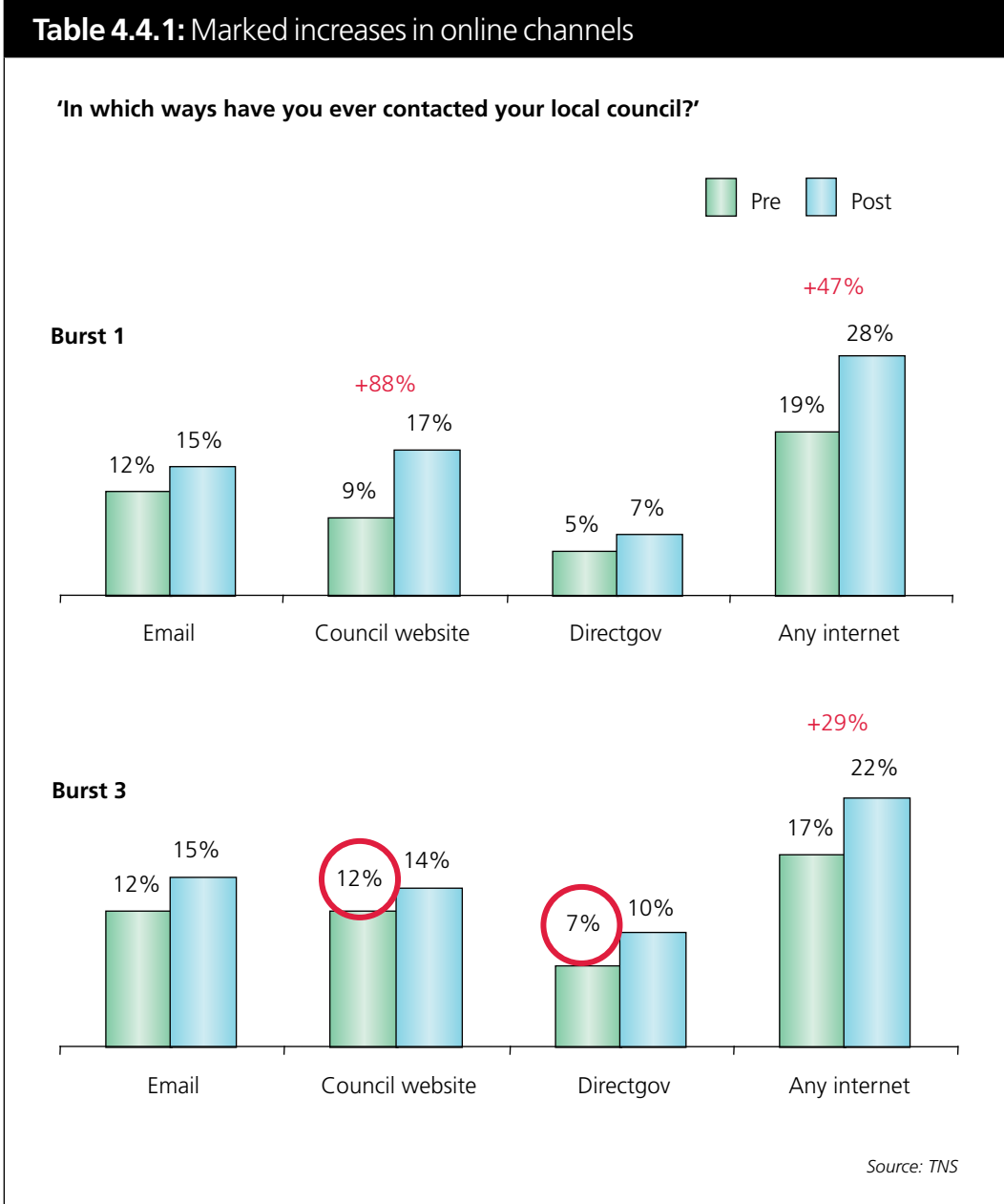


#### 4.4 Increased online access

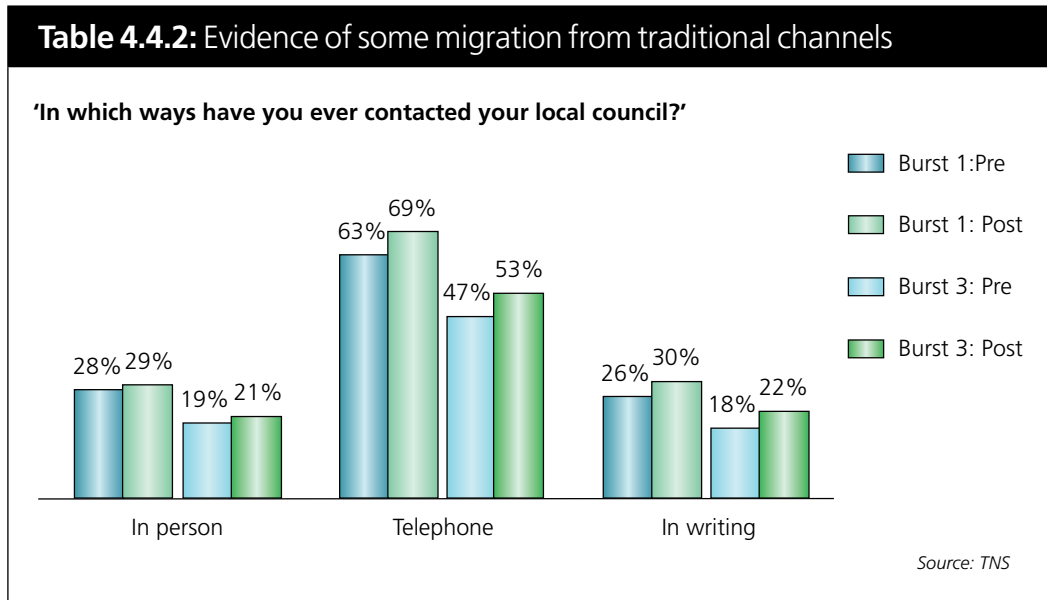
As identified in earlier research, telephone contact remains the most popular way of contacting LAs. Concomitantly high levels of reported satisfaction for the phone also suggest that migration towards online will be a gradual process, dependant on increased confidence as usage increases over time.

Illustrated in Table 4.4.1 below, marked increases were recorded for the number using "any online" access during Burst 1 and 3 – up 47% and 29% respectively. The use of emails rose from 12% to 15% during both bursts. During Burst 1 the most significant increase came from those accessing council websites – up 88%, from 1 in 11 to 1 in 6 and resulting in websites overtaking email to become the most important online channel. It is noteworthy that by Burst 3 there appear to have been some residual gains from earlier activity, with a higher proportion of people accessing the council via the website or via Directgov to begin with than in Burst 1. Moreover, during each burst there was an identifiable uplift in the share of LA websites.

There was also an increase in total Directgov share from 0.04% to 0.06%, which continues to grow recognition as an important portal by which visitors can access a wide range of government services.



There is also evidence of migration from traditional channels towards online means. Table 4.4.2 shows that although “off-line” contact increased during each burst, there was also a medium term decline in these channels by the start of Burst 3. In person contact was down 25%, telephone dropped by 16%, and written was down by 15%.



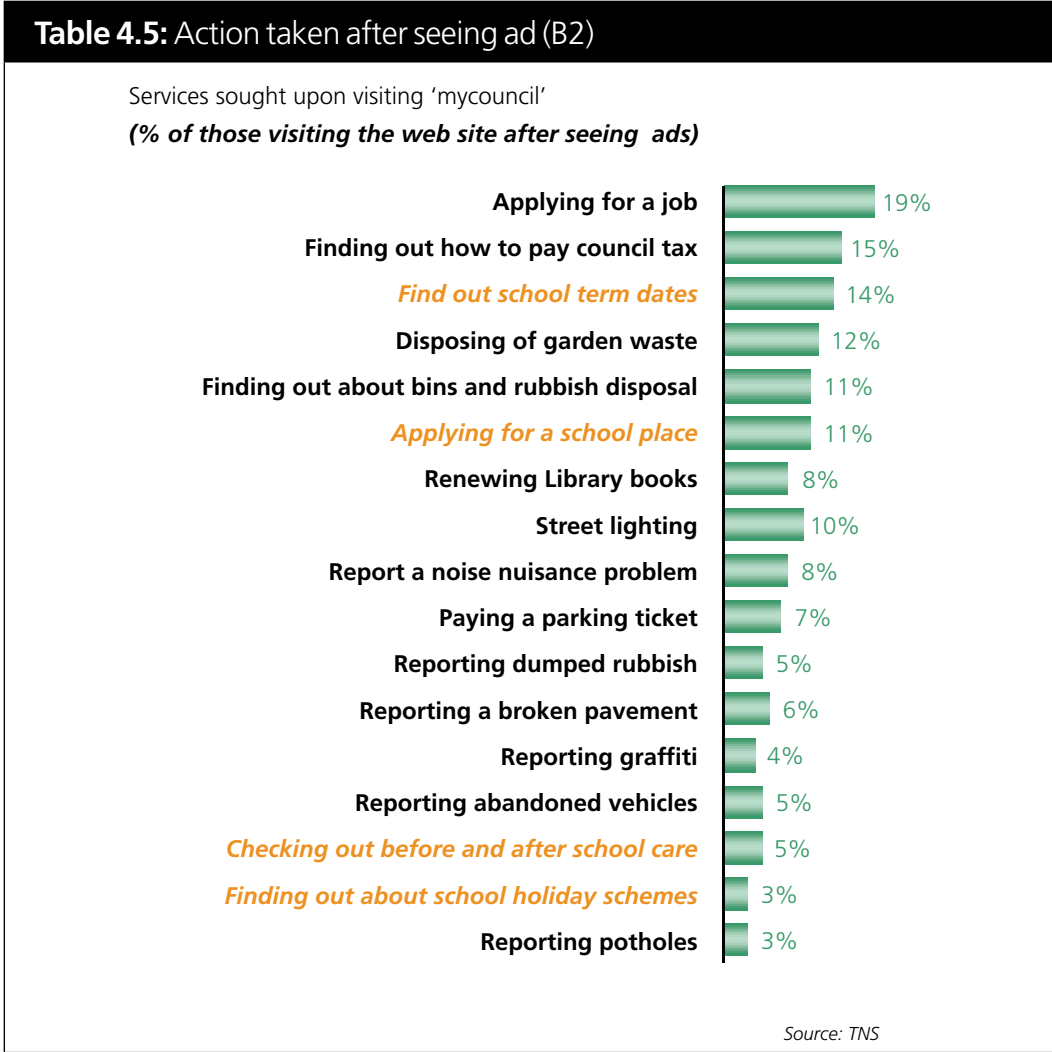
**4.5 Action taken after seeing the ads (Burst 2)**

The TNS survey asked respondents who had seen the advertisements whether they took any action as a result of the campaign, and if so which services they sought upon visiting the ‘mycouncil’ page. (This was undertaken for Burst 2 only).

Of those who saw an advertisement, 19% actually took action as a result. This included:

- Visiting or searching for their local council or the Directgov site
- Adding ‘mycouncil’ to their favourites
- Recommending the site to someone else

Term dates, applying for a school place and related subjects ranked high as the reasons to visit ‘mycouncil’ (as shown in Table 4.5), after applying for a job and paying council tax.



**4.6 Directgov "Top 200" search engine terms (Burst 1)**

Consideration of the 200 most popular search terms used by visitors accessing Directgov also records a marked increase in interest in online LA services. In April '06, prior to Burst 1, local government and LA services only accounted for 5 of the top 200 terms referring into Directgov – comprising 2 services ("council tax" and "schools", ranked 33 and 63 respectively), 2 generic terms ("councils" and "local councils", ranked 107 and 125 respectively) and a single named LA (at 181).

Detailed in Table 4.6 below, council-related searches increased dramatically in the following 2 months – not only in the range of terms used, but also in the visitor numbers each term represented (as evidenced by their ranking within the top 200). In May '06 the number of relevant search engine terms rose to a total of 20 and by June 2006, these terms had increased still further – to a total of 28.

**Table 4.6:** Local government-related searches in Top 200 leading to Directgov visits (service/generic/named LA and [rank])

April	May	June
5 (2 + 2 + 1)	20 (3 + & + 11)	28 (4 + 6 + 18)
council tax [33]	council tax [17]	council tax [17]
schools [63]	schools [86]	schools [92]
	recycling [159]	recycling [75]
		library [86]
councils [107]	direct.gov.uk/mycouncil [37]	direct.gov.uk/mycouncil [48]
local councils [125]	www.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil [102]	
	mycouncil [173]	mycouncil [121]
	local councils [148]	local councils [148]
	local council [150]	local council [100]
	local authority [180]	local authorities [173]
		local government [158]
named council (1) [181]	named council (11) [70]	named council (18) [45]

Source: Hitwise

It is worth noting here that even when familiar with the actual URL addresses, large numbers of visitors still entered the phrases “direct.gov.uk/mycouncil” and “www.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil” into their search engines.

The term “my council” was clearly attributable to the advertising while, of the services themselves, there is also a clear correlation with the subjects advertised.

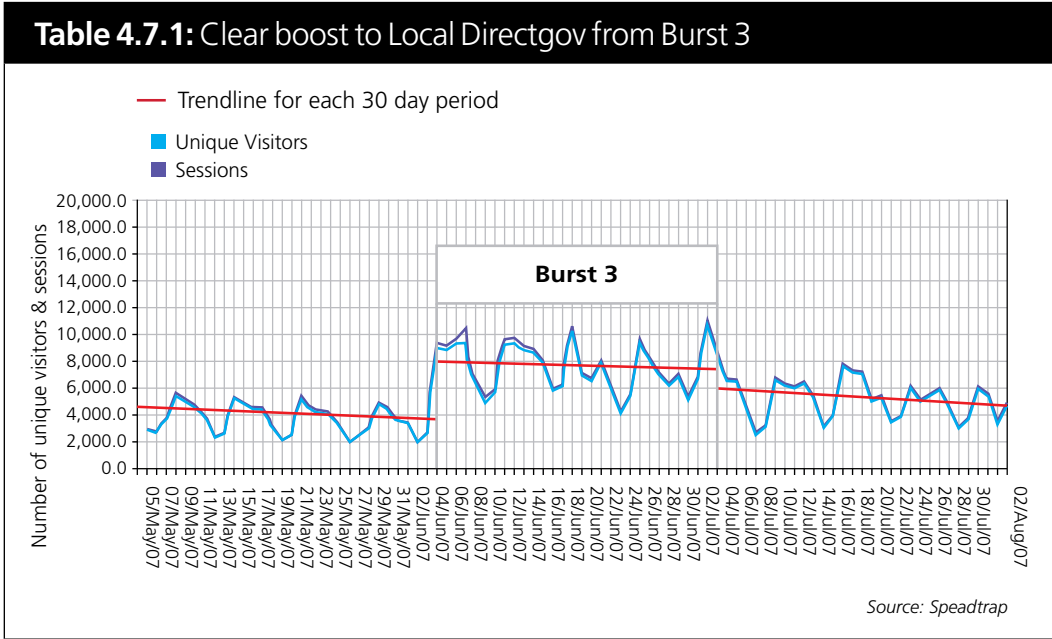
As a list based on the search terms used before visitors chose to then access Directgov, these rankings also indicate that equally large numbers are likely (after entering the same terms in a search engine site) to have then chosen a different website to visit – including to the LA website directly.

### 4.7 Advertising impact: example illustrations

#### 4.7.1 Example 1: Boost to Local Directgov (Burst 3)

Traffic to Local Directgov pages over the course of Burst 3, identified through the Speedtrap analysis software, demonstrates the campaign produced a successful increase in the number of visitors, with a gradual fall-off post-burst.

It is also worth noting that general peaks in traffic occur on Mondays with less activity on weekends (especially Saturdays). This may be due to behaviour recorded in other studies, which shows that people concentrate on chores and tasks more at the beginning of the week and on leisure-related interests later in the week. It may also be related to workplace use of Internet access (and possibly even to the perception that LA offices will be closed at weekends and therefore won't respond until Monday anyway).

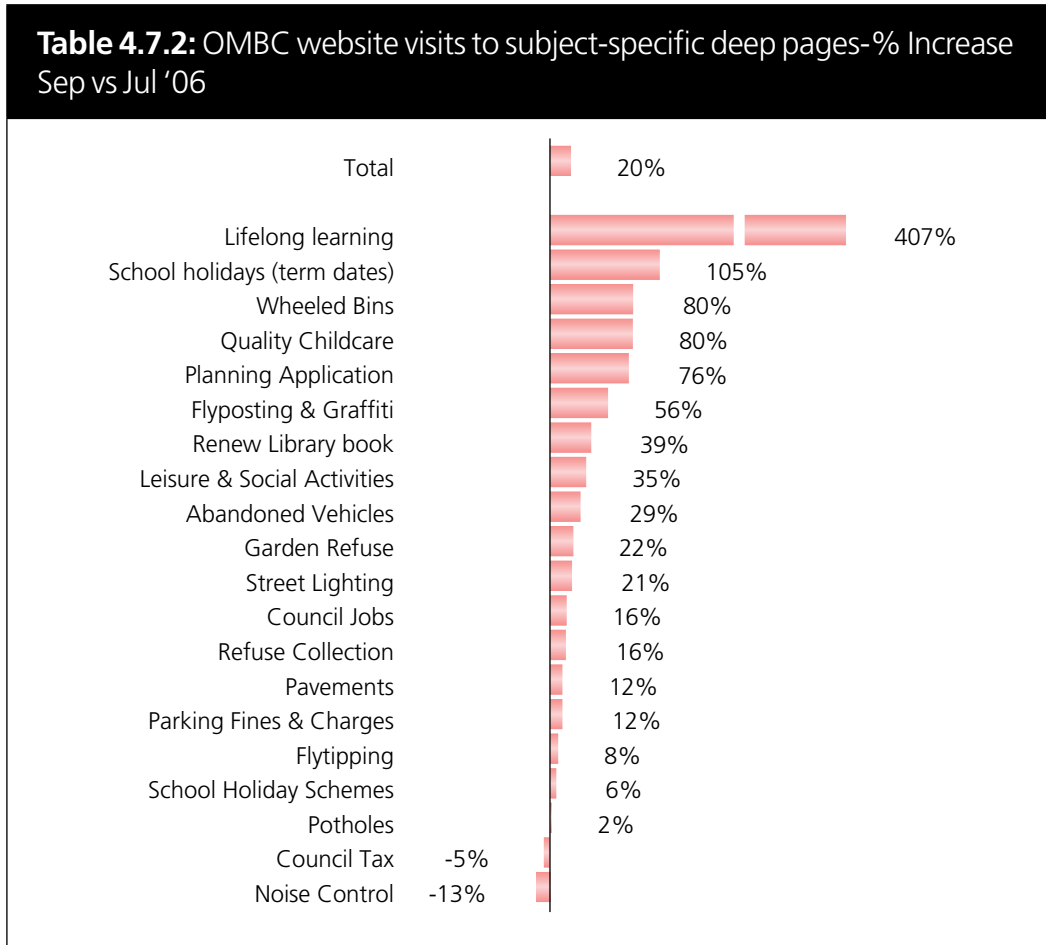


#### 4.7.2 Example 2: Impact of campaign on visits to Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council’s website

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC) supplemented the national Take-Up Campaign with a number of local activities, such as a visible presence in local libraries (in which library staff were encouraged to participate) and a week-long promotion in the local shopping centre in late August-early September.

With a small working budget for production costs of around £7,000, OMBC’s Graphic Design Unit were able to make use of the national campaign toolkit and other in-house resources to customise its website content and to produce A3 and A4 posters, postcards, and other promotional material. Subjects featured those services most relevant to Oldham’s 220,000 population, such as Lifelong Learning, Youth Services, and Child Care.

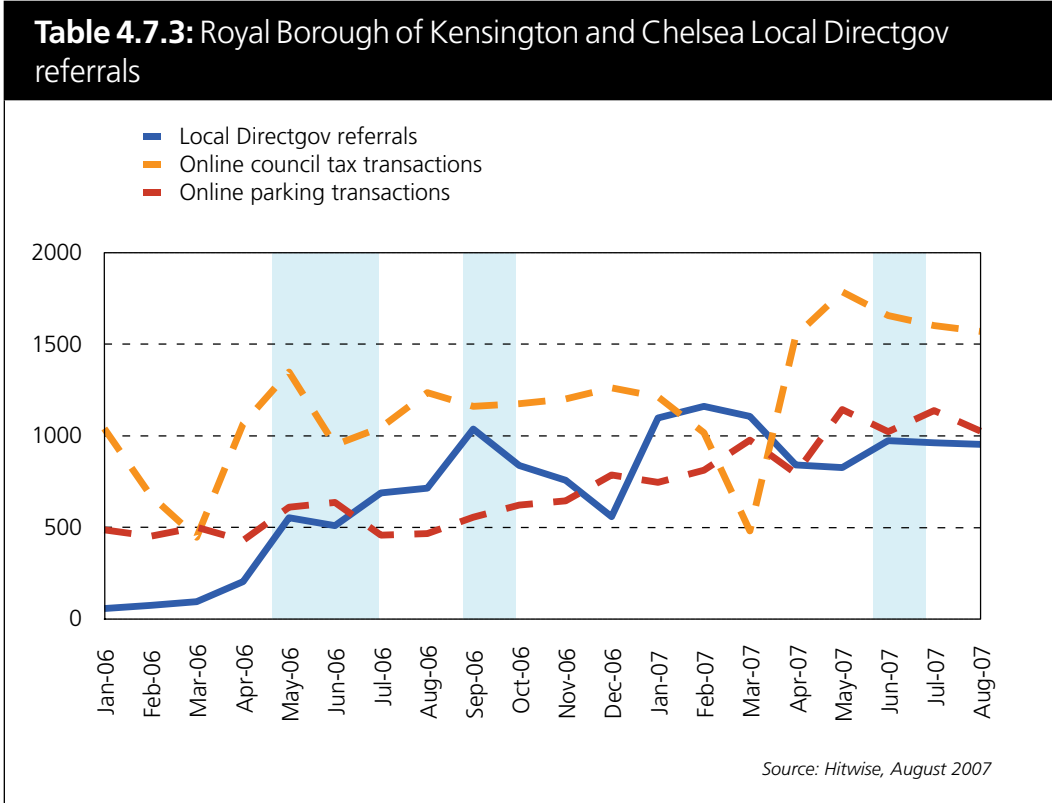
Between July and September 2006, unique visitors to OMBC's website increased 15% from 10,000 to 11,400 per month. Moreover these visitors made more use of the site during their visits: page views increased 20% (from 35,900 to 43,200) and Table 4.7.2 below identifies the % increase for individual subject-specific deep pages over this period. Importantly, the increased traffic generated by this activity has been sustained since then, with 12,500 unique visitors and 39,800 page views recorded in September 07.



**4.7.3 Example 3: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Local Directgov referrals (Burst 3)**

Traffic to the website of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) over the course of the campaign provides a useful illustration of the impact of the campaign on an individual LA site. Table 4.7.3 below shows a marked increase in Local Directgov referrals into the RBKC site during each burst.

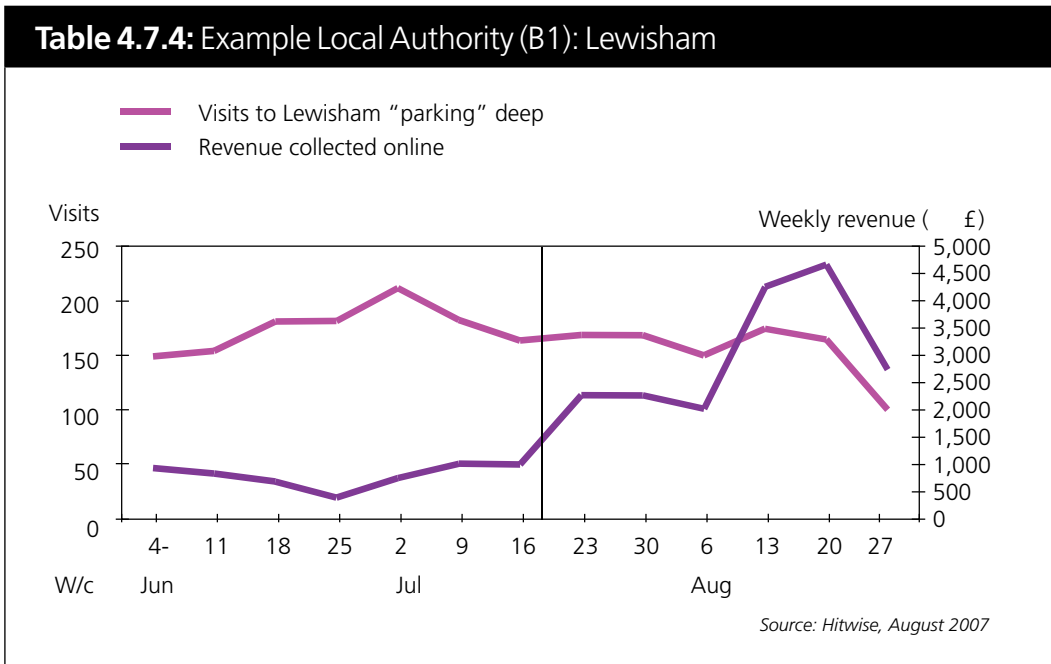
It is also worth noting that the level of Local Directgov traffic into the site is similar to the numbers undertaking key transactions, a reminder of the overall contribution of the campaign in attracting "quality referrals" into LA sites.



**4.7.4 Example 4: Impact of Lewisham’s local campaign**

As mentioned previously, LAs were provided with a toolkit allowing them to customise the campaign to their local needs. Following on from the national and regional activity in Burst 1, the London Borough of Lewisham undertook a follow-on campaign focusing on the single issue of paying for parking fines online. The campaign media consisted of bus posters, advertisements in the council magazine, meter stickers, and home page highlights and promotion.

Lewisham monitored website visits to the parking “deep page” as well as the revenue collected online over the period of the campaign, as shown in Table 4.7.4. Site visits peaked at the end of the regional campaign, but the local campaign was able to drive interaction, with weekly revenue collected electronically up from a minimum week of £370 to a peak of £4,660.



**4.7.5 Example 5: Higher response regarding “Schools”**

Burst 2 of the campaign reduced the number of topics focused upon in the creative executions, and added that of finding out about schools on local authority websites.

Table 4.7.5(a) below shows the number of unique visitors to schools-related pages on the Directgov site during Burst 2 and compares this to the previous year. Although there is an identifiable seasonal effect from August to September, there was a markedly higher seasonal increase in 2006 than the previous year (+148% from August to September '06).

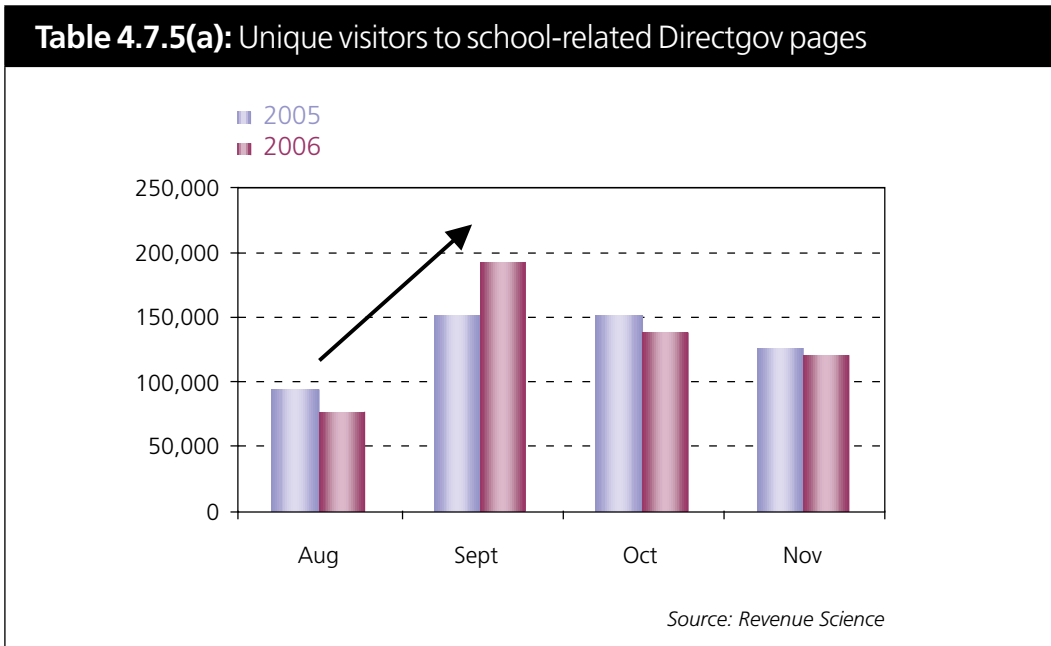
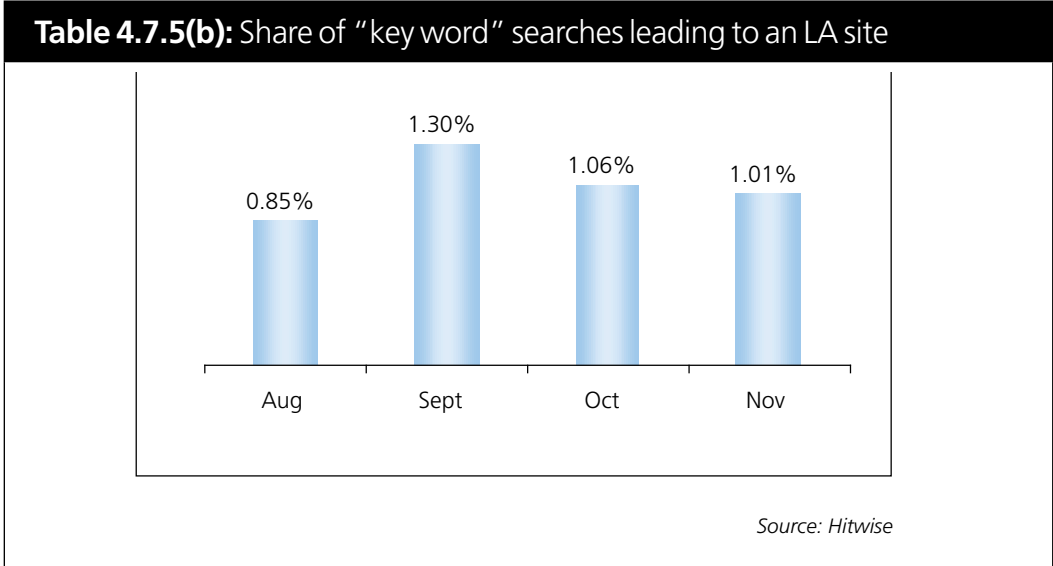
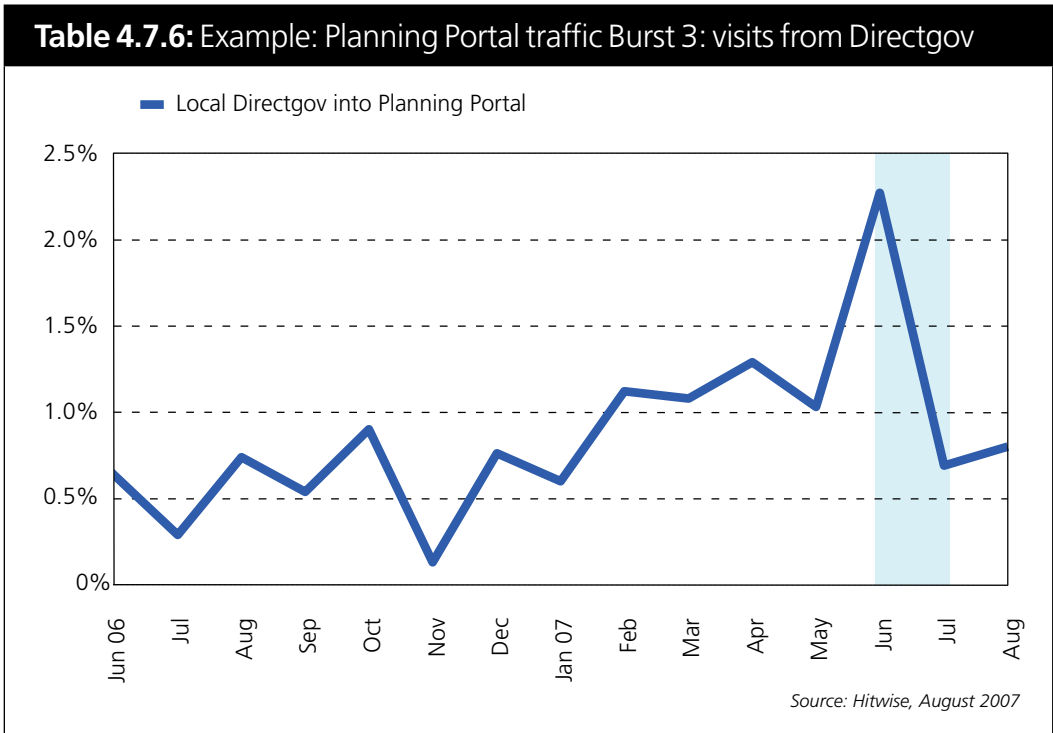


Table 4.7.5(b) shows the share of searches containing the word "schools". There was a 50% increase in the proportion of searches leading to a referral to an LA site which included the term "schools", while "school" went from 14th to the 10th most used term leading to a LA site council referral – and then remained in 11th place for October and November.



**4.7.6 Example 6: Planning portal traffic (Burst 3)**

Table 4.7.6 shows the web traffic from Directgov to the planning portal (www.planningportal.gov.uk) during the period of Burst 3 which, as mentioned earlier, had a narrower focus than the previous two bursts with its emphasis on online planning. The table below clearly shows a peak in referrals during Burst 3, with a subsequently drop at the end.



## Section 5. Key learnings and recommendations

### 5.1 Use of local media and other communications options

It is clear that advertising has raised awareness and site visits, across a range of different online interactions.

Where budgets permit, continued communications activity using local media such as press and outdoor (and supported by a presence in relevant mailings and other literature) can help maintain the momentum achieved by the national activity, and would therefore continue to increase the visibility and usage of such online services. Such increased web traffic may also deliver savings against more traditional (and more costly) methods of contact.

This may be particularly effective when used around the ongoing local PR activities organised by GNN, including the “Pride of Place Poll” and “Doorstep Challenge”.<sup>5</sup>

In planning such communications, across an increasingly wide range of end-users, it is important to target messages most appropriate to each audience (such as parents, garden owners or motorists), and with the most appropriate media for that message and audience.

It will also be worthwhile to consider wider collaborative activities, to take advantage of lower cost media covering a wider catchment area than an individual LA. This may include national online marketing and search engine activities, or regional co-operation around a local radio footprint.

In terms of collaborative activities, it is also worth noting that LAs are authorised to use the Local Directgov links on their own websites, eg to help bring together virtual service links between County Councils and District Councils or between neighbouring authorities<sup>6</sup>. This also saves time on broken link maintenance.

### 5.2 The implications for creative content

The campaign toolkit enables LAs to adapt the same creative executions used in the national campaign to fit local activities and include their own website addresses.

Data from the national campaign has also established the subjects of most interest to different audiences, from which to select those most likely to stimulate interest when used locally.

<sup>5</sup> Further details available from Communities and Local Government and GNN

<sup>6</sup> Contact [localdirectgov@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:localdirectgov@communities.gsi.gov.uk) for further information.

Limited budgets suggest that advertising should concentrate on ensuring visibility for only a few subject areas, selected against local criteria and the media being used. However the Oldham example in section 4.7.2 above demonstrates that relatively high visibility can be achieved on a limited budget through carefully selected local activities.

Smaller-sized ads may provide an option for a more sustained presence over time. In addition, response-generating calls to action may enable LAs to concentrate on particular services where online interaction works particularly well and offers identifiable cost savings.

### **5.3 Recognising different reasons for use of online**

The research has identified large numbers of visitors who now recognise how they can access a range of information (such as for school term dates) through their LA website.

The advertising campaign has also driven an increasing familiarity and confidence regarding the different problems they can report online, a main focus of the creative content. It is worth noting that such problems arise on a sporadic basis and that this suggests the need for a more continuous, lower-key advertising presence.

Supported by this background increase in familiarity and confidence (and according to the development of individual website capabilities) visitors are now willing to undertake more complex transactions such as parking fines and council tax – often supported by specific local activity and with the inclusion of reminders within in the respective mailings.

There are clear indications that each of these reasons for the use of online services has been increased through the use of above the line advertising concentrating on a single access channel message.

Meanwhile, the web traffic and consumer survey data provides more detail as to which individual services are of most interest to different end-user audiences.

### **5.4 Different end-users, with different expectations regarding access routes**

Since the campaign was first planned, there has been a marked growth in the number of Internet-enabled households, with older and more down-market users also expecting to access LA services online.

These groups may be less familiar with online services than younger more upmarket visitors and it is important the range of services and the means by which they access them are fully catered for.

Meanwhile, even Internet-confident users still expect to be able to access LA websites and the relevant deep pages through a variety of routes – with search engines featuring prominently, and Local Directgov able to generate “quality referrals” into specific pages.

Across Government, there is an increasing emphasis on customer-centred services, with consequent expectations on LAs to improve their understanding of the existing and potential audience for online services (customer insight).

### **5.5 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation**

It is important to set up and maintain a regular monitor of website usage and customer attitudes and opinions – both to improve online services and to monitor the effects of any activities (advertising or otherwise).

Metrics should include web traffic in terms of the number of visits, visitors and unique visitors across the different pages accessed, as well as the sources from which the site was accessed.

Where possible, it is also important to measure the public’s awareness of the services available online, key subject areas of interest, usage of different channels (including “off-line” access to council services), as well as what may best constitute the key measures of customer satisfaction.

Consistent use of the same metrics will enable direct comparisons over time.

There may also be opportunities for other data capture and feedback, possibly within a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programme.

## Section 6. Appendix: Examples of creative executions







