

Communications Division report London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

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Introduction

The Communications Division is responsible for all aspects of communications for the HPA, including but not limited to media relations, stakeholder relations and internal communications. In order to support the HPA's response to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, enhanced communications arrangements were established.

In preparation for the HPA's Games time reporting period (2 July – 12 September 2012) an Olympics 'core team' was put in place from April 2012 to get the Communications Division Games-ready. This core team was made up of three communications managers and two press officers and was responsible for the following tasks and outputs:

- Developing Communications staff rotas and job roles
- Producing template media statements and a sign-off protocol
- Coordinating the HPA's contribution to the NHS Games Time Reference Pack for frontline clinicians
- Overseeing the production of the HPA's 'Baseline Document' to brief key stakeholders on health protection issues in relation to the Olympics
- Attending numerous workshops with Olympics stakeholders to run through health protection scenarios and establish the appropriate lead organisation and key messages for particular situations
- Participating in Olympics command post exercises
- Facilitating the production of 'b-roll' laboratory footage to provide to media in order to reduce disruption to laboratories at times of high work volume
- Facilitating the production of a series of seven short films – 'Behind the scenes in an HPA laboratory' - to promote the work of HPA laboratories:
www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/InfectiousDiseases/Films/

The following report is a summary of key Communications outputs during the Games period.

Olympics communications team

The Games communications rota ran from 2 July – 12 September 2012. The core Games Communications team was embedded within the Olympic Coordination Centre (OCC) at HPA Victoria to enable a quick response to any information reported to the OCC.

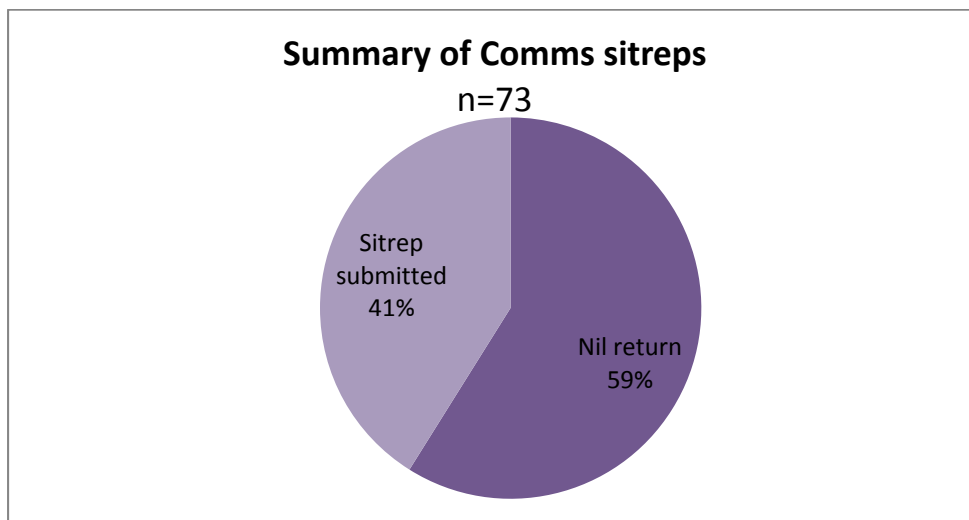
This core team comprised a lead communications manager and two press officers who were responsible for Games-related communications from 08.00-19.00 Monday-Friday. Games-related media enquiries outside of these hours were picked up by the on call press officer as per usual arrangements. The lead communications manager was also on standby out-of-hours to provide advice and support, primarily to Games stakeholder communications colleagues.

In addition, this core team was supported by an 'internal communications' lead who was responsible for coordinating information for staff, and a 'briefings developer' who was responsible for external/stakeholder communications. These two roles were staffed remotely, as the Communications Division is geographically dispersed, with staff based in regions and centres around the country. A Games press officer was also on duty at HPA Colindale.

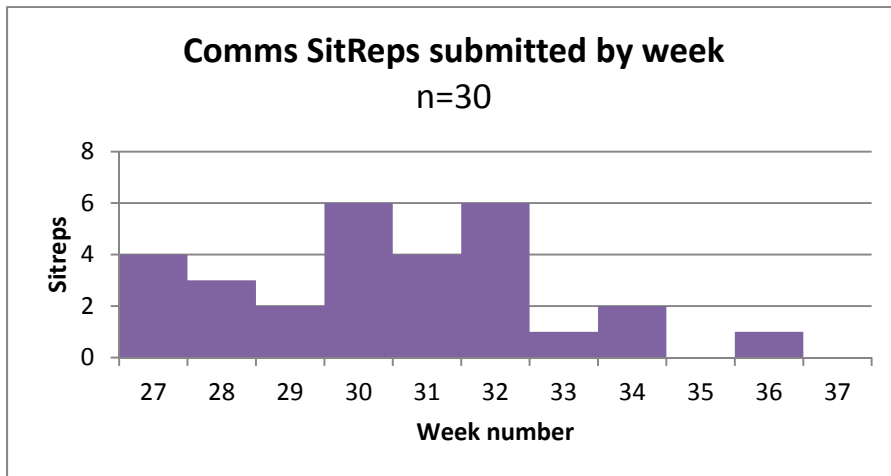
This structure was established to enable a robust communications response should a significant public health incident occur. As no significant public health incidents affected the Games, we were able to scale back the staffing arrangements for the Paralympics, and during the period between the Olympics and Paralympics.

Communications SitReps

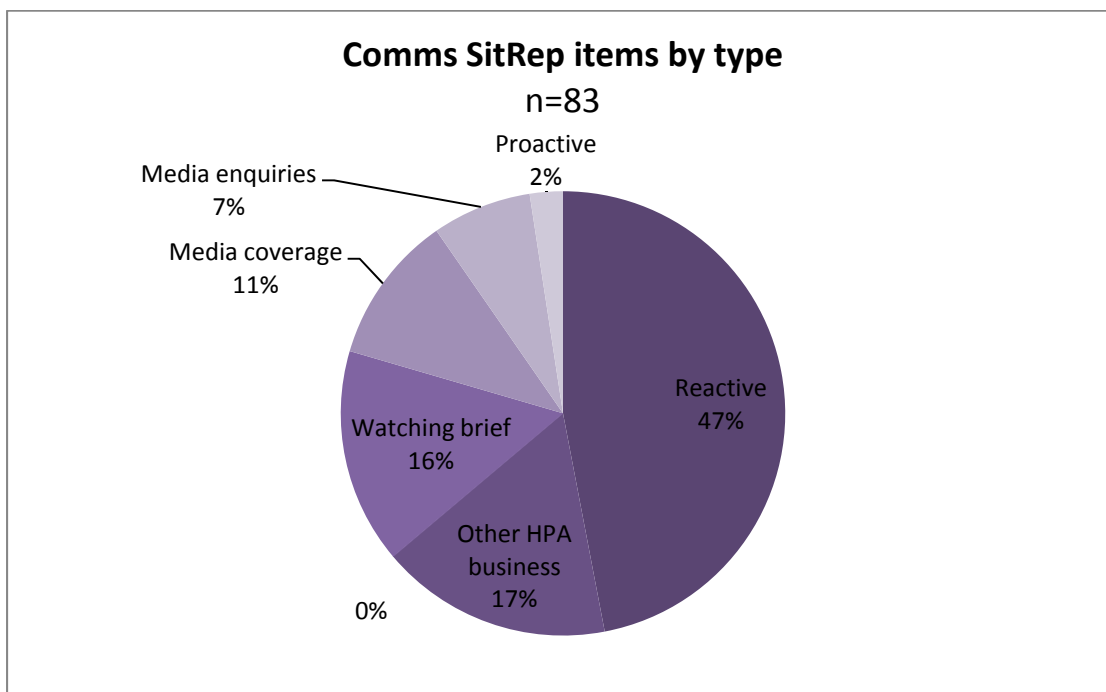
The lead communications manager was responsible for submitting a daily communications Situation Report (SitRep) to the OCC for inclusion in the 'media reporting' section of the HPA SitRep. Daily reporting commenced on 2 July 2012 and finished on 12 September 2012, covering 73 days in total. During this time period Communications submitted 43 nil returns and provided SitReps on 30 days.



The largest proportion of Communications SitReps was submitted during week 30 (23 July – 29 July – six SitReps); week 31 (30 July – 5 August – four SitReps); and week 32 (6-12 August – six SitReps). This reflects the period of the Olympic Games (27 July – 12 August).

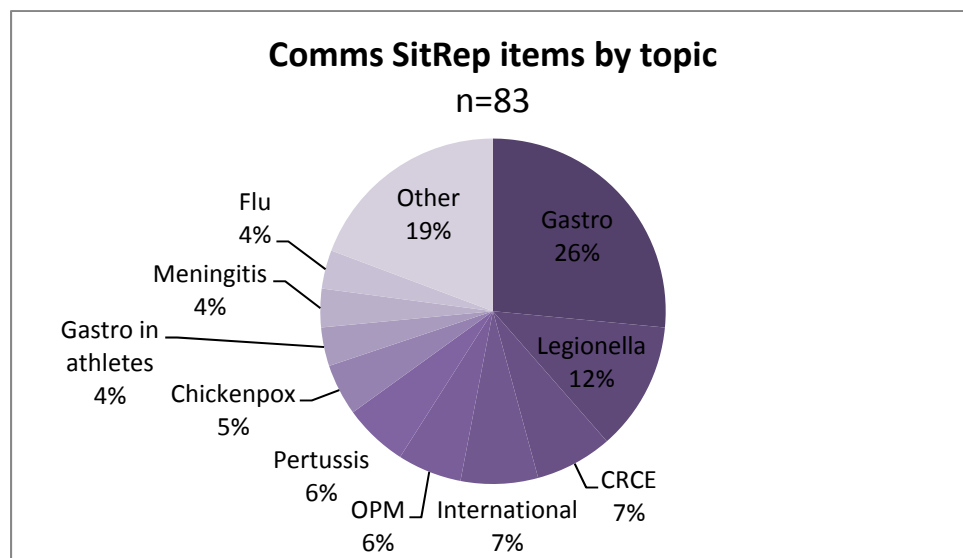


Within these 30 SitReps submitted by Communications to the OCC, 83 items in total were reported. The largest proportion were reactive issues (47%), for which the HPA needed to draft a position statement in the event of media enquiries; followed by other HPA business that may have been generating media interest (17%); and watching brief items (16%) of which the HPA was aware and which it was monitoring.



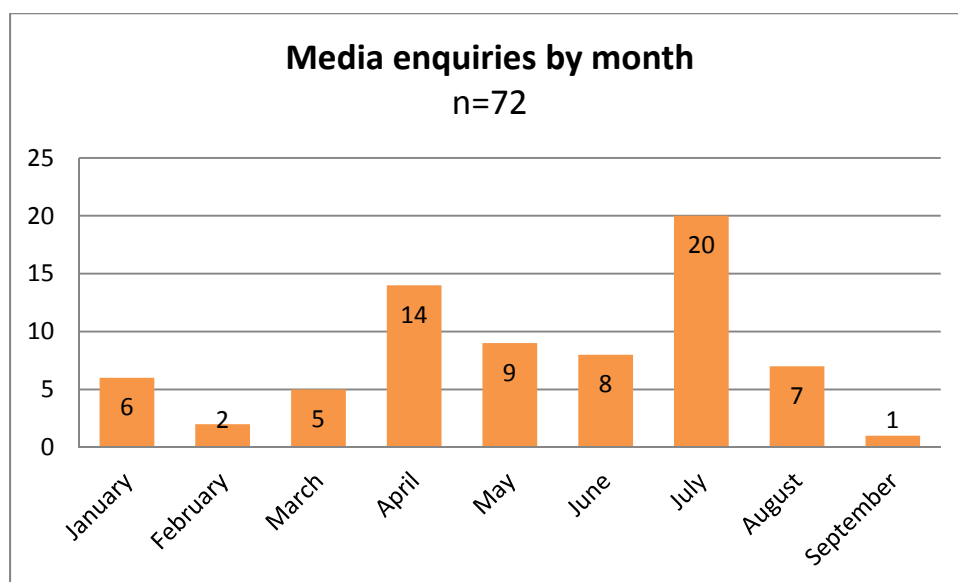
The topic areas that were the subject of most Communications items reported were gastrointestinal infections (26%); legionella (12%, including legionella on a cruise ship housing

Games-related staff and the Legionnaires' disease outbreak in Stoke-on-Trent unrelated to the Olympics); CRCE topics (7% - radiation, chemicals and environmental hazards); and international issues (7% - hantavirus, ebola, enterovirus-71).

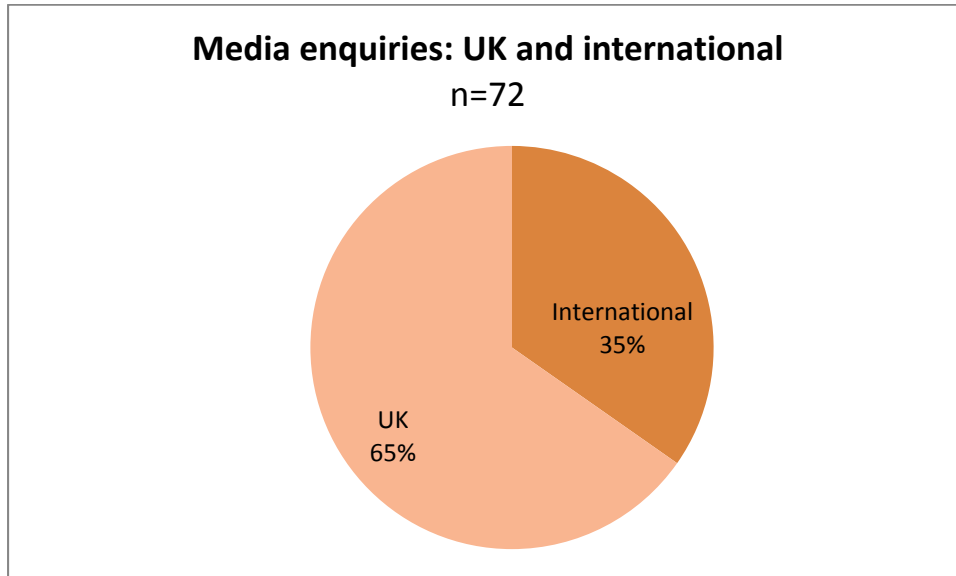


Media enquiries

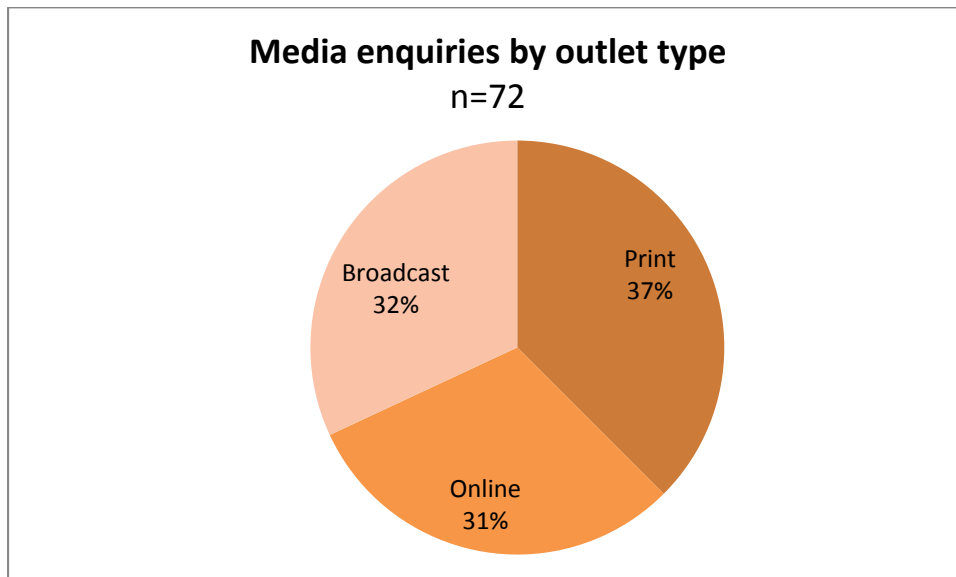
Between 13 January 2012 and 17 September 2012, 72 Games-related media enquiries were recorded on a media call log shared among press officers on Games duty. The majority of media enquiries were received in July (20) – which was expected in the run up to the opening ceremony on 27 July – followed by April (14) and May (9).



International media accounted for 35% of media enquiries recorded, which correlates with the Olympics being a global sporting event. This 35% includes enquiries from World Service sections of UK based media.

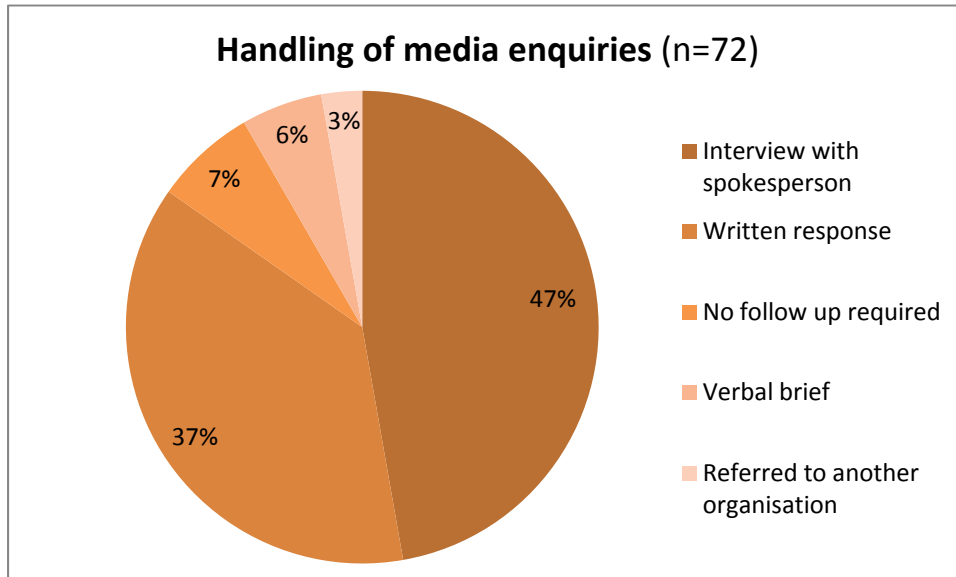


Enquiries from print media accounted for the largest proportion at 37%; online media 31%; and broadcast 32%.

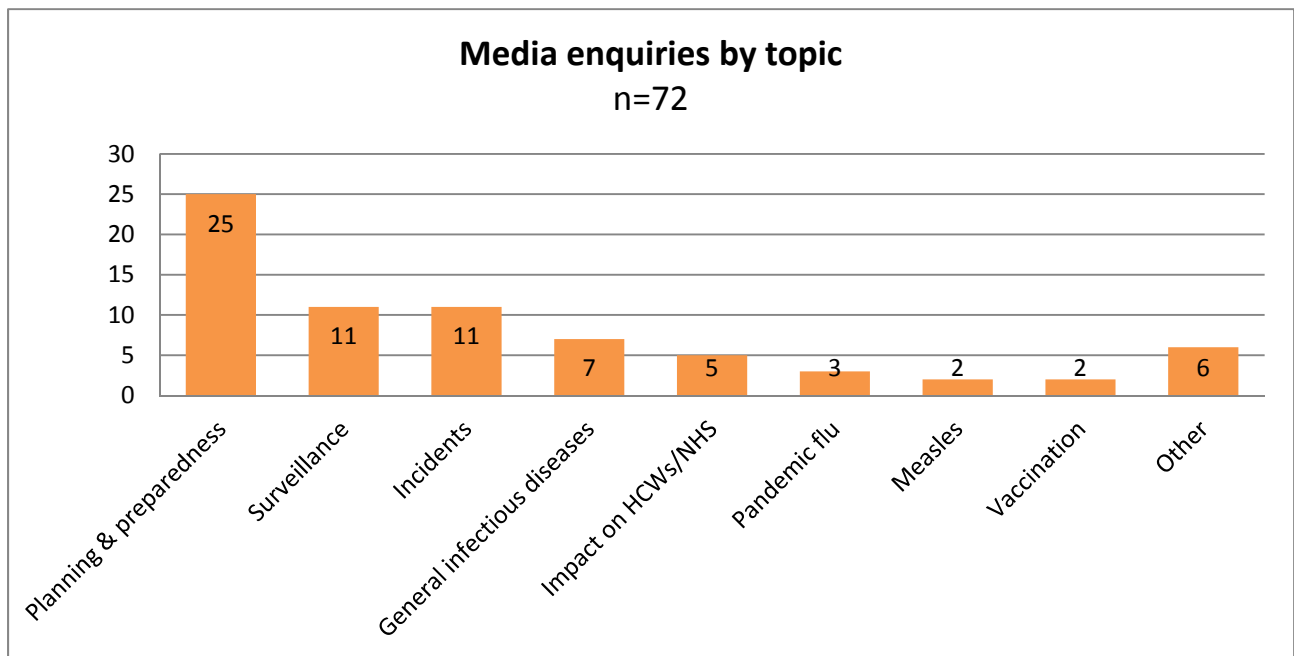


An interview with an HPA spokesperson was provided for 47% of media enquiries, which is a large proportion and which was due to the proactive approach of the spokespeople available. A

written response was provided to 37% of enquiries, and this included directing media to written information already on the website (such as press releases).



The topic area of most media enquiries was planning and preparedness (25 enquiries), followed by surveillance and incidents (both 11 enquiries), and infectious diseases in general (seven enquiries). The 'incidents' included legionella on a cruise ship housing Games-related staff and gastrointestinal infection in a particular group of athletes.



Proactive media relations

An off-camera media briefing was held at HPA Victoria on Tuesday 3 July 2012 to announce that the HPA was 'Games ready' after seven years of planning. A press release - 'Health Protection Agency fit for Olympics challenge' – was issued to coincide with the briefing.

HPA speakers included Justin McCracken (chief executive), Dr Brian McCloskey (regional director for London and Olympics lead), Professor Maria Zambon (director of reference microbiology services at HPA Colindale) and Dr Gillian Smith (head of real-time syndromic surveillance for HPA Birmingham).

The aim of the briefing was to promote the world-class systems the HPA had established to monitor and respond rapidly to health threats in preparation for the Games. The presentations by the speakers included rapid laboratory testing, enhanced syndromic surveillance and undiagnosed serious infectious illness (USII) surveillance. The briefing also covered the overall HPA risk assessment and practical steps the public could take to prevent the spread of infectious disease during the Games.

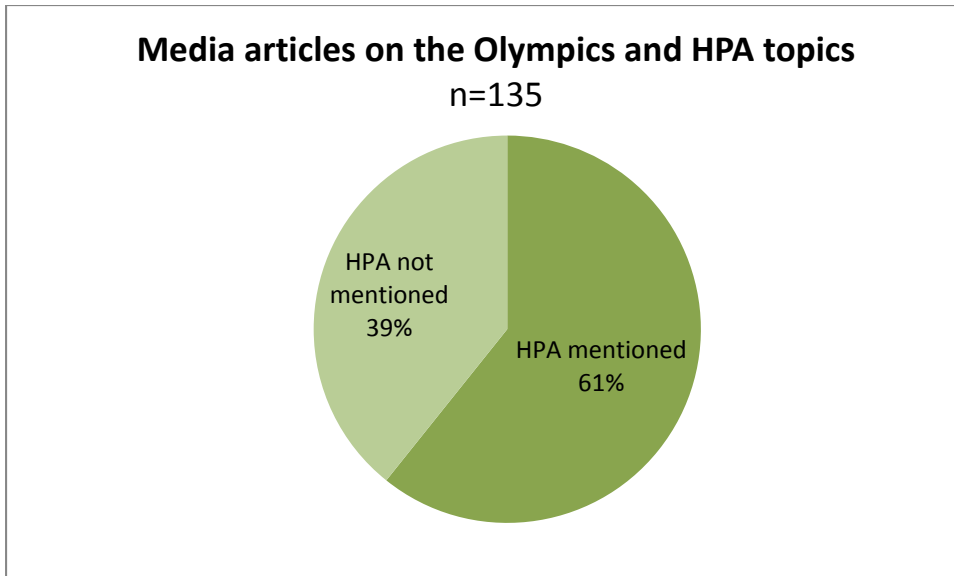
An invitation was emailed to media one week prior to the briefing. The briefing was attended by 12 journalists, including those from the Financial Times, The Times, the Press Association and ITV. Trade media made up a significant proportion of the audience, with journalists attending from the Nursing Standard, BMJ, BMA, GP Magazine and Pulse Magazine. The briefing was also attended by stakeholders from the Department of Health, NHS London and Government Olympics Communications (GOC).

The press release resulted in 20 media articles, which accounted for 15% of the total media coverage on the HPA and HPA topic areas in relation to the Olympics from 1 January 2012 – 12 September 2012 (n=135).

A further press release titled 'HPA surveillance systems clear first Olympic hurdle' was issued on 16th August 2012 in the period between the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The aim of this press release was to summarise what the HPA had seen during the Olympics and to reiterate general public health advice prior to the start of the Paralympic Games. This press release received very limited pick up, probably due to the fact that no events of major public health significance had occurred.

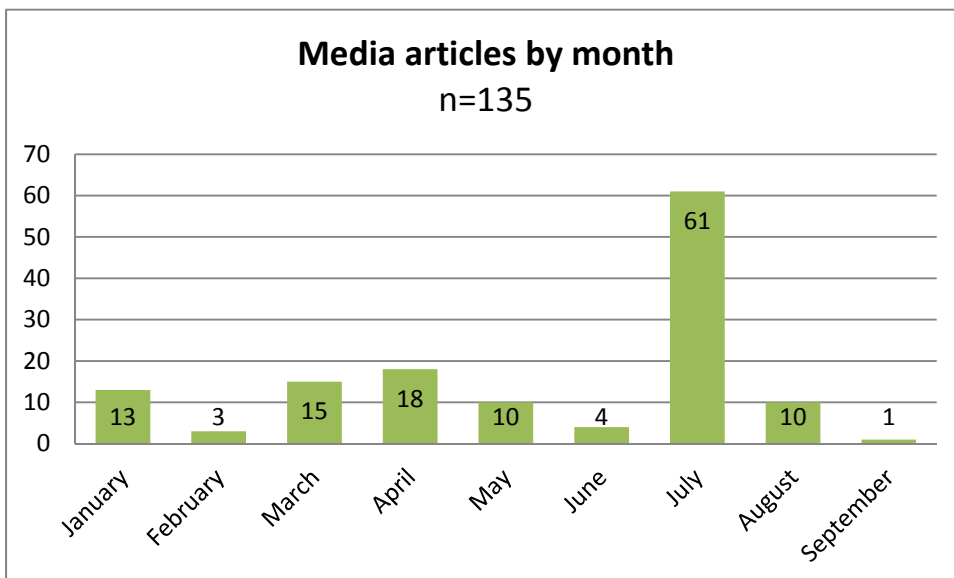
Media coverage

Between 1 January 2012 and 12 September 2012, 135 media articles were identified that referred to HPA topic areas in relation to the Olympics. Of these, 61% mentioned the HPA.

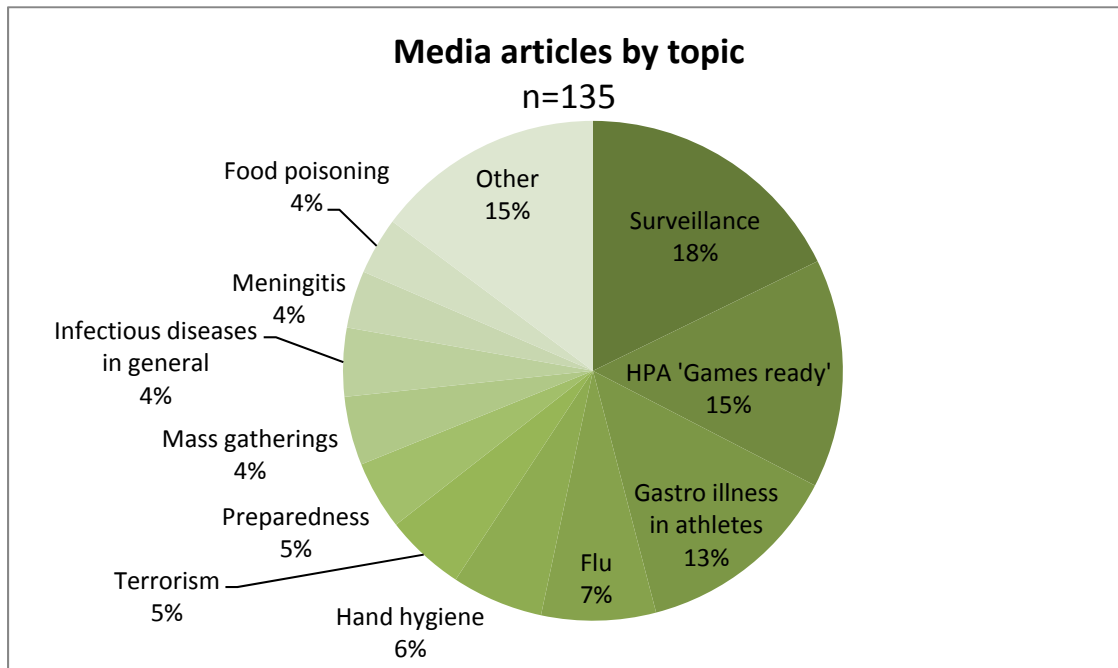


A large proportion of these articles were from online media sources (71%). Print media accounted for 29%. The HPA subscribes to a media monitoring service that identifies all articles mentioning the HPA and HPA topic areas in print media, which provided the source for these print articles. Google Alerts were set up to identify relevant online media articles and in addition the press officers on Games duty conducted daily key word searches of internet news sources.

The most popular month for Games-related media coverage of HPA topic areas was July (61 articles), followed by April (18 articles) and March (15 articles). The volume of media coverage for July and April is consistent with the proportion of Games-related media enquiries received by the HPA press office.



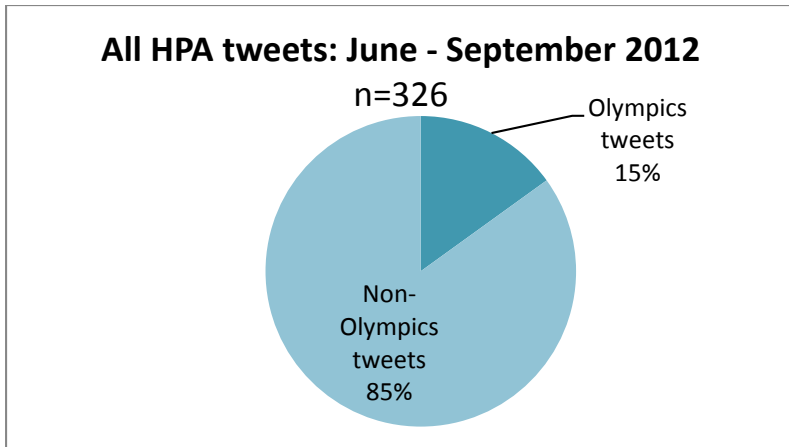
The top three topic areas covered by these articles were syndromic surveillance (18%), coverage of the HPA's 'Games-ready' press release (15%), and gastrointestinal illness in a particular group of athletes (13%).



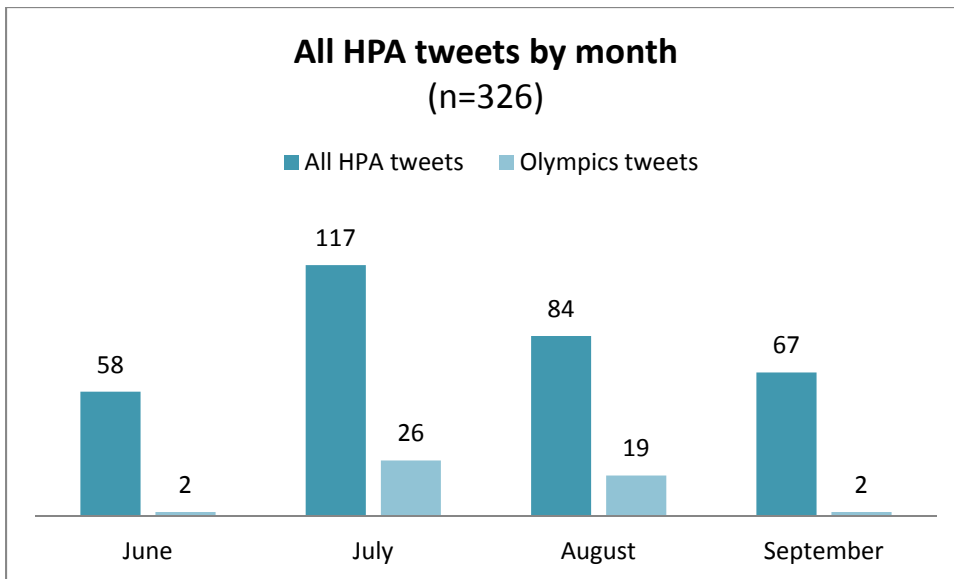
Twitter

The Olympics communications team worked closely with the social media press officer at HPA Colindale to develop a number of Games-related tweets to be published on the HPA's official Twitter account at www.twitter.com/HPAuk. Since the launch of the account on 3 October 2011, the HPA has acquired 4,669 'followers' (correct as of 21 November 2012) who subscribe to receive the HPA's tweets (messages 140 characters in length). In this time the HPA has tweeted 914 times (including re-tweeting relevant messages from other Twitter users).

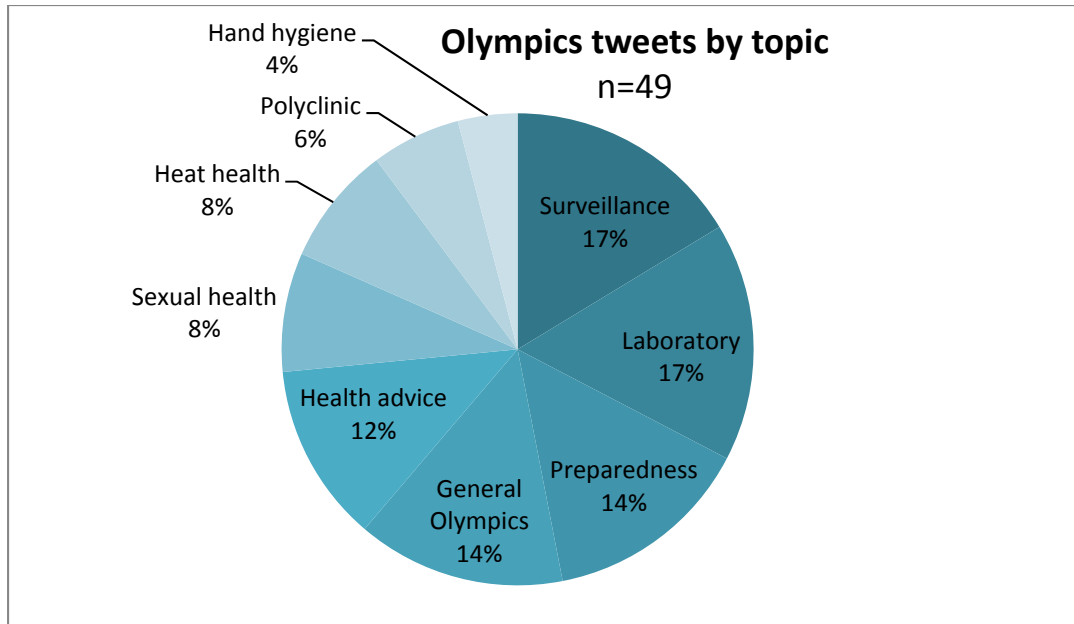
Games-related tweets accounted for 15% of all HPA tweets published between June and September 2012.



The most Games-related tweets were published in July (26 tweets) followed by August (19 tweets).



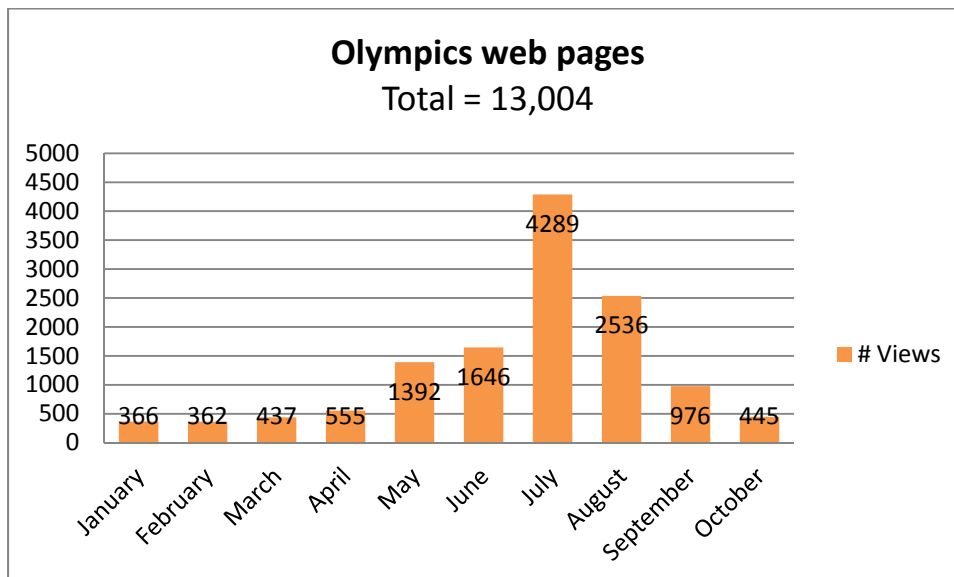
Most of the Games-related tweets focused on surveillance and laboratories (including the 'behind the scenes in an HPA laboratory' short film series), both at 17%. These were followed by preparedness (14%) and general awareness-raising of the HPA in relation to the Games (14%).



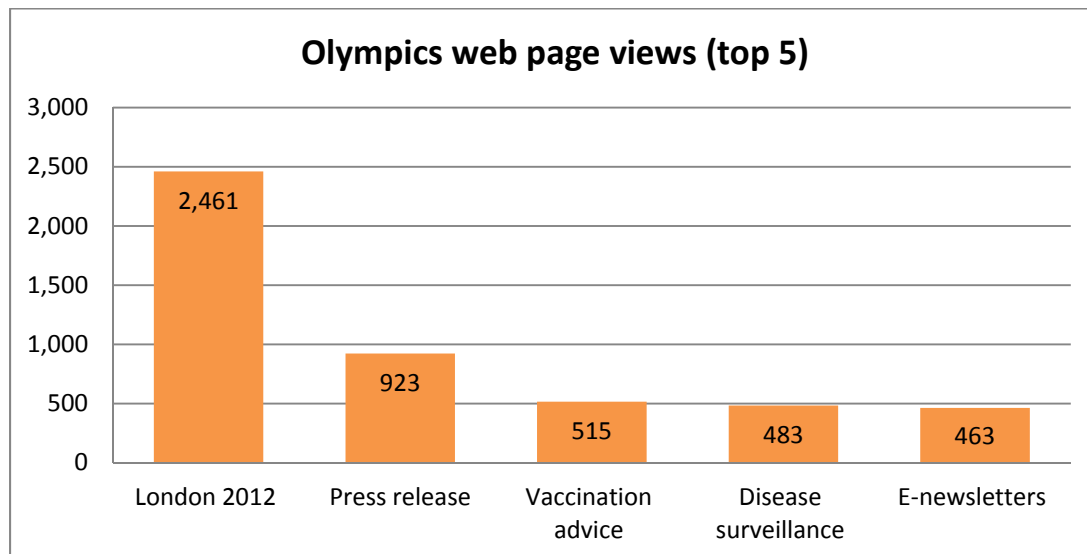
Website

From 1st January – 31 October 2012 the Olympics section of the HPA’s external website was viewed 13,004 times. This was 0.14% of the total website page views from the same period (9,265,009) indicating limited interest in the Olympics content.

The month with the highest traffic on the Olympics section was July (4289 views), followed by August (2536 views) and June (1646 views). This was to be expected as the profile of the Olympics increased throughout June and July in anticipation of the opening ceremony on 27 July and through to its conclusion on 12 August.



Looking in more detail at the HPA's Games working period (01 July 2012 – 12 September 2012), the Olympics section was viewed 7,317 times which was 0.36% of the total page views from this period (2,038, 303). The Olympics pages with the most views during this period were as follows:



For comparison, during the same period, the pages on the HPA website with the most views were as follows:

1. Homepage (>190,000 views)
2. Current vacancies (25,000 views)
3. Mosquitoes (11,220 views)
4. Whooping cough (8730 views)
5. Legionnaires' disease (3830 views).

The press releases with the most views during the same period were as follows:

1. Whooping cough 06 July (1577 views)
2. Hantavirus 03 September (1499 views)
3. Legionnaires' disease 30 July (1393 views).

The Olympics section was accessible from the website's homepage via the features box, which included a relevant image. The Olympics section remained within this box throughout Games time, occasionally rotating with two other features within the same box. This was intended to make the Olympics section as visible as possible, and easily accessible. The limited interest in the Olympics content is therefore likely to be due to the absence of any major event of public health significance to have affected the Games. If there had been an event of public health significance, then we would have expected a much greater hit rate on the Olympics web pages.

Internal communications

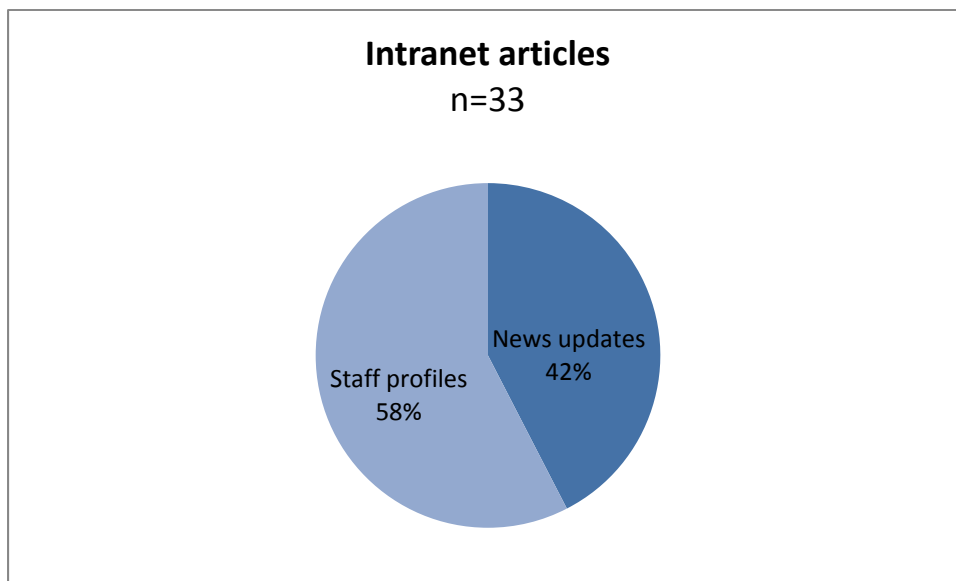
The internal communications strategy aimed to keep staff informed of the HPA's work during the Games, to maintain awareness of the agency's Games activities.

To this end a redacted version of the Situation Report (SitRep), with confidential information removed, was posted daily on the HPA's intranet (HPAnet). A dedicated archive page for the SitReps was created within the 'Olympics 2012' section of HPAnet. The SitRep also appeared on the homepage under the 'What's New' section on the day it was posted. It was the responsibility of the late shift press officer to liaise with Online Services to arrange for the SitRep to be posted, having received the redacted version from the OCC manager at the end of the day.

News updates and staff profile articles were also published on HPAnet during Games time. The aim of the staff profiles was to demonstrate how a wide range of staff at different grades and from an array of departments and locations were contributing to the Games work. Profiles that focused on the lives of staff outside of work in relation to the Games were also included to add variety to the articles and to show the wider impact of the Games on staff. Feedback from staff featured in these profiles was positive.

An 'Olympics Internal Briefings' page was created on HPAnet to archive the news updates and staff profiles. This page was accessible from both the News & Events and Olympics 2012 sections. The articles also appeared in the features boxes on the homepage and were accompanied by a photo when one was available.

The Internal Communications lead on the Communications rota was responsible for producing these articles and ensuring sign off from the OCC team. In total 33 articles were published on HPAnet from 2 July – 6 September; 14 of these were news updates and 19 were staff profiles. The average article length was 220 words.



Intranet statistics are only available for HTML pages and not for downloads such as pdf documents. The Daily Situation Reports page was viewed 692 times from 2 July – 12 September. This was just 0.07% of the total intranet page views from that period (952,873). However, we do not have statistics for how many times the pdf document was accessed directly from the homepage (without the need to access the Daily Situation Reports page), which could account for this low percentage. The SitRep was also emailed by the OCC to all cells involved in the response, so staff with direct interest in the document did not need to use the intranet to access it, which may also account for the low percentage.

The Olympics Internal Briefings page was viewed 1,416 times from 2 July – 10 September. This was just 0.15% of the total intranet page views from that period (920,085), suggesting limited interest in these updates. This may have been because staff were well aware of the HPA's role in the Games and did not feel the need for regular updates. Also, the mass media was saturated with stories about the Games. If there had been more public health issues these updates may well have been more popular.

Furthermore, we do not have statistics for how long these updates were featured on the intranet homepage, or for the exact time of publishing. Feedback from the Communications Division debrief noted that other urgent HPA news often took priority, and the Games items were not featured on the homepage for very long. An identified lesson from the Communications debrief is that intranet statistics could be used more in future to plan information updates and make them more effective. For example, HPAnet is mostly accessed first thing in the morning, with a second peak at lunchtime. The highest traffic is Monday morning, and this decreases as the week progresses. Posting news updates to coincide with these peaks would likely lead to a higher hit rate.

Games time e-bulletin

The OCC identified the need for a publication jointly branded by the HPA, WHO and ECDC to demonstrate partnership working during the Games. At the request of the OCC the Communications Division facilitated the production of a weekly e-bulletin that included content from all three organisations.

The Briefings Developer on the Communications rota was responsible for coordinating the e-bulletin. This included seeking content from WHO and ECDC, editing the text to ensure consistency of style and tone, liaising with the HPA's Publications team (who were responsible for design and layout) and ensuring sign-off from all three organisations.

The e-bulletin spanned two pages of A4 including photographs and design features. It covered topics such as the liaison between the three organisations, surveillance systems, public health legacy, and a summary of notable incidents reported to the HPA.

Five editions in total were published. The first issue was published on 27 July to coincide with the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, and the fifth and final issue was published after the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games to reflect on the experience overall. The e-bulletin was published on the Olympic pages of the HPA website in pdf format, emailed to key stakeholders by the OCC and distributed by email to relevant contacts by WHO and ECDC.

Feedback from WHO and ECDC on the production process and quality of finish was positive.

Conclusion

Overall, since January 2012, the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games generated significant interest in the HPA's preparedness and enhanced systems. It has been noted in this report that no major events of public health significance occurred to affect the Games, which in turn impacts on many of the statistics recorded here.

The low level incidents that were notified to the OCC required significant reactive preparation work and liaison with external stakeholders. This ongoing 'peacetime' work is crucial to the success of Communications during a high level incident.

The few incidents that did attract media attention, including legionella on a cruise ship housing Games-related staff and a gastrointestinal illness affecting a particular group of athletes, served as a reminder that the media were poised for any health protection incidents to occur that would generate news mileage.

The Communications Division established a staffing structure and rota for the Games period that would enable a robust response to any incidents and outbreaks, and we were able to de-escalate this as required depending on Games workload. We are satisfied that if there had been a major incident then our Communications systems would have been fit for the challenge.

Tycie West

On behalf of the Communications Division, 21 November 2012