Email Marketing Benchmarks and Best Practices

for the UK Public Sector

GRANICUS

"As the delivery of public services moves from a centrist and dependency approach to one more focused on empowerment and prevention, services must build closer relationships with the people they serve.

This requires fresh thinking about the role that communications and engagement should play in the delivery of public services.

A modern communications function should not only act as the trusted advisor, it should also play a significant role in the transformation and delivery of services in a way that brings communities with them as active participants.

Strategically aligning communications with customer-centric programmes and services is more important than ever, and the communications profession must continue to find ways to nudge audiences along a "pipeline" from inaction and apathy, to awareness and understanding, and to action and advocacy."

Simon Jones, Chairman, LGcommunications

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Introduction

Smart strategic use of digital communications by the public sector is more important than ever especially in the context of budget constraints and the ever-changing demands and expectations of the modern consumer.

Communications teams must align their work wholeheartedly with customers' needs and organisational objectives, empowering and supporting programmes and services that foster safer, healthier and happier places to live and work. Is there time or resource for anything else?

If communicators are to stand a chance of influencing the way people live their lives, the decisions they make, the services they access, and the opportunities they take up, they must be able to reach and engage the right people at the right moment on the right channel. They must capture attention and inspire action. How? The answer lies in knowing your audience, and the journey to this enlightenment must be guided by data.

The comms companion standing the test of time

Where is your audience comfortable interacting with you? Where do they spend time? In our fragmenting media landscape and "always on" society (more digitally connected than ever), finding a way to control your message and cut through the "noise" to reach your target audience can be a challenge.

With the proliferation in recent years of so many social media and messaging platforms, figuring out which channels generate the best returns on investment (ROI) for your organisation may be somewhat daunting - and expensive, in terms of both time and money. But one trusty communications channel is standing the test of time, and that's email.

Email continues to be a cost-effective way to reach and engage large audiences, and drive those people to act on specific calls-to-action (CTAs). It isn't going anywhere, and this expectation is backed up by the latest Ofcom market report and research by the Office of National Statistics.

✉ **EMAIL - FOR THE MAJORITY, ANY TIME, ANY WHERE:**

82% of adults most often use the web for email	**43%** of 18-34 year-olds use email while commuting	**51%** of commuters use email more than they did two years ago	**90%** of the population have internet access at home	**78%** of adults own a smartphone

Using this guide to influence the success of your organisation

As communicators map their work to strategic objectives, they must monitor communications performance to help turn "I think this works" into "I know this works".

Are your email bulletins a shot in the dark? As you hit send do you feel confident your messages will resonate with your target audience? Is there any science to your messaging strategy?

We recommend you continually review your email performance data to understand how well your communications are connecting with your audience and which messaging, design and content decisions hold the potential to yield the best results.

Data can help identify who cares about your messages, what interests your audience most, which techniques are effective at eliciting a response, and most importantly, what tactics drive meaningful audience engagement that could affect your programme outcomes.

Top tip for Granicus customers

To gauge how your communications are currently performing, take a regular pulse-check in the "Reports" section on the left-hand menu in your GovDelivery Communications Cloud account. Here you'll find handy visualisations summarising your account's progress and performance.

About this guide

To produce this report, we've analysed the email performance of nearly 200 UK-based government and public sector organisations who use our GovDelivery Communications Cloud to deliver their B2C, B2B and B2E (that's E for "employee") digital communications. The report provides an insight into email marketing-communications delivered by:

central government   fire and rescue services   health organisations   local government

London councils   internal communicators   the police

Review the metric reports in this guide to compare your performance with others in your industry and to identify areas that may require improvement. The email marketing best practice tips and examples provided throughout this guide will help you sharpen your strategy for better results.

Performance metrics and definitions

Incremental improvements in your communications performance really do matter. When your communications are interlocked with strategic programmes and outcomes, email performance indicators such as the number of people subscribed to your communications (your reach), open rate, and click rate are no longer just vanity metrics.

Greater audience reach and engagement with your messages could be the difference between 100, 1,000 or 1 million people receiving potentially life-saving information during an extreme weather event. Or an increase in the number of people reading a weekly bin collection reminder could lead to a 27 per cent reduction in the number of households contaminating their recycling bin. Testing what messaging tactics trigger higher email engagement can help deliver meaningful knock-on action.

These are the email performance metrics studied in this report. We recommend you monitor these and adjust your communications strategy to improve results over time:

ENGAGEMENT RATE

The number of unique email recipients who opened an email or clicked on a link in an email over a period of 90 days, divided by the total number of people who received an email during that time.

OPEN RATE

The number of recipients who opened an email divided by the number who received it.

CLICK RATE

The number of recipients who clicked a link in an email divided by the total number who received it.

OVERLAY IMPACT RATE

The number of people subscribing to an organisation's updates via a web overlay (data capture form), divided by the total number of subscribers who signed up online through a subscription link (12-month average).

NETWORK IMPACT RATE

The number of people subscribing via another organisation in the GovDelivery Network, divided by the total number of subscribers who signed up online through a subscription link (12-month average).

SUBSCRIPTIONS PER SUBSCRIBER

The number of "topics" an individual has signed up to receive email updates for, calculated by dividing total subscriptions by total subscribers.

Comparing your performance with other sectors

It's always interesting to compare your performance with others, particularly if it helps you get to the root cause of any underperformance and set your sights on matching the top performers. However do keep in mind that government and public sector communications are different – from the very purpose of an email to how success is measured.

Many public sector organisations are starting to flex their entrepreneurial skills and use email to meet income targets. However unlike the private and not-for-profit sectors, your email marketing rarely serves to drive sales. The objectives and measures of success are more nuanced, and can be tricky to map. At Granicus, we believe this crucial difference is why it's important the public sector has its own set of benchmarks to reference.

It's interesting to note that public sector email marketing is outperforming other sectors in terms of audience engagement. This strong performance highlights the public's appetite for bite-size and regular information from government and other public services. Residents, businesses, tourists, patients, academics, employees and many others continue to opt to receive email content on the services, programmes and opportunities that matter to them.

27%	22%	22%
UK Public Sector Open Rate	UK Private Sector Open Rate	UK Not-For-Profit Open Rate

5%	2%	3%
UK Public Sector Click Rate	UK Private Sector Click Rate	UK Not-For-Profit Click Rate
Source: Granicus	Source: IBM	Source: DMA

> *In today's hypercompetitive inbox, "average" benchmarks have become the new bottom. We encourage you to set your sights higher and compare your results with organisation's performing in the top 20 per cent. With the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in place, list hygiene must be impeccable and audience engagement should be high.*
>
> *Digital communication platforms like our GovDelivery Communications Cloud are 100 per cent dedicated to serving the public sector and take care of subscriber acquisition, list health, GDPR-level consent, and data security for you. This leaves communicators free to monitor performance and be creative. This guide will help you gauge how you're doing and make improvements."*
>
> – Dave Worsell, Managing Director for Europe, Granicus

The big news in a snapshot

ABOUT THE DATA

Measured from 1 August 2017 to 1 August 2018

From nearly 200 government and public sector organisations in the UK

Taking into account 555k email bulletins sent to 1.3b recipients

In a network of 11m subscribers

YEAR-ON-YEAR METRICS FOR THE UK PUBLIC SECTOR (OVERALL)

	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
2018	60% ↑	27% ↑	5.00% ↑	117% ↓	2.6 ↑
2017	50% ↓	25% ↑	4.50% ↑	156% ↓	2.1 ↓
2016	58%	24%	3.50%	236%	2.4

LATEST METRICS FOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay impact rate	Network impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
Median	51%	19%	4%	95%	398%	2.6
Top 20%	62%	24%	6%	341%	771%	4.6

LATEST METRICS FOR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay impact rate	Network impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
Median	60%	25%	4%	59%	67%	2.1
Top 20%	66%	29%	7%	53%	626%	2.8

LATEST METRICS FOR HEALTH ORGANISATIONS

	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay Impact rate	Network impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
Median	50%	17%	4%	1070%	316%	2.4
Top 20%	59%	23%	6%	1070%	637%	4.3

LATEST METRICS FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATORS

	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay Impact rate	Network impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
Median	60%	27%	5%	–	–	–
Top 20%	72%	42%	8%	–	–	–

LATEST METRICS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay Impact rate	Network impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
Median	62%	31%	5%	117%	65%	2.9
Top 20%	70%	41%	9%	522%	206%	4.4

LATEST METRICS FOR LONDON COUNCILS

	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay Impact rate	Network impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
Median	66%	38%	8%	198%	24%	2.4
Top 20%	69%	40%	12%	802%	68%	2.7

LATEST METRICS FOR THE POLICE

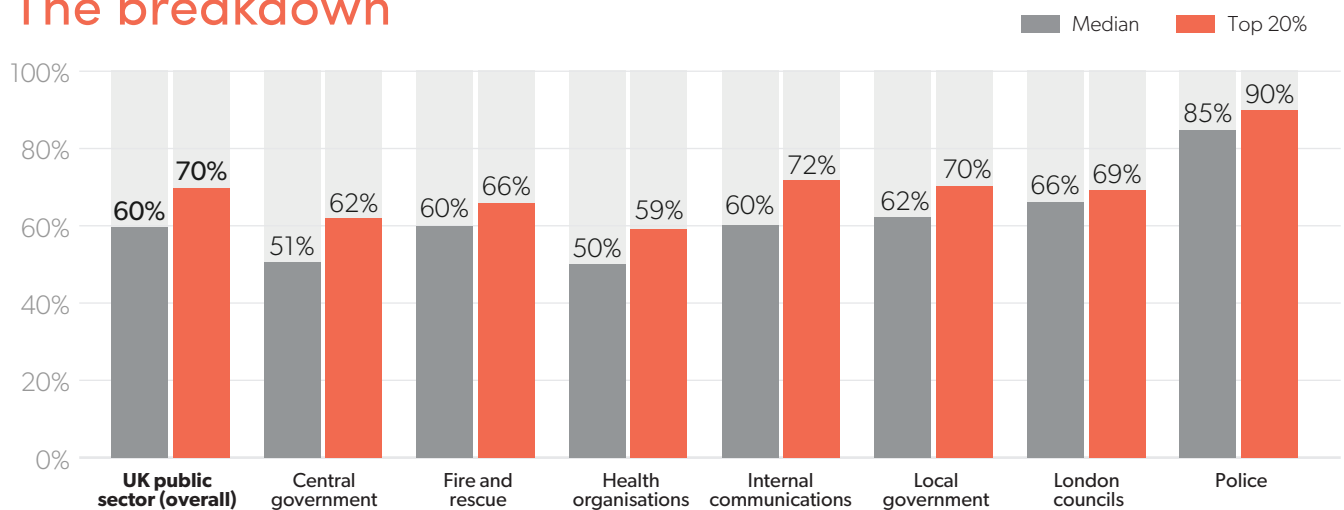|	Engagement rate	Open rate	Click rate	Overlay impact rate	Network impact rate	Subscriptions per subscriber
Median	85%	54%	8%	*	9%	1.9
Top 20%	90%	61%	8%	*	17%	2.9

*No overlays in place.

Engagement rate

Engagement rate is the number of active unique email recipients measured over 90 days.

Engagement rate is perhaps the most important metric for monitoring the performance of your email communications overall. It takes into account both opens and clicks, which is significant given that the "success" of some of your messages won't depend on clicks on a call-to-action (CTA); your emails may be informational only.

Year-on-year improvement in email engagement rate

	2018	**2017**	**2016**
ENGAGEMENT RATE	60% ↑	50% ↓	58%

The breakdown

Legend: Median, Top 20%

Category	Median	Top 20%
UK public sector (overall)	60%	70%
Central government	51%	62%
Fire and rescue	60%	66%
Health organisations	50%	59%
Internal communications	60%	72%
Local government	62%	70%
London councils	66%	69%
Police	85%	90%

This metric is calculated by taking the number of unique email recipients who opened an email or clicked on a link in an email over a 90-day period, and labelling those individuals as "engaged". That number is then divided by the total number of email recipients during that time period. If the rate holds steady or increases while your total reach grows, this is a strong indication your communications strategy is performing well and effectively maintaining subscribers' attention.

To find your overall engagement rate in the GovDelivery Communications Cloud, go to "Reports" > "Account Performance Report".

Good practice example

Sender: Kirklees Council

Overall account engagement rate: 85%

Audience: Subscribers of "Kirklees News"

Subject line: New Hospital Proposals | Bring Rugby Home | New Animal Welfare Regulations

11k
Recipients

54%
Open rate

25%
Click rate

WHY WE LOVE IT

✓ Clear CTA buttons use the active voice to make clear what the recipient should do next.

✓ Bold relevant imagery reinforces the messages.

✓ Headlines and body copy are concise, helping to keep the readers' attention and draw them to the CTAs.

✓ Straight formatting and single-column design are easy to follow and look good on different devices.

Tips for improving your engagement rate

① CHECK YOUR TARGETING, TIMING AND TONE ("THE THREE TS")

Make sure you're only sending your email to the people who care about the content and at a time that makes sense for them. When is your target audience most likely to read and act on your message? Avoid jargon, use plain language, and adopt a tone of voice appropriate for your target audience: make them feel comfortable. Accessibility is key to delivering a positive customer experience, and communications that resonate with the audience make your brand more credible, trustworthy, and dependable. People are more likely to act on your CTA (for example to buy or to do something).

② TEST WHAT WORKS

Do take the time to get to know your audience and test what messaging tactics are most effective at capturing your audience's attention. Experiment with subject lines, delivery times, sender names, colours, imagery, language, message length and formatting to find out what helps maintain high engagement rates. Use the A/B (split) testing capabilities in the GovDelivery Communications Cloud to always send the most powerful message to the majority of your audience.

③ REMEMBER TO CHECK BEYOND THE EMAIL...

Don't forget to test your emails and the recipient's onward journey on different devices before you hit send. The customer experience may begin in the inbox but depending on the purpose of your message, it could extend well beyond your email. Make sure all web links load instantly and your pages are mobile-responsive, or you'll risk losing credibility and repeat engagement. Your subscribers may not give you a second chance after one or two poor experiences.

Did you know?

Ericsson Labs' research shows that we find waiting for a page to load on our smartphones as stressful as watching a horror movie! Patience is low and expectations are high, so do take the time to check your user journeys are seamless.

Open rate

*Open rate is the number of recipients who opened an email compared to the number who received it.*

Open rate seems like a straightforward measurement, but it's not always comprehensive. Open rates can be affected by images not being downloaded in emails (many stats are tracked like this using pixels embedded in emails). We recommend you compare the open rate of similar messaging over time to determine which messaging tactics are most effective.

The most obvious driver of a poor – or excellent – open rate is the subject line. Include a "hook" that captures the attention of your target audience, but do not mislead people. Other factors impacting open rate include sender names, pre-header information (the line of text that appears below the subject line in some inboxes), time of send, and quality of the subscription list.

Year-on-year improvement in email open rate

	2018	2017	2016
OPEN RATE	27% ↑	25% ↑	24%

The breakdown

Median Top 20%
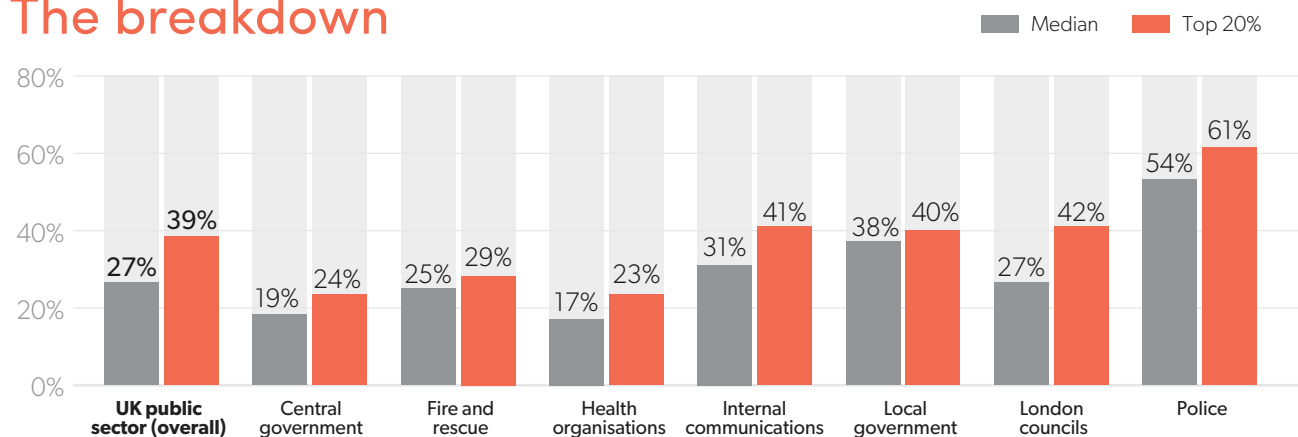
> ### To find your open rate in the GovDelivery Communications Cloud, go to "Bulletins" > "Sent" > "View Report" (for the email in question).

When developing your strategy, decide whether open rate determines the success of your message. A large proportion of information sent from public sector teams can be consumed without being opened. For example, weather alerts, emergency notifications, and bin collection reminders could all be conveyed in the subject line: "Put your green bin out tomorrow (Monday) morning". Here you have communicated what recipients need to know and the majority of them will be able to respond appropriately without further engagement with your email.

Good practice example

Sender: Malvern Hills District Council

Overall account engagement rate: 83%

Audience: Subscribers of "Emergency Alerts - Flooding/Extreme Weather"

Subject line: Severe thunderstorms could cause flooding

2.9k
Recipients

61%
Open rate

8%
Click rate

WHY WE LOVE IT

✓ The subject line is to-the-point, providing a warning to entice recipients to open the email for more information.

✓ A 5.45pm send time is a prime opportunity to reach people on the commute or as they're settling into their evening routines.

✓ Provides the need-to-know info, reinforcing the credibility of the content by citing the Met Office.

Tips for improving your open rate

1 KEEP SUBJECT LINES SHORT AND ENTICING

We recommend you stick to a 54-character limit for your subject lines. Anything longer probably won't be visible in the inbox. Use words that will pique your readers' interest and prompt them to open the email for more details. Tap into people's fear of missing out (FOMO) by conveying scarcity and urgency in your subject lines for time-sensitive opportunities. Include a countdown to an event for example to compel recipients to open the email and take up the opportunity. Subject lines like "Last chance to book", "Tips for preventing the flu" or "What's so important about next Wednesday?" invite readers to open for more details.

2 BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT THE READER CAN EXPECT

Time is precious, so you need to make sure that you're front-loading your subject lines with words that spell out the benefits of engaging with your message. Being upfront and honest with recipients also helps strengthen the relationship between you and your audience. If your subject lines always deliver on their promises when the recipient opens the email, they'll know to trust you and you'll likely see repeat engagement over time.

3 PERSONALISE AND ADD A BIT OF CHARACTER

Personalisation in email has become commonplace so be careful not to overuse it. We recommend you test different uses sparingly for impact. As long as you keep your message relevant and on-brand, adding a bit of personality and playfulness to your subject lines can be a powerful way to get people to open. You may even choose to include the occasional emoji, which has been known to win in A/B split testing! For example, "We don't want to say goodbye ☹" achieved a 3% higher open rate than "We don't want to say goodbye" in a recent reengagement campaign by Central Bedfordshire Council.

THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATOR IN ACTION
Email for keeping people safe

During the "The Beast From The East" severe weather event, Bradford Council attracted more than 6k new subscribers to its "Extreme Weather Email Update" in one week (400% higher audience growth than usual). These proactive emails achieved open rates of up to 75%, helping to keep people informed and safe. The automated cross-promotion on social media meant the bulletins were viewed a further 8.3k times, and overall the support messaging helped twice as many rough sleepers into accommodation than on a "normal" cold night.

If you need help with your winter and severe weather communications, get in touch.

Click rate

Click rate is the number of recipients who clicked on an email compared to the total number who received it.

If a message is for informational purposes only, such as a reminder about a meeting, or healthy lifestyle tips, you don't need to be disheartened by a low click rate. It probably isn't the right success measure for this type of message. But for teams using email to drive people to their website to read or do something, a high click rate is a strong indication that you're reaching the right people, your content is interesting, and your calls-to-action (CTAs) are clear and compelling.

When the purpose of your message is to get people to transact online, enroll in a programme, watch a training video, book an appointment, give feedback, acknowledge receipt of new information, or renew a membership, then click rate is definitely an important success measure. Basic channel-shift principles apply: clicks equate to web traffic. And the more people you empower to complete tasks online (led by your email strategy), the lower the demand on your call centre and other front-line staff.

Year-on-year improvement in email click rate

	2018	2017	2016
CLICK RATE	5%	5% ↑	4%

The breakdown
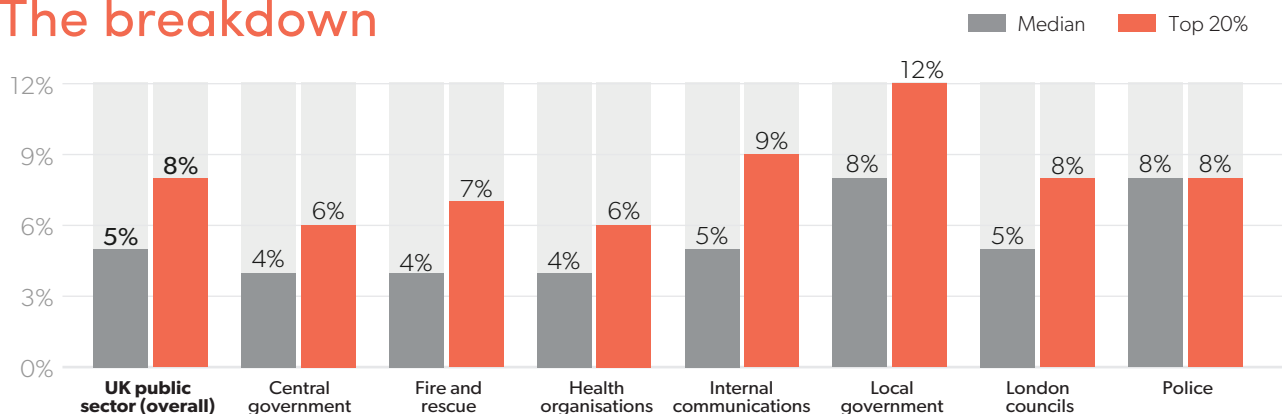
To understand the impact of your email communications and identify the best ways to drive more people to your services online, add utm parameters (URL tracking tags) to your the destination URLs for each CTA in your emails. Using Google Analytics or another web analytics package, you'll be able to monitor which emails generate the highest web traffic and "conversions" (i.e. visitors going on to make a payment or complete another task on your website). Being able to accurately track the contribution of your emails to strategic initiatives such as getting more people to pay their taxes online will also help you demonstrate the value and return-on-investment of your email marketing efforts.

To find your click rate in the GovDelivery Communications Cloud, go to "Bulletins" > "Sent" > "View Report" (for the email in question).
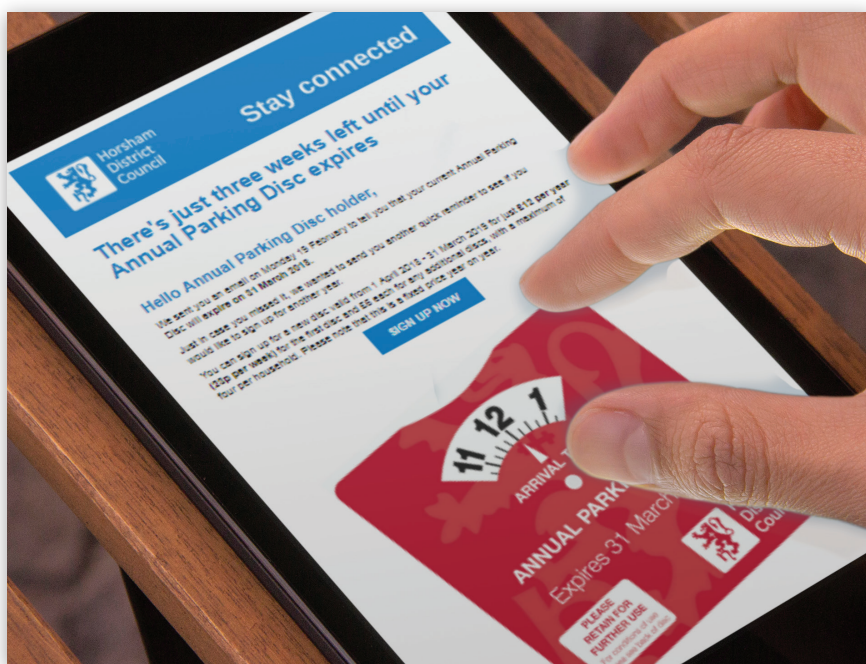
Good practice example

Sender: Horsham District Council

Overall account engagement rate: 79.6%

Audience: Subscribers of "Annual Parking Disc Reminders"

Subject line: Your Annual Parking Disc will expire in three weeks' time

5,916
Recipients

59%
Open rate

30%
Click rate

WHY WE LOVE IT

✓ Email drives people to a single clear call-to-action.

✓ Subject line, headline and colour red create a sense of urgency.

✓ Simple relevant imagery reinforces the message.

Why we REALLY love it

In three months, Horsham's email updates (targeting parking disc customers due to renew the service) **referred 57% of total traffic** to the renewal page (13k unique visitors). Nearly 12.3k annual parking discs were bought online, equating to significant new revenue and return-on-marketing-investment (ROMI).

Top tips for improving your click rate

1   **TEST YOUR CALLS-TO-ACTION (CTA)**

Here's another chance to use A/B testing (manual or automated, available in the GovDelivery Communications Cloud). Try using different words, colours, positioning, font size and style for your buttons to find out what drives more clicks.

2   **USE ACTION-ORIENTED TEXT FOR YOUR CTAs**

Keep your CTA button text short, active, and start with a verb to make it clear what the reader should do next. For example, try "Make an appointment" over "Appointments". A recent study by Unbounce showed that changing button text from the second person ("Start your free trial") to the first person ("Start my free trial") resulted in a 90% increase in clicks. Naturally results will be dependent on what you're offering and who you're communicating with, but numbers like those certainly warrant a test.

3   **DECIDE ON YOUR HIERARCHY**

If you're bundling items together in a monthly newsletter you need to decide what the most important CTA is. The goal of your email is to get someone to act on your "number one" CTA, so other details need to take a backseat. Try using a bigger and brighter button for your priority item, and a secondary colour for everything else. We recommend limiting the number of items in any email to four or five, and be stringent about character counts. Do not include the "full story" in your email, instead provide a short amount of "teaser copy" and use your CTA button to drive people to your website for more details.

THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATOR IN ACTION
Email to deliver channel-shift cost savings

Birmingham City Council sends targeted email updates to thousands of parents and schools during school admissions periods. They provide information about the application process upfront and direct people to their website for more details. During the secondary school admissions period this year, the proactive emails and interactive voice response system reduced the number of calls requiring customer service support on "offer day" by 72%. The council saved £4.3k on call costs in one day and £13.4k in one week.

If you'd like to find out how you could use email to save money, please get in touch.

Benchmark 4:

Overlay impact rate

Overlay impact rate is the number of people subscribing to an organisation's updates via a web overlay (data capture form), divided by the total number of subscribers who signed up online through a subscription link. This is calculated as a 12-month average.

An overlay is a small box that appears for first-time or repeat visitors on a webpage to prompt an action. In this instance, our public sector customers' overlays invite web visitors to subscribe to receive email or text updates from them.

Whether you want to attract new subscribers to your updates on leisure venues, or policy announcements, or foster care roadshows for example, overlays are a powerful tool for increasing your reach. They help convert web visitors into active audience members who opt to stay connected with you.

Year-on-year subscriber acquisition via an overlay

	2018	2017	2016
OVERLAY IMPACT RATE	161% ↑	156% ↓	236%

The breakdown
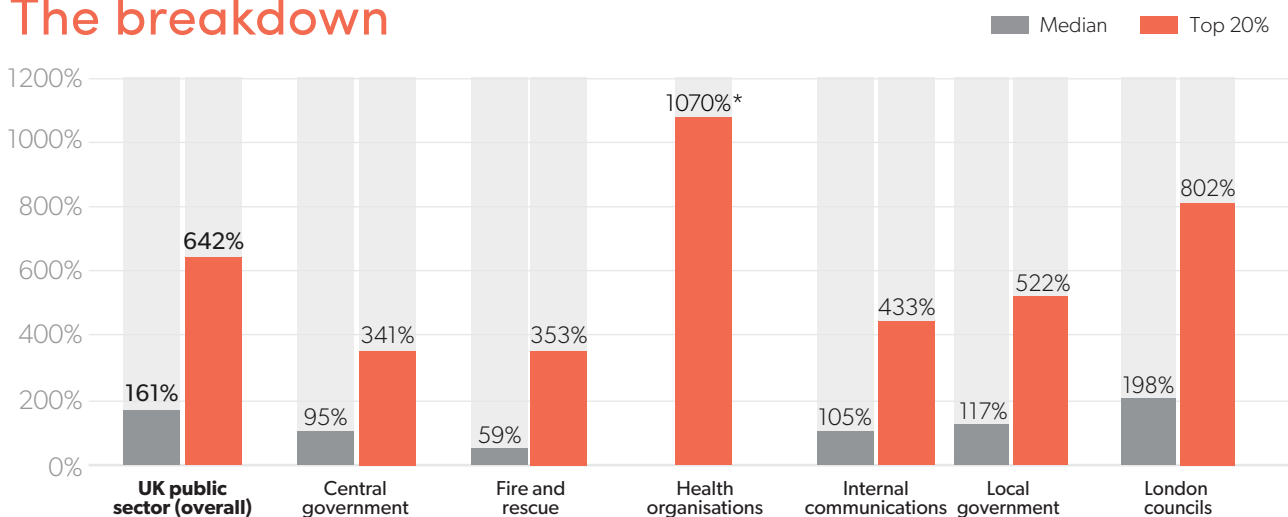
* Only one health organisation utilised the overlay feature.

Overlays are proving to be the fastest and most effective method for growing a digital audience. For example, overlays are twice as effective at attracting new subscribers to London councils' digital communications than all other online sign-up links put together. If you're worried an overlay will disrupt the online user experience, don't be. You can implement different types, and make them as intrusive or discrete as you like.
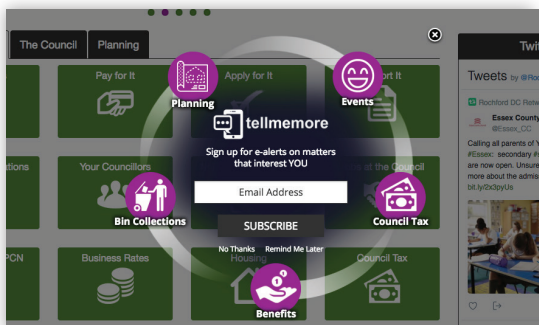
Examples in practice
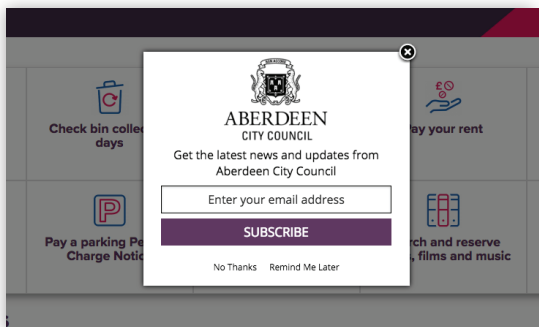
Aberdeen City Council

2800%
Overlay impact rate

✓ Make how to close the overlay obvious.
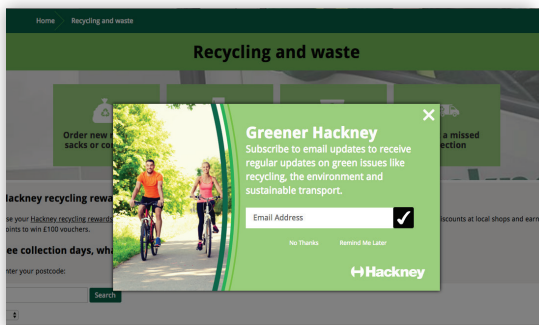
✓ Keep it simple and visually attractive.

Rochford Council

1040%
Overlay impact rate

✓ Give people an idea of the content on offer.

✓ Give prominence to your most popular services.

London Borough of Hackney Council

156%
Overlay impact rate

✓ Use strong relevant imagery.

✓ Add service-specific overlays to relevant web pages.

THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATOR IN ACTION
Email to deliver channel-shift cost savings

Building an audience takes time, so you may want to add an overlay or other sign-up links on your website to capture early interest in an upcoming service or event. Bournemouth Tourism delivered a "teaser campaign" during the construction of their luxury beach lodges, attracting over 5k subscribers to the beach lodge email update even before they were finished. When they were ready to start promoting the lodges and accept bookings, they already had a mailing list of "warm leads" to nurture along the sales "pipeline". Each email generates on average £10k in revenue off a 7% conversion rate on click throughs-to-bookings.

If you'd like to find out how you could use email to save money, please get in touch.

Network impact rate

*Network impact rate is the number of people subscribing to your digital communications via an-
other organisation in the GovDelivery Network, divided by the total number of subscribers who
signed up online through a subscription link. It is calculated as a 12-month average.*

Network impact rate is unique to organisations using the GovDelivery Communications Cloud
by Granicus. It refers to the positive impact of being part of the GovDelivery Network on every
organisation's subscriber growth.

WHY IS THE GOVDELIVERY NETWORK SO POWERFUL?

By using our digital communications platform to deliver your email campaigns, you will
automatically start gaining new subscribers through other organisations in the GovDelivery
Network. These could be hard-to-reach audiences that you otherwise may not have been able to
engage. It's a neat multi-way collaboration, unique to Granicus.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

After someone subscribes to an organisation's digital communications, the final step in the process
invites them to subscribe to nearby or related organisations' services too. Every day Granicus
customers leverage this network of 200 organisations and more than 11m citizens in the UK to
increase the visibility and impact of their services and digital communications.

The breakdown

	Median	Top 20%
UK public sector (overall)	86%	473%
Central government	398%	771%
Fire and rescue	67%	626%
Health organisations	316%	637%
Local government	65%	206%
London councils	24%	68%
Police	9%	17%
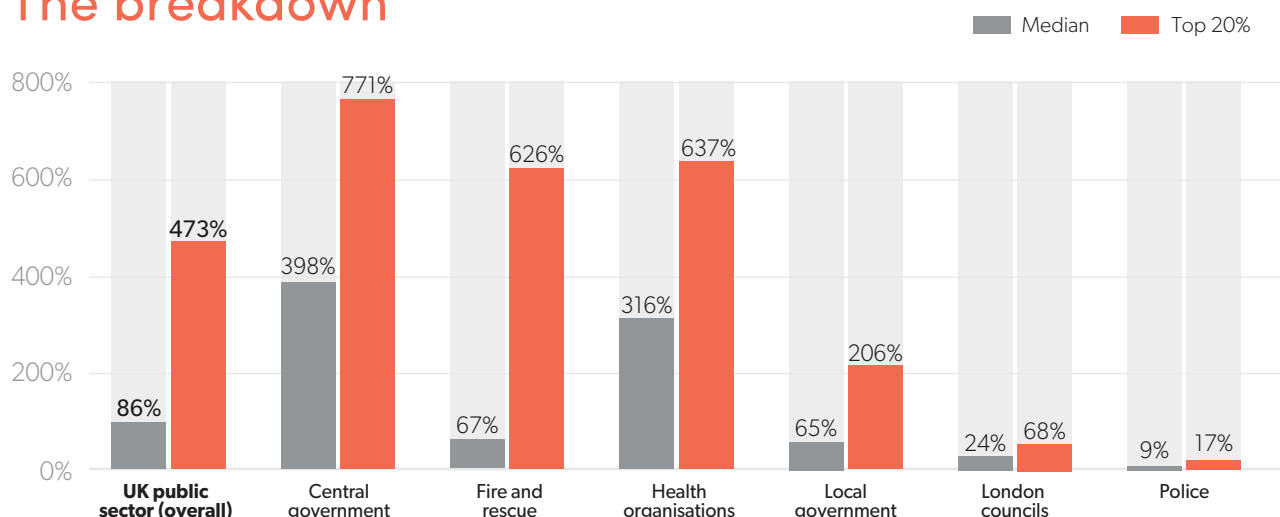
The GovDelivery Network is an especially effective audience acquisition tool for central
government and health organisations which gain on average between three and four
times as many subscribers through the network as they do via their own website and
other online sign-up links.

Subscriptions per subscriber

Subscriptions per subscriber is the average number of "topics" an individual has signed up to receive email updates for, calculated by dividing total subscriptions by total subscribers.

Monitoring subscriptions per subscriber can be a great way to help you gauge public awareness of your programmes and services. If your average is low, it could indicate that your subscription options don't meet customers' needs and interests, or that the quality of your content needs improvement. This metric is also a good way to assess whether you need to do a better job of cross-promoting other topics which may also be of interest to subscriber groups (where permitted). You could advertise new subscription options on the bottom of your most popular email bulletins.

Year-on-year average subscriptions per subscriber

	2018	2017	2016
SUBSCRIPTIONS PER SUBSCRIBER	2.6%↑	2.1↓	2.3

The breakdown

	UK public sector (overall)	Central government	Fire and rescue	Health organisations	Local government	London councils	Police
Median	**2.6**	2.6	2.1	2.4	2.9	2.4	1.9
Top 20%	**4.4**	4.6	2.8	4.3	4.4	2.7	2.9

Giving people freedom to choose what comes into their inbox and being explicit about how their personal data will be used by your organisation are key to building trust and positive relationships with the people you serve. If your audience is feeling good about your organisation and its communications, they are more likely to engage with your messages and act on the calls-to-action.

By offering a range of specific subscription options rather than asking people to subscribe to "everything", you can deliver a more targeted communications service that meets the specific needs and interests of each subscriber. This audience segmentation leads to higher engagement rates and a positive subscriber experience since people respond best when information is presented in manageable bite-size pieces.

Most importantly though, breaking up your communications will help you stay on the right side of the law. To comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) you must obtain individuals' explicit consent to receive information about your services, unless you can rely on another legal basis to communicate with them. The consent needs to be purpose-specific. If you're a Granicus customer, you'll benefit from the templated and automated subscription processes provided with the GovDelivery Communications Cloud. These make it easy for you to deliver topic-based communications according to subscribers' choices.

Good practice example
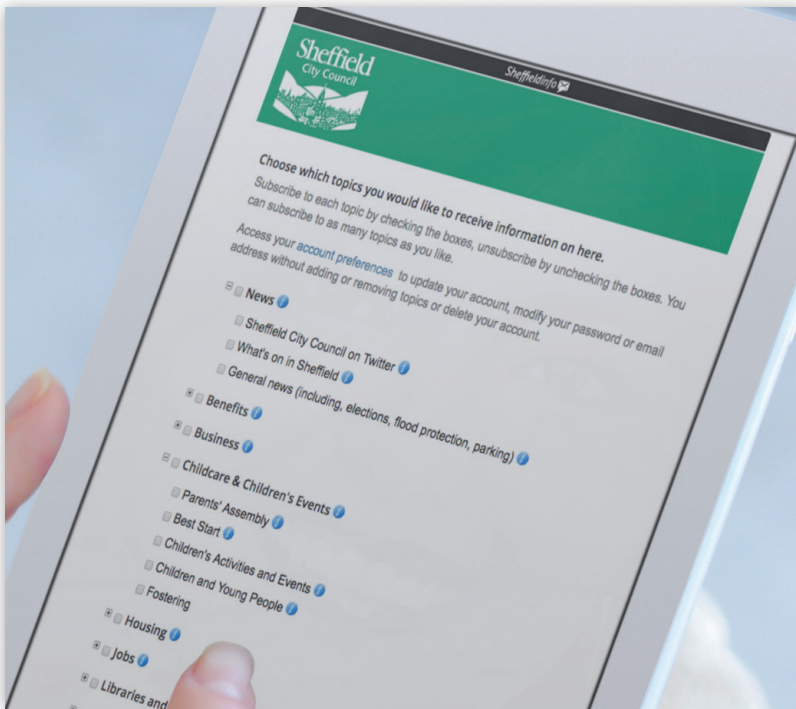
Sheffield City Council

13
Subscriptions per subscriber

WHY WE LOVE IT

- ✓ "Topic tree" uses simple terms the audience will relate to.
- ✓ Subscriptions are structured under thematic categories, giving customers a methodical way to choose.
- ✓ The range of options enables Sheffield to deliver highly targeted communications.

THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATOR IN ACTION
Leverage digital audiences for other important services

Caerphilly County Borough Council is driving up subscriptions to important services such as fostering, leisure venues, and libraries by cross-promoting these options in other popular emails. Nick Rutter, Digital Communications Officer, said the increase in subscriptions after cross-promoting other services on weather alerts had given him a "cast iron business case for cross-promotion". **The ads attracted 11,099 more subscriptions and 602 new subscribers in just a few days.** The lesson? Don't forget to "fish" from your existing subscriber base. You have a captive audience that may not know what else is on offer to them.

Want to engage more of your existing audiences in new programmes? Talk to us about making the most of your reach.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – The new era

We've officially entered the "new era" of permission-based marketing which means you must only send marketing-communications to people who have explicitly opted in to receive them, and you're not permitted to keep hold of data that's not being used. For a long time this has been recommended good practice for email engagement, and our public sector customers are accustomed to giving the public a choice about what they receive and how their personal data is used.

This targeted topic-based approach to communicating is certainly one of the reasons public sector email marketing outperforms the private and not-for-profit sectors (in terms of audience engagement).

Templated sign-up processes and data storage practices that come with the GovDelivery Communications Cloud give organisations a helping hand toward delivering GDPR-compliant digital communications. Nevertheless the change in the law did offer a brilliant opportunity for teams to give their email communications a health check, something organisations will continue to do regularly to maintain a healthy lawful service that meets subscribers' needs.

THE IMPACT OF GDPR PREPARATIONS ON THE SUBSCRIBER BASE

In the lead up to the GDPR, many of our customers delivered campaigns specifically to reengage "unengaged" subscribers and anyone they needed to obtain new consent from. Some customers enlisted the support of our Digital Engagement Services team to produce and deliver their campaigns. Those who did saw higher engagement rates than organisations who didn't take up our campaign management services.

Subscribers who didn't respond to organisations' reengagement efforts were removed from the subscriber base, ensuring list hygiene. On average UK organisations using the GovDelivery Communications Cloud retained 88% of their total subscriber base immediately following the introduction of the GDPR.

> Almost 3.3m UK-based subscribers were removed during data health checks in preparation for the GDPR, but more than 1.5m people opted in to other communications, many via this cross-promotion process in the GovDelivery Network.

## SPEED UP SUBSCRIBER GROWTH BY JOINING THE GOVDELIVERY NETWORK

Between February and June 2018 (prime time for GDPR preparations), our customers saw a hike in the rate of people subscribing to their updates via the GovDelivery Network. Many will have gained new subscribers off the back of other organisations' reengagement efforts. How? When people are asked to confirm consent (by updating their subscription preferences), they are taken to the "subscription centre" where they have a chance to view other services available in the network.

The breakdown

Percentage of subscriber base retained immediately following the enactment of the GDPR.
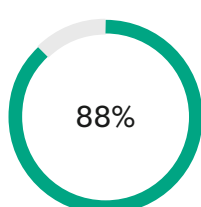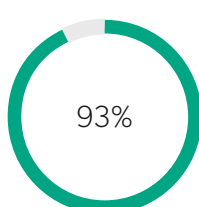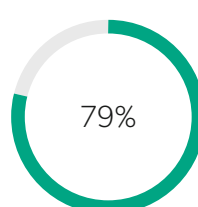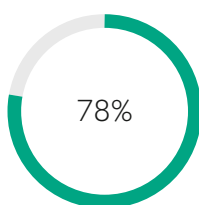
88%
UK public sector (overall)
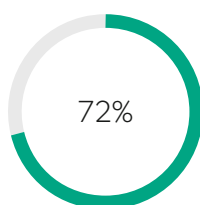
93%
Central government

79%
Fire and rescue
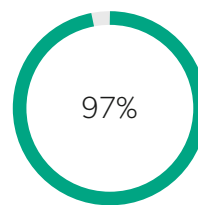
96%
Health organisations

78%
Internal communications

72%
Local government
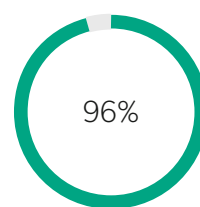
97%
London councils

Did you know on average the GovDelivery Network increases a central government organisation's subscriber base by nearly 400%? Joining the network is a unique opportunity to leverage other organisations' audiences and reach new people. Want to get involved? Get in touch to start building your subscriber base.

Digital communications for a healthier nation

We know the health sector is juggling many challenges, some of which could be alleviated if enough people are encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices, or know how and when to access the right healthcare service for their needs and those they care for. For example, significant time and money could be saved if more people self-served online, or called NHS111 instead of visiting A&E, or used a pharmacy instead of a GP.

So how can you lead people to access the right service at the right time? What role can targeted communications play in educating and channel-shifting more people away from costly health services? How could your organisation start using public, patient, stakeholder and staff digital communications more strategically, to help people stay healthy for longer?

More than 50 organisations across the UK health sector and local and central government are already using the GovDelivery Communications Cloud platform to deliver "health and wellbeing" email and SMS updates to the public, staff and stakeholders.

From life-saving allergy alerts to education events invitations, digital communication tactics are playing an important role in improving health services and access to them.

Imagine reaching and engaging hundreds, thousands or even millions more people, patients and staff.

What could you achieve?

Bring your challenges to us today and get help to make your campaigns and programmes a success.

info@granicus.com

Here are a couple of examples of how targeted email communication is being used to help reduce the pressure on our health services and improve public health:

① EMPOWER THE PUBLIC TO MAKE HEALTHIER CHOICES

More and more health organisations trusts and local councils are sending email updates to signpost people to opportunities to improve their physical and mental health. These messages are popular among subscribers, achieving high open and click rates.

Sender: Horsham District Council

Overall account engagement rate: 80%

Audience: Subscribers of "Health and Wellbeing"

Subject line: Health and Wellbeing: Welcome to the Horsham district health and wellbeing newsletter
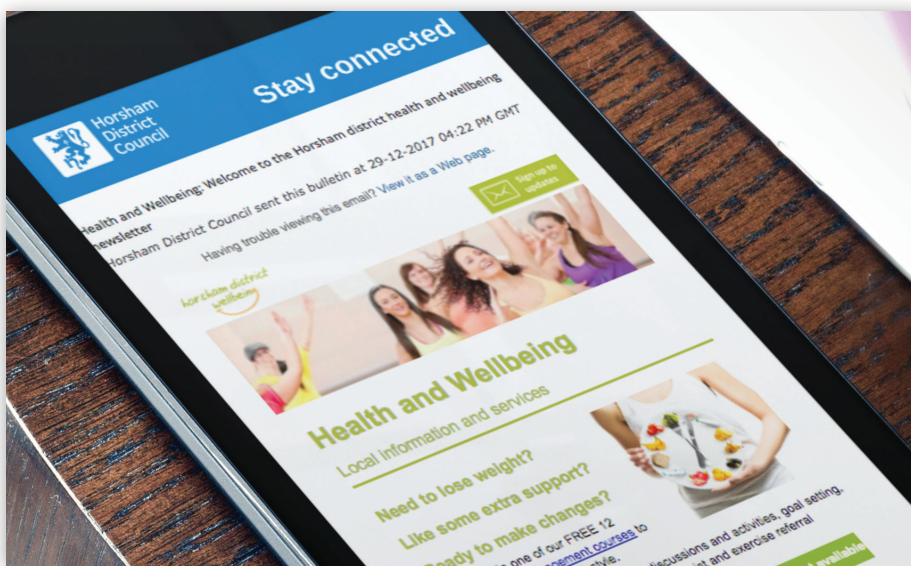
450
Recipients

58%
Open rate

23%
Click rate

WHY WE LOVE IT

✓ Items are sectioned off and to-the-point, making the email easy to scan.

✓ Images help people "see themselves" in the situation, which can increase the likelihood of them participating.

✓ Colour palette is appealing and friendly which suits the purpose of the message.

✓ Clear call-to-action buttons make it easy to engage with the messages.

## ② IMPROVE EMPLOYEE TRAINING, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

We're working with central government and other health organisations to: increase participation in professional development opportunities, empower collaborations that tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time, and share good practice across the sector.

Sender: Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

Overall account engagement rate: 46%

Audience: Subscribers of "Annual Lecture"

Subject line: Register your interest: MHRA Annual Lecture 2018
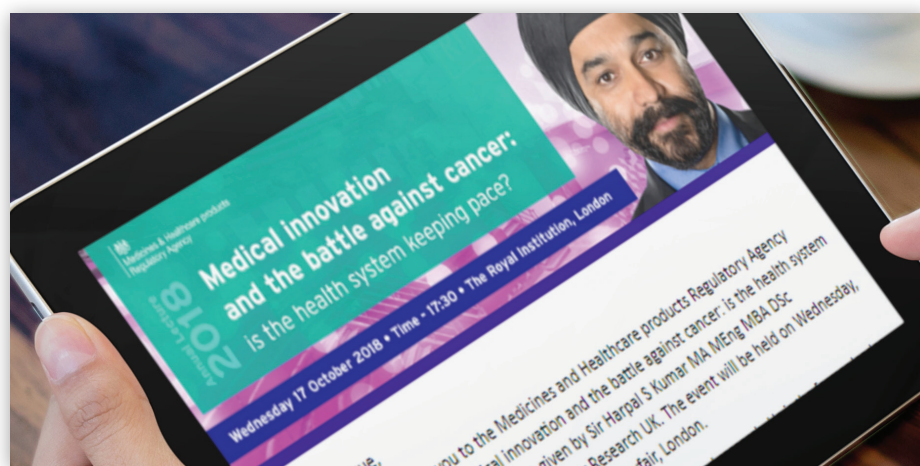
1089
Recipients

27%
Open rate

11%
Click rate

WHY WE LOVE IT

✓ All the need-to-know information is in the header image.

✓ Use of portrait photography makes the invitation more appealing and personal.

✓ A single bold call-to-action button encourages people to act now.

THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATOR IN ACTION
Empowering employees to achieve great things

MHRA uses the GovDelivery Communications Cloud to increase bookings for pay-to-attend educational events. Email marketing accounts for approximately 25% of event attendee, which brings in £100,000 in revenue. Email also drives 25% of web traffic to its events website.

Do you need to increase the takeup of professional development opportunities? Get in touch for some help today.
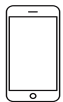
Granicus empowers the public sector to:

Reach and engage large audiences

Drive digital transformation

Generate revenue

Reduce demand

Save money

Change behaviour

with secure digital engagement solutions and campaign management services.

Are you short on time and digital skills?

Granicus' Digital Engagement Services is a team of digital engagement experts who can create and manage your campaigns for you. We become a neat extension to your communications team and can fast-track the delivery of the outcomes you need. Need help?

Get in touch: info@granicus.com

Partner with us today

In our digital world metrics are everywhere, but they are only really useful when put into context. Consider the purpose of your communications and what is an appropriate measure of success.

As you steer your modern digital communications service toward achieving even better audience engagement, we recommend you refer to this guide regularly for performance benchmarks and best practice tips.

Granicus is trusted by over 4,000 government organisations worldwide, including at the highest levels of federal government. We already provide digital engagement technologies and services that connect nearly 200 organisations with more than 11 million people in the UK. You too must ensure you have dependable means to strengthen relationships with communities now and for the future.

If you'd like to lead more people to use your programmes and services for happier, healthier and safer lives, please get in touch today. We'll help you deliver greater value for the people you serve.

Request a chat with Granicus >

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@GranicusUK

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