# Direct mail in the pandemic and in the future

M: Super.

M: We're now recording, Francis.

M: Thanks, Andy. Just really brief intro, so, I'm Francis Ingham, I'm the executive director of LGComms and the director general on the PRCA. We're talking today about direct mail in the pandemic and in the future. Now, obviously we've, we've lived through and are living through remarkable times, and the way in which we communicate with the public has never been more important. And in my view, direct mail has suddenly become far more important that we've seen for many, many years during this period, and hence this event today. And it's the latest in a series of LGComms events, it's, sort of, free to members, and I encourage you to attend as many as you, you can. It's important during these times we have this, sort of, network, this community of local government communicators comparing notes and sharing problems and solutions. Now, Royal Mail is a partner of LGComms, we're very grateful to them for their support, and Sophie Grender is their business development manager at MarketReach from Royal Mail, and she'll be talking to us this afternoon. Now, Carly Davis is chairing the meeting, she's a member of the executive committee of LGComms, she's strategic communications and campaigns manager at Waltham Forest, and it's great to have Carly doing this. And it's all been organised by Andy Allsop, who I'm sure you all know, who's the head of professional communications and marketing at Essex County Council, and a stalwart and big mover behind the scenes in LGComms, so thank you, Andy, for organising this. And that's it, really, from me. Carly, over to you.

**Moderator: Thanks, Francis, lovely introduction. Yes, I am the strategic comms and campaigns manager at Waltham Forest council, delighted to be here and taking part in chairing this virtual event. Welcome to those watching it in the future, we will be publishing this. Just a bit of housekeeping from me, I assume you're all working from home or from your workplace, so if you do have to dash off because there's a fire alarm or something like that, off you go. There won't be one at Waltham Forest, so I'll remain here for the next 90 minutes. Just most-, I can see all of you are on mute, so thank you. We've got some excellent speakers coming up, feel free to pop questions in the chat box as well. And when we get to our discussion panel, because there's so few of us as well, you know, raise your hand and I will call on you and we can have a really spirited discussion, hopefully, around direct mail in the pandemic and the future of it. So, without further ado, I will hand over to Sophie who is going to do a presentation for us. So, over to you, Sophie.**

F: Brilliant, I just need to-, I wonder, Andy, if you could share your, your screen. I'm, I'm struggling.

M: Okay Sophie, just won't be a moment, and then we'll, we'll try and get that up.

F: Sorry about that. Thank you very much. So, just whilst Andy's putting that into full screen, I'm delighted to be here today, and the sponsor of LGComms that will-, I think it's for our second year. We obviously value all of the work that we do with our government partners, but it isn't just about Royal Mail. I actually work for MarketReach, and MarketReach is really the body that, I, I guess, kind of, works to promote mail as a media channel. So, we're completely agnostic, we don't mind if you work with Royal Mail or you work with Whistl, whoever it happens to be. But what we do is we tend to take a lead in terms of delivering great research and stuff that helps us to underpin the case for mail, not just mail though, but alongside other channels. And the world as we know all changed when the country locked down in 2020, and the importance of home-, and, it's alright Andy, I'll stay on my first slide, if you would. That's great, thank you. And, and the importance of, of home made people really focus on what's truly important to them. We researched people's views of what it meant being suddenly forced to work, study and connect to people from home, and we found evidence that messages by email or smart phone actually started to feel a bit invasive to people. I mean, I certainly remember that bombardment of emails at the beginning from brands telling us how they were operating, how they were gonna help us, you know, what they were doing during the pandemic to get us through it. And Andy, if you could go to my next slide, that would be great.

And what happened in the first lockdown was, we found that 88% of people paid either the same attention or more attention to mail during lockdown. So, I certainly know that my habits changed, I'm sat in my dining room normally, the dog barks, the postman arrives and I can actually hear the mail falling through the letterbox. That's an experience I've not had before because I work full time, and normally I'd be in the office. So, it meant that the mail that was coming into my home was certainly commanding a lot more attention. People said they really looked forward to receiving mail, so things they got, you know, they, they were opening pretty rapidly because it was something that was a, a little bit of a break in the day, actually. You know, something else to look at other than a, a computer screen. And I think the other thing that's really important about mail is that it, it-, it's useful. People find the stuff that they get in a letter or a mailing pack really, really useful. We got a lot of people saying, you know, that whatever lands on the doormat is inherently trusted. You know, there's a lot of emails that go out that you're sometimes a bit unsure about whether you should even open, and it feels like the person sending it has really invested time, effort and money in getting their message across. And, you know, people were saying things like, 'It must be worth reading.' That was a really common sentiment that we heard from people. Next slide please, Andy.

And the other thing that we found that for government in particular, there were some really key pieces that came out of the research. Basically, people were saying that, you know, in, in relation to communications from government, as, they, they-, they seemed to feel that it's the most appropriate way to, to be talked to because the, the subject matter was so important. People felt that when they received a letter from government, it showed that the situation had really been taken seriously. And probably most importantly, well over half of the people we spoke to said it helped them better understand what they needed to help, and what, what they needed to do to either keep safe or get help. Which was obviously one of the crucial things that many of the local authorities were trying to achieve during, during that lockdown period when they had lots of vulnerable people who were either shielding or, or, you know, even wanted to volunteer and go and help people. You know, because that was another big factor. Next slide please, Andy.

And this, this is particularly telling, you can see here on the left that we've compared letters from-, the letter from Boris, we then looked at letters or, or any communication, really, it could've been a mail pack or a leaflet or whatever from the local authority, or stuff from the NHS. And anything you see on that chart with a little yellow triangle, which I hope pops out on screen, is, is significantly higher than anything you see on the left. So, you can see that anything with that triangle, that local authorities scored really highly in terms of showing citizens it's taken, taken them-, the situation seriously, it's helped people understand what they need to do, and it's actually helped people feel more secure, which is a pretty good thing, really. When you consider that probably a lot of people, even those who weren't vulnerable before, probably moved into that vulnerable space through, you know, being furloughed and all the other things that were going on during-, in the economy at that time. Just to say though, actually I, I don't know if-, I, I didn't see anyone pop up who, who works for the NHS, but letters about shielding were, were taken even more seriously. And again, you know, it's kind of not a surprise, because those people are probably at their most vulnerable during a situation like this. So, you can see here that mail was incredibly helpful in terms of communicating to citizens, to get-, you know, to really land the messages. Now, the next slide, Andy, please.

This might not be something that you're particularly familiar with, so I'm gonna just spend a couple of minutes explaining what JICMail data is. This is a project that I, I set up in 2017 because what we realised was that within the media world, there had been people like TV had been collecting data about how people consume television for over 30 years. And that's when you get figures like, you know, there were 17 million people watching Strictly last night. And the figures come from a, an organisation called BARB, which is basically the joint industry committee for TV. I joined MarketReach about six years ago, and my very first task was, 'Could you please set up one of these things for mail? Because we've never had one.' So, starting right from scratch, what we did is, we set up a panel of, of people who gather information about all of their mail, and they put it all on their smart phone so that it can be tracked over a 28 day period. So, they gather the mail for a week, and then they stop at that week, and then they track all of those pieces of mail in that week over 28 days.

And what we can see from it is, is these two really important pieces of information, that's mainly used by media planning people, which is reach, so how many people saw it. The common wisdom is that, you know, mail packs only get one person that it's addressed to will see it, actually they're shared. And the other thing that people tend to think is that you, you take a look at a mail pack once, but you know, even if you think about your own behaviour, you know that you go back to it more frequently. And so, what we see is that people revisit a, a-, a piece of mail over, over a period of days. And this is really interesting for government because government comes out in every measure, if you look at the whole sector, and that's not just local authority, but I've, I've split that out in, in a couple of later slides. But government stuff is the highest of any sector in terms of its levels of engagement. It generally gets 98% engagement overall, and by that I mean the piece of mail has been engaged with in some way, shape or form. It's been looked at, opened, read, put aside to look at later, you know, it's had a, a-, some form of touch point has happened with that mail. And government can, sort, sort of, be pushing up towards five times that someone will revisit it, which is, is-, is really, really high when you consider that the average is 4.2. Next slide please, Andy.

So, engagement with local authority mail during the lockdown actually got to 100%. So, it was engaged with by everybody. Now, actually the average with all mail also went up during the pandemic, so we've enjoyed record highs, really, of engagement. I think though what you can see, and that is quite a significant difference, is that for every hundred people who are receiving a, a piece of mail from a local authority, and I by the way just looked at the first quarter of this year for this data, normally the average would be that another fifteen people would see that piece of mail. Here, you can see it's 55. So, it's getting shared around a household an awful lot. The frequency has just recently, it's-, it was 4.2, it was running at 4.2 until the pandemic, and it's now running at 4.4, so people are returning to their mail slightly more frequently than they were. But with local authority mail, it's 4.7. So, you're getting near-, you know, a, a real cut through in terms of people engaging with the messages that are being sent.

I also, then, on the next slide, Andy, took a, a-, a quick look at door drops, because they're often quite forgotten, but they are a way of reaching every single household in the UK. So, they are very useful at doing either, you know, a complete drop to a, a-, a local authority area, or honing in on, on-, on segmented audiences. And again we saw that with local authority stuff, we were getting 100% engagement with, with those door drops, which is-, I've never seen that before in any sector. We were getting higher than average reach, as well, and higher than average frequency. And you can imagine, 'cause it's not an addressed piece, a door drop is only, you know, is slightly less engaged with than, than mail would be. So, and overall, we get this, kind of, resounding, sort of, pattern of, of really high levels of engagement.

The one thing that isn't captured within reach and frequency is also what we, we class, and it's not a great term for government, we call them commercial actions. And what we mean by that is, do people go on and, and declare that they do other things like, you know, if it was a supermarket, it might be go in store, for example. And actually what we found with local authority mail was that 55% of people who, who got a, a piece of communication from a local authority went on to take other actions. And a lot of that, we found half of that, so 55% go on to do something, of that 55%, half of them went online. So, also what you were managing to do with the local authority communications was drive people online, and I think we've seen-, you know, it, it's been a massive change, hasn't it, in the digital world. And for a lot of people I think for the very first time, they're probably using the internet to a certain extent, where, where maybe they weren't before. So, I think that, that's a, kind of, resounding success for, you know, if your communications were around getting people to go and seek further support, information, get further advice, that an awful lot of them were doing it.

And I just finally wanted to finish on a, a-, a quote from one council, Leicester City Council. They very much used mail to reach their vulnerable and local residents. They did a whole series of mailings aimed at different groups of vulnerable audiences, and they know from the way that they measured it that it, 'Not only increased their engagement, but helped build on their resident relationships.' Which, you know, 'As a sense of value is provided with every letter sent.' And I think that's a lovely quote, encapsulates lot of the things that I've said to support it in terms of the data. And that was my section.

**Moderator: Wonderful, thank you so-,**

F: So, back to you, Carly.

**Moderator: Yeah, thank you, that was really interesting. I'm a bit of a data nerd, so I love seeing all those stats and figures come out. And anything, especially in a local authority, anything that you can show reach, engagement and your return on investment is incredibly important. There was one question that came through in the chat. So, the figures that you just went through in terms of reach and frequency, do these figures apply-, this is from Chris, do these figures apply when the mail isn't addressed to anyone, like when it's simply addressed to the householder or something similar?**

F: If it was addressed to the householder, we would call that partially addressed, and what we find is that partially addressed falls somewhere in between addressed mail and non-addressed, i.e. door drop. So, it, it does nearly as well as addressed, but not quite. But we can-, you know, if you're interested in any of that data, we can-, we can split it out in so many different ways that might help support, you know, your particular business case or whatever.

**Moderator: Yeah, thank you. I actually-, people feel free to put up your hand or pop a question in the chat. Chris is very interested in that data, Sophie.**

F: Okay.

**Moderator: So, we'll make connections after this and-,**

F: Great.

**Moderator: And yes, we'll be able to-, people can find out more. So, I have a question with regard to, obviously we've seen a real resurgence of direct mail during the pandemic, one, do we think those figures that you went through are sustainable? Do you think that they will drop off to pre-pandemic levels, or do you think that they will, kind of, maybe exist in between there because people have, kind of, almost rediscovered how valuable it is, especially in communicating with those seldom, seldom reached or really vulnerable people, or the people that don't have digital access?**

F: Yeah, it's an interesting one, isn't it? I mean, obviously I, I'd love to say that engagement levels would remain as high, but I think one of the biggest factors has been that people have been at home. They can actually see the postie coming up the, the-, the, the path, it, it-, it's, kind of, changed the dynamic. When people start, I think, you know, it's going to very much depend on how many people do return to work, you know, and in what numbers. And you know, I'm hearing all sorts of different pundits, you know, say that they, they think it's-, you know, a lot of people are going to take advantage of this ability to be able to work from home, because it's made them more efficient, and that's just going to change things. It does mean that the home is actually a really great place to, to communicate to people in, because they're not surrounded, you know, if you think about a press ad, and I'm not going to slate press ads, I love press ads and I've, I've run many of them in my-, in my career. But, but if you think about it, a press ad sits in a, a magazine surrounded by a lot of editorial.

**Moderator: Yeah.**

F: If you think about a mail pack, the average that people get on a daily basis is about two, so you are getting very-, a very single minded message into people's own personal space.

**Moderator: Yeah, definitely, and I think there'll be a real consideration of a lot of marketing and campaigns teams to, kind of, bring DM, direct mail, back into their integrated marketing plans when perhaps they'd been, you know, disregarded because one, could they be measured, and two, I know one of the challenges we have is cost, as well.**

F: Of course.

**Moderator: And we have to balance out the cost with the, the evaluation of it and the return on investment.**

F: Yes, and, and I think-, I think you're absolutely right, and, and that's why we say mail is good for certain things. You know, it is that-, it isn't good for those light, quick reminders which email is great at. You know, it, it-, it's great when you've got really quite complex messages to get across, that you really, really want to be sure land.

**Moderator: Yeah.**

F: And, you know, or, or-, you know, thinking about something a little bit more mundane, and you know, things like parking fines, I think without mail, you'd find it very difficult to recover the money. You know, because actually it, it gets-, it, it gets it noticed. You know, stuff like that I think is, is-, you have to consider it in the round, don't you, and you know, when social, social media's good, it's good. Yeah, they all have their different used.

**Moderator: Yeah, definitely one to consider. And we do have a question from LGComms, so I'm just going to share that down to you, were-, when you measured the-, when you measured, were councils using QR codes to drive website hits alongside the call to action?**

F: I wish I could tell you that. I wish I could tell you that. What, what the consumer does when they capture the mail is, they take an image of it, but you can't always see everything because some of them are good at it. In fact, some of them lay out, you know, artistic back shots, you know, others just take a little snapshot to remind them what it is. Just generally, we are seeing an increased use of QR codes. We've also got our first, I can't say her name, but voice activated technology being used in mail for the first time, so yes, that's a-, that's quite a nice one. We are definitely-, I mean, QR code have become fantastically ubiquitous, haven't they, because we've all had to scan in, and now they're available on smart phone, all you've gotta do is point the camera at it.

**Moderator: Yeah.**

F: It just makes it so easy. I do know a, a finance company that's trialling it at the moment, and they are getting a 98% click through to it.

**Moderator: Wow.**

F: Which is really high. So, I, I'm a great believer in trying to make-, you know, if one of your objectives is to get people to go online, giving them a frictionless and seamless way to do that is, is-, is pretty good.

**Moderator: It removes the barriers, doesn't it? I remember a little personal anecdote when I started off in campaigns, probably about maybe ten years ago, I had a boss say, 'No, no QR codes, they're outdated, we'll never see them.' And then they've just come a full circle now.**

F: Yeah.

**Moderator: Everyone's putting QR codes on everything. So, Shima asks yes, so, is there data available for door drops versus addresses, partially addressed mailings. So, we covered that a bit.**

F: Yeah.

**Moderator: And I will-, Shima, this will all be made available and I can pop people in touch with Sophie as well if they want more data or, you know, to look at the, the-, the wider piece of it all. So, I think that's it for all the questions, so now we'll move onto the next section of our-, Chris has just asked what is the definition of engagement?**

F: Yeah, it is-, it-, they've got to have done something with that mail and not just stuck it straight in the bin, because the amount of people that I hear say, 'I never open a single piece of mail.' And then we do, because we, we did some fantastic (mw 24.45) studies a while back, which is where you put cameras in people's homes, and, and there's one woman who said, 'I never open a piece of direct mail.' And there she is in her kitchen in her dressing gown with a piece of mail in one hand that she'd just opened, and she's googling with the other. So, you know, it means they've done something with it, and not just chucked it away.

**Moderator: Okay, great. Thank you, Sophie, that was hugely interesting. We will move onto the next part of our webinar today. So, it-, we will now-, so, Andy has interviewed-, so, this is where we're testing out our tech here, guys.**

M: We are.

**Moderator: So, Andy has interviewed-, so, Andy's the head of professional comms and marketing at Essex County Council, has interviewed Ali Sheard, head of brand and design at Surrey County Council. So, Ali couldn't be here, and they have shared their experiences of using mail or door drop during the pandemic. So, we have a recording of this, so I will hand over to Andy and hopefully it plays really well. If not, we can always share it after this so people can go and watch it, but I'm fingers crossed that it will be working.**

M: Ali, thanks for joining us today. Tell us a little bit about your experience of having used direct mail in Surrey.

F: Right, well, we've actually used Royal Mail quite a lot over the years, but it really came into its own last year for us. We did actually three door-to-door drops with them over, well, over the last year. The first one was probably the most important one, and that was in April, right at the beginning of lockdown. And we identified pretty quickly with all of the normal channels and ways of reaching our residents that we needed to do something really, really quickly, and try and cover off and signpost people to information. So, basically to help and advice on how to look after themselves, and help their, their community as well. Loads of people were putting lots of stuff out, there was lots of information coming from central government, and we realised that we really needed to try and, sort of, pull that all together, working with partners in the county and actually trying to just create, sort of, a-, I suppose, that trusted voice. And we realised that, you know, we did-, we did a community impact assessment and realised that basically, our ageing population were not going to be very digitally aware. We've known that for some time. We were doing digital comms, but not everybody was actually linking into it.

So, we had to figure out a way of getting this really simple information, it was only an A5 flyer, two sided, so it wasn't a big deal, it wasn't a huge print, you know, big piece of print. Half a million copies, so a big print run, but a fairly simple piece of information, but it was really vital. And we decided that the only way that we could be sure of getting it into everybody's house across the county to our residents was by a door drop with Royal Mail.

M: Excellent, and, and what messages were contained within that, that-, that mailshot or those mailshots? Can you give us a feeling of what you were trying to get across in, in, in, and as part of those exercises?

F: Yeah, it was-, really we focussed on five key things. And we started off, our whole-, our whole, sort of, I suppose campaign as it-, as it, it ended up, what started off with some very simple information, was around five key things that we wanted to get across to residents about, sort of, keeping them up to date with official guidance and making sure they went to the right location for that. Because you know, all the, sort of, you know, the worries about misinformation, people putting stuff out there, all sorts of different messages, so we wanted to make sure that we directed them to that one source. So, it was up on to the, you know, to the NHS website for all the information on the virus itself. And sharing information as well, and just making sure that they realised that, you know, they, they needed to be I suppose a little bit cautious, and if they were sharing information, to share it from a trusted source because there was so much out there at the time. You know, people with all sorts of stories. Then there was the, sort of, the safety messages around staying safe and washing your hands and, and physical distance, 'cause that was the really big thing at the time.

And also, people were desperate to help other people within their community, and, and a lot of people, we had a lot-, we've got a lot of vulnerable residents and they needed help themselves. So, I was basically, sort of, flagging to, you know, to people who could volunteer to do that, and the people who needed their help, that we could actually, you know, sort them out. We could actually get them help if they needed it with shopping, with picking up prescriptions and what have you. And also, we could muster those volunteers and, and drive them and focus them to the areas that the county and the organisations in the county that would actually be able to use them in, in the best possible way. And also just a little bit of, I suppose, personal resilience around staying in touch with people, and just that whole, sort of, mental health thing. We were driving them to the two things, you know, those, sort of, five key messages, but driving them to our community helpline. We set up a, a new community helpline which started at the beginning of the pandemic, and I think it's only recently been, sort of, slowed down a little bit. But it was-, it was set up, and it was really, really successful. In fact, you know, sort of, on the back of this, calls were-, calls were-, increased phenomenally. So, we actually had to get loads more volunteers and staff volunteered to actually manage over the weekends as well, 'cause it was not quite 24 hours, but it certainly felt like it at times.

And also our website. We started very quickly to populate a very key area on our website that had all of the information, everything that our resident might need to know, lots of sign posting around, sort of, mental health, and, sort of, wellbeing, how to stay safe and well yourself, but also information about health and support that was available right across the county. Because it was a big piece of work, and we started working very, very successfully and very closely with all of our partners, public sector partners across Surrey. And our website was really the place that we were driving people to to basically get-, find out anything they needed to know, and when it wasn't all signposted, they went to the government site as well. So, we have some very, very clear messages that we wanted to get across to them.

M: So, lots within it. Let's-, Let's start with the, the, the, authority and the credibility that Direct Mail enabled you to communicate, because we're finding certainly in Essex and other parts of the country, I know as well, is that sense of the letter arriving on the doorstep, meaning something that you've got to read and something which is important, and it carries that sense of credibility and authority.

F: Yes. Well, we took a slightly-, we didn't actually package this up with a letter. We didn't actually put it in anything. We just had it going in raw, as it were, just as the flyer. But our whole approach, right away through, from the get go on all of this, was to actually do a Surrey reflection on, or a Surrey version, I suppose, of the national look and feel. So, our material, we were using the colour palette they were using. We were using a similar sort of styling, everything was quite plain, but it was very clearly branded. Sorry, and there was no way you were gonna miss it because we'd got, sort of, the little badge on it, sort of, you know, protect yourselves, others and the NHS, that little, sort of, box call out that they'd got. So, there's some very key pieces of information. But Surrey branding full on there, and literally, you know, the five things, those five messages is little simple icons on the front of it. So, when it landed through the letter box, they would-, it would literally stand out. So, it wasn't an envelope that-, we wanted to make sure that they didn't have to go through another process. So, they didn't see an envelope and think, 'Oh, I'm not opening that,' or, 'I can't be bothered,' or it wasn't hopefully hidden in anything else. But it would sit there. It was-, it was only small, A5, as I say, so we wanted to make sure that it literally stood out from the crowd. So, we just let it see for it itself on this occasion.

M: Brilliant. And in terms of the, kind of, actions that you wanted residents, and you said particularly older and more vulnerable residents, to undertake as a result of having, having received that. How did you make sure that you were linking the content that was going through the letter box with what you wanted to happen next? And, and how did you measure that?

F: The measuring was probably a bit more difficult, because I think we were-, it was more, I suppose, a signposting exercise. I mean, we knew it was getting out because the response to it and the work that we were doing through the community helpline when people were ringing in, signposting them to the support groups, things like working with, sort of, local pharmacies, people delivering shopping, delivering medicines to vulnerable people, all the residents who were shielding. So, we knew-, we knew it was working, we knew we were getting out there. And we did do social media as well, but we were very-, we were very aware that not all of our residents would be able to access that information, which is why we needed to do this key piece of print. So, we knew, you know, from the, the work that we were doing in working very closely with partners and community groups within the county, the response, it was working, because people were actually, the volunteers were coming forward, they were being more coordinated. You know, the support networks were there, food, food banks were being set up and distribution centres for food to get-, to get stuff to vulnerable residents, they were all being set up and it was all working. So, it seemed to be going really well. We had hits on our website increase as well, because I think, and I'm sure other people have noticed as well, while our, sort of, digital uptake-, we had-, we had a very good, we've always had, you know, a good digital offer with Surrey, and we did digital comms, quite a bit of print as well, we all, all left in all, sort of, the usual outlets and places for people to pick up.

But we just wanted to make sure that we didn't-, we targeted those people, the residents who didn't have access to that, but they actually, after a while, I think, realised that they had to get on board with it. So, what we found was, you know, visits to our website were increasing. We've been changing and adapting the information on there to put up what it was that people need and listening to them, so if they're-, if they're asking for some information, and if we get feedback from partners across the county, we were actually putting that information up on the website. So, it was a really useful tool. So, and every time we went out to the residents with anything digital or print, as I say, we did three door mailings, door-to-door mailings, some newspaper advertising as well. But it was always directing them to those, that trusted one source of information. And I think, you know, the response that we got from across the county with people coming forward to help and support residents, and the help, I mean, the community helpline was just nuts. I mean, it just went absolutely mad. It was a brilliant piece of support, and, you know, getting the number out there to every single household in the county, it was brilliant. It worked really well. Really well.

M: Ali, thank you very much for sharing that with us. I'm sure it will prompt lots of conversation as we move on through this afternoon's session. Thanks very much for taking the time to talk to us.

F: You're very welcome. Very welcome. Nice to talk to you Andy.

**Moderator: Lovely interview piece there. Thank you to Ali and Andy for that one. Certainly asked (inaudible 36.28) questions there, and I've seen some in the chat as well. Andy, I'll hand over to you now for your presentation, kind of, following up from that interview that you had with Ali.**

M: Thanks Carly. And just for the benefit of everyone on the call today, that is the first time we've managed to make the audio actually work on this video. I can't tell you how pleased I am about that. Not quite as easy as it may look. Right, so I'm going to try and share something a little bit more traditional by way of PowerPoint, just now. So, this is our experience. Actually aligning relatively closely with Surrey, but, but, different in a few respects which I'll come onto, of using Direct Mail in the pandemic. So, when and where we used it, and what our objectives were. We used Direct Mail in relation to the road map and we had some pretty obvious and clear objectives within that, provided by some reassurance from our director of public health, who we have worked assiduously to build profile for through the preceding thirteen months or so of the pandemic, explaining what the government roadmap actually meant for the people of Essex in terms of the key milestones, and how that related to Essex County Council services and how they would be changing, opening up, as a result of the steps which we've know obviously been through, through the roadmap. So, we distributed as part of an integrated campaign, and that's, that's a really important element. This was not stand alone. This was integrated across our PR and social media to 650 odd thousand households, which is all of the households within what we refer to as the particular area of Essex. Not stuff in the New Forest, but the Essex County Council area.

So, it was packaged within an envelope. It contained an A4 letter from Dr Mike Gogarty, who is now Director of Public Health, and an A4 double sided leaflet which set out in obviously visual format the key steps of the roadmap, what they meant for individual residents and families, and what they meant for Essex County Council services. So, that was the envelope. A very stark, easy to understand message there, and a very clear instruction in respect of our expectation that people would actually read it. And then the letter from Mike. One of the areas that we were very, very keen to push, and this is going back a few months now, in April, as we began to work through the easing of restrictions, was around obviously a, encouraging the cohorts who were able to get vaccinated at that point in time to get vaccinated, and to connect with the GP or with the Essex wellbeing service, the equivalent of what we were hearing about in Surrey from Ali, in terms of the extra help and support that was put in, in place to look after residents at that point in time. And secondly, a very important message which I'm sure everyone that put this continuing to push around the importance of self testing regularly. At this point, in the middle part of the spring, we were still, you know, very much in a space where we were trying to push as much in terms of habit forming elements around getting into a habit of testing twice a week. And in Essex we did a lot of work to make testing, LFT tests as available as possible in our libraries, pharmacies, promises testing centres or obviously ordering online.

And then finally, and part of Mike's mantra on this one was around hands, face, space elements, which we were continuing at that time, obviously. Recently, we've moved on from there, but Mike's mantra was making social distancing a habit, to be in terms of personal space. So, the leaflet obviously reinforced all of that in visual terms and contained the roadmap. May 8th, as we originally knew it. Obviously, there was the final delay around the roadmap. There, into July. The original date was 21st June, and people will remember. But on one side reinforcing getting tested, getting vaccinated, and where help and support was available, obviously mental health being part of that. And then the restrictions as they were relaxed as we went through roadmap. So, this was obviously particularly extensive and, and, trillant. And this quote really illustrates that from Councillor John Spence, who is a member for health and health care. At the top of his agenda was testing and promoting that across the county. And also, at this point of time, with financial support, which was available for anyone who registered a positive test. So, in Essex, mirroring the national scheme, we made money available, £500 per week, in fact. That was an insistence for the work force criteria attached to it for families through self isolation provided to see a test. So, why was Direct Mail our preferred channel? We wanted to reach every household in the county with this messaging. We wanted to make sure that kind of information was accessible and available to all.

The usual offer there was there in respect of translation or interpretation. We absolutely wanted that information to have a reasonable shelf-life. You know, the ambition for this was it went up on the fridge and stayed there through the various roadmap stages. And we also combined this, so that it was an integrated campaign, with the arrival of street times, who were sent to Essex from, I believe, the Cabinet Office, who helped us engage the (inaudible 43.19) voice engagement with residents. And that was particularly targeted, as you would expect, the boroughs and districts, where at that point we were seeing an increase in case levels. So, the messaging we've really been through. But we also, via the leaflet, encouraged people to sign up to our e-newsletter, where we now have 70,000 plus subscribers for the latest information. So, they linked in the paper communication, Direct Mail, with our online, in this case, email, offer very strongly. More on the messages there, but, you know, what we really wanted to do was, was reinforce the importance of compliant behaviours and offer support. So, in terms of the breakdown, just a little bit of, of detail here. So, 626,000 envelopes via Royal Mail, 20,000 by delivery teams and 850 via Direct Mail. So, a mix of companies there, but the weight of what we've been, being via Royal Mail there. And just in terms of the evaluation there. We saw some interesting dynamics. So, the bulk of our social media content, for example, was a precursor to the mail shot.

So, mail shot was around the week commencing the 26th April, as a mutual point there. There we were absolutely thrilled by the results that we got, and as you can see through the fortnight or so where the Direct Mail happened was the volume of traffic that drove to the Essex County Council coronavirus hub, and you can see, as I say, it's more than bubbling there within the space of that period of time. We also saw an uptake in vaccination in terms of total first and second jabs there, but by the time we got to the end of the mailshot period. We have seen an increase in terms of numbers of, of people being vaccinated on a weekly basis across Essex. As I said, the social media impressions dropped off, because actually we targeted that before the mail shot happened. But the number of LFT tests was quite interesting because we also saw quite a massive tailing off there from the point when the mail shot went out. Some of that was related to a shift in terms of where the tests were available from. So, during this period of time, we shifted the front desk and stand alone centres into local libraries and pharmacies, where they are still available from, for example. And we think that that probably impacted figures at that point. This is just the graph that, for us, we've demonstrated the value of the Direct Mail exercise in terms of driving people to the richer consent of Q&A information online, and you can see there, just on the graph that we were very successful and very pleased with the performance of that particular exercise.

So, I shall pause there Carly and happily take any questions, and happily share anything else I can about Surrey's experience, as well. It's a shame that Ali couldn't be here today. She's away on holiday this week. But if anybody does have any questions for Ali in particular, you can leave them in the chat and we can make sure that they reach the team at Surrey and we will get an answer for you. So, Carly, back to you.

**Moderator: Absolutely, Andy. Thank you for that. Really interesting. I've got lots of questions, but I'll hand over to our audience first, before I asked. So, I will go through this. So, Matt, just quickly asked, what was the total cost for that campaign, Andy? You knew someone was going to ask.**

M: I-, I knew-, I knew someone was going to ask that, and happily, Matt, my colleague, Charlotte Falon is on-, on the call today. We were looking at in the region of-, of about 50k-, 50k plus spend on, Charlotte, I think I'm right in saying you have the exact figures, so?

F: Yes. Well, with the print and everything, it worked out at just over 80,000 to reach all the households within Essex, within Essex control. So, it was, like, 80, just over 83,000.

**Moderator: Sorry, you couldn't.**

M: So, that's-, that's the total cost of everything going into this.

**Moderator: And your evaluation, Andy, very stacked with how it directly attributed to that Direct Mail. Like, how did you measure it? Did you have-, did you make a special link or a QR code so that you could see they were coming in directly from that piece of comms?**

M: That's a good question. We didn't use a QR code on this particular exercise. Although, actually, since then, we've invested in a QR code generator and that will very much be a fixture within the similar exercises that we-, that we carry out from this point in time. And we have got those factored into a further planning on public health as far as Covid-19 is-, is concerned. The difficulty we found in terms of getting total clarity in terms of the evaluation was the sheer amount of activity that was coming on at this point in time. When you've got a shift in terms of where testing is being carried out, for example, you know, as part of our Direct Mail campaign you can see some fluctuation within numbers. But the two stacks that really came to and absolutely one of our objectives in terms of driving people to an authoritative information source was and now the relationship with the coronavirus hub. And that was where we saw more than a bubbling of hits, which we know was directly attributable to that piece of Direct Mail putting out. There was no other activity during that time period that will have driven that extreme level of activity and people acting on the website, and part of what we were engaged in. And we saw some pleated increases within vaccination, but within the-, even within the vaccination for this, there was a big (audio distorts 50.06) and that was because the NHS was experiencing what I've explained in bits, in terms of vaccine availability, which impacted the numbers of people being vaccinated. So, we-, we have a reasonably good idea how we were doing and the influence of the exercise. But within that time period, so much noise and other activity had to be taken account of as well.

**Moderator: I mean, it's only been eighteen months. The rest-, I was just saying to the rest of the audience, if you want to jump in at any point, feel free to raise your hand, take yourself off mute. We've got a really small group, so I think we can manage that quite easily. A question from Chris in there. So, I'll go the second one first and then the first one second. So, he said, obviously the figures will have dropped off after the Direct Mail campaign, but did the figures plateau to a level which was higher than before you did the campaign. I'm trying to understand how long does an improvement need to be seen before you say, 'Yes, that was value for money.'**

M: Yes, I think that's, that's a really good question. You know, how long is a piece of string that we're looking at here in terms of where the value runs out on-, and at what point does it continue to or begin to lose its value, rather like the effectiveness of the vaccine, in some ways. Look, from our point of view, we were certainly driven by political imperative. In terms of the political viewpoint on value for money, which is obviously going to be a P1 for anyone on the call or looking at Direct Mail as an option, it was very, very strongly driven by a politician within Essex. Not just Essex, as a wider partnership space. We are still holding fortnightly sessions as the leaders and chief executives of the County Council, our colleagues in Public Health, all of our twelve city borough district councils, and our colleagues from the NHS who are replenishing the vaccination programme around the table on a fortnightly basis. This proposal went to that board for approval and received unanimous consent. But the other interesting thing about the time period that we did it in was it was just before the politically restricted period for restrictions. So, we were up against the clock in terms of, you know, we had to get this out. But we received no political objection to that-, to that happening. I think the-, to come back to-, to-, to the real difficult there is the way that COVID has moved around and continued to-, we've found it has continued to surprise us.

You know, this week's figures being half past the roadmap. We would expect to find when there was a major news announcement, good or bad, in terms of the roadmap, that we might find that it's on our website, our social media, large shares and so-on would increase. But it's hard, I think, to come up with any hard and fast measure that you can absolutely relate to one figure. Although, from the respect of the main roadmap steps, we would expect to see, obviously, some increase there in terms of levels of engagement. So, that's-, that's the-, that's-, that's it. As I said, in terms of our ongoing plan, we have more Direct Mail factored in. What we don't have yet is a decision whether we are actually going to go down that route, because we will need to take a view particularly around the September review of restrictions, whether or not it's going to be appropriate for getting the level of messaging at the pace that we want to follow help to residents. If we find that come September, there is still a requirement, and the Public Health and the political viewpoint is that we will need to do that, then Direct Mail will probably be our go to making the decisions, making that happen. Cost associated with it as well.

**Moderator: Thank you. Chris, do you want to jump in?**

M: Sorry, yes. I'll introduce myself to everyone. I've not been on one of these calls before, so I'm finding it really, really useful. So, sorry for all the questions.

**Moderator: Not at all. Not at all.**

M: But there was one thing that-, sorry to come in-, what's the gentleman's name that's just been talking, sorry? Andy, is that Andy? Sorry, Andy. Andy, one thing I-, you said there that I immediately thought, 'Oh, yes that's made all the difference,' is you had-, you had political buy-in. How much of the tile are we trying to convince of the benefits of doing this? And I think that must-, that must have been a big, big help to you having that kind of thumbs up from the beginning.

M: Yes, completely. We, we, all the way through this process-, and, and I'm sure I'm not recounting anything that is different from the majority of experience. We've been led by Public Health. The political aspects and elements of that have never been far away in terms of making decisions of (audio distorts 55.28). And, and that continues to be the case. For us, we have a very energetic, a very proactive cabinet member in this arena. A very challenging one as well. In, both in respect of the advice that Public Health colleagues and (audio distorts 55.51) director of Public Health is offering. But in terms of the communication that has accompanied that, and, you know, having an honest conversation in that space has been helpful for us. My 3:30 today is with that self-same cabinet member, looking at our next range of assets and messaging, as we move into the autumn, planning ahead for the various scenarios that COVID might have in store for us. It comes back to a bit of an LGcomms cliché, and a bit of a local authority cliché around having that space up at the top table, or being adjacent to that top table, so that conversation can, can, can, can happen. But we've been there all the way through, and so have our partners as well. Actually, that's, that's a really important dimension within this. It may have been Essex County Council that funded this work, but we couldn't have done it without the support of our city's boroughs and districts and our colleagues in the NHS. So, I, I think it's correct to see this very much through that partnership lens.

**Moderator: Great. Thank you Chris and thank you Andy for that. I-, just something jumped out at me there, when we were talking about the cost, because that is a big amount of money for, you know, one channel, as wide-reaching as it is. And there's certainly a risk there, especially with the COVID situation last year, that things will change, and we got caught out more often for us doing that. We did a big Direct Mail out, three days later all the rules changed. So, everything was out of date. So, I guess it's that right time, and finding that balance to make sure that, you know, that doesn't happen. We certainly learnt our lesson around that, not to assume anything basically. Had another question from Chris. So, this is going back to the interview you did with Ali, and Sophie you might have a view on this as well.**

F: Yes.

**Moderator: In terms of, kind of, the groups that you've done.**

F: Is this on about having two messages?

**Moderator: Yes. So, it was around, Chris said, is there any feedback on how the public react to receiving more than one message at once? I know at local authorities we have to think about the cost of a mail drop, you know, so, and then we would be interested to learn.**

F: I think it's a really-, it's a really interesting question. I can only give you my experience of twenty plus years working across big brands in agency-, I've talked to an agency on things like BT. Also having done a lot of stuff with the charity sector and for government. And I think when it's coming from government, people don't mind, because they know you're scarce of money. You don't have huge amounts of cash to play with. Yes, and especially if it's local government. So, I don't think that the public mind getting more than one thing in an envelope from you. You know, if you piggy-backed and you popped something even completely different in there, you know, that's about recycling, they're not going to complain. They understand that you've got to maximise your budgets, and that's the kind of stuff that comes out in-, in research. You know, I think, though, if-, if it's COVID related, I think what you've seen from both councils is what they've done is they've packed a huge amount of information in there, but it is still quite single minded in that here is your go to place for all the stuff that you need to know about what's happening currently and that you need to do. And I think that that-, that's where it probably needs to have that kind of slightly more single minded focus to it.

But I think, you know, everyone knows that if you get, you know, your local authority magazine and it's got a reminder about recycling, rules and dates and stuff, that's great. I-, I'd rather you put it in there than delivered it separately to me, because you know, it's not value for money. And they're constantly looking at that. I used to work on a lot of charities, and they-, they would say, 'Why have you put this gratuitous pen in the envelope?' Well, actually, unfortunately, the gratuitous pen in the envelope meant that more people gave you money. But you know, there's a bit of a fine balance, I think, with people where, you know, consumers understand that relationship between what you're spending. You know, they really get that.

M: I think-, I think the learning point of the observation from Essex would be, single issue in respect of COVID, yes, but there is the opportunity to break down the key messages within that. We had three in an important rider. It was around get tested, it was around get vaccinated, it was around maintain social distance and do your bit. And if you do get tested and you're positive, there is financial help available. That was the core of what we wanted people to understand in respect of behaviours, and then alongside that we provided a detail of the government's roadmap. So, that was the longs and the short of the exercise from our point of view, which, as I say, appear to work well, particularly in terms of driving website traffic for people who wanted more detail or wanted to understand more of the background circumstance. One of the things about our Coronavirus hub is that we've worked very very hard at having the clearest Q&A content that we could possibly muster and I'm very proud of the work that our team have done on that. A link to quality content I think really helps things as well.

**Moderator: Thank you both. Do we think that the, our residents and our communities are more forgiving with the spend or the cost of it because it has been COVID and it's been really important and there is quite high trust in local authorities at the moment. What do you think would happen, and I'm putting this out to the group as well, in, you know, twelve months' time, we've subsided it's, you know, we've got it under control, it's a public health, everyone get your booster shots. If we start talking to them about things and we continue but we'll talk to them about our economic growth plans or, do we think that there will be a bit of pushback then?**

M: I-, my take, Carly, is that it will get more difficult this week because we came through in respect of justifying spend, continued spend in this arena. Our PR helped us here, we've have always been very transparent and upfront in respect of the amount of funding that we've got from government in Essex in terms of COVID-19 I've pressed hard and lobbied hard and done well out of it (audio distorts 01.02.26) funding, which will be a familiar term almost certainly to some people on the call. We have an FOI on our mailshot asking us how much it costs and we were able to offer the exact figure but also the reassurance that the funding for that was drawn from money that the Council received from the government specifically to deal with Coronavirus-related issues and to help residents and communities. So, we have been able to make a strong case to our political leadership for enough of that grant funding, that resource to head in the direction of communications and marketing because that helps us drive better public health outcomes. There's no-, those linkages, the PR elements there were really important because we were already out there with how much money we've received from the government and when we were asked questions we had the answers ready and waiting and we have been transparent about fund source.

**Moderator: Great, thank you. Do we have any more questions from the group? I feel like I'm monopolising the conversation. If not, I'll just keep asking questions. One area that I'm quite interested in with direct mail is particularly around regeneration and planning and we have to people, councils have to, they have a statutory duty to consult and quite often part of that consultation plan will be, yes, social media, website, planning notices, but also direct mail. Because there's been quite a move from paper to paperless, especially with most councils declaring a climate emergency and wanting to be paperless and carbon neutral and stuff, Sophie?**

F: Yes, I'll let you finish your point, first but (talking over each other 01.04.11) in there because this is a hot topic for me.

**Moderator: Yes, exactly, so is there-, 'cause in, like, I know in Waltham Forest Council we're moving much more towards digital but there's a real risk of isolating and alienating people that aren't digital, don't have access to, you know, social media or websites, so we need them to feel involved and like they have their say and they're part of the community. So, how do we balance that?**

F: I-, well, there's two things I think that there is a really big thing in the industry that we, we, we tend to call greenwashing, and basically that, you know, that is people basically saying paper bad, digital good. I don't know if anyone on this call knows the digital the carbon footprint for this Zoom call alone, it's much bigger than you might think. 'Cause it all has to get run on a server somewhere which is all using power and, and, and it, it takes up vast amounts of energy. There, there's a really interesting organisation that I would press all of you to take a really quick look at their website because it's very easy to engage with, which is called, and I'll put my fingers up, Two Sides. And they, they basically do research into, into what the true impact of the print industry is on the environment. And do you know what, it's not nearly what, what people tend to think it is. You know, and I always, sort of, say to people, you know, no-one's having a go at the huge rise in e-commerce and the number of parcels being, you know, literally driven to peoples' doors. And the cardboard that that generates and the packaging that, you know, you know, because most of that gets recycled, actually, and so does mail. Most of mail gets recycled. And ultimately, a bit of paper, do you know what, it goes back to pulp and you can use it again. And that's just so not true of a lot of the kind of things that we use every day like our, you know, iPhones and stuff like that.

So, I've rambled on on that one but I am a bit, I'm-, I do get a bit, you know. I mean, I think the cost issue is always going to be a big one but that's why I, kind of, I always stress to local authorities that if you're going to use mail, you use it for the things that you know you really can't afford to get wrong. You know, and I'll give you a really basic example, I mean, recycling is a really good one. My mother lives in a borough in Kingston where it's really complicated. You've got a brown bin, you know, a paper bin, it's literally, I go into her house and I go, 'How do you cope with this?', you know. The only way she copes with it is having the leaflet which explains what she's got to do, because she's 84, up on the pinboard. And that bit of communication from the council for her is absolutely invaluable. She wouldn't be able to go and look that up on a website. But that's no excuse, I still think even with people who can access digital, you're going to get greater compliance if they've got it in paper. You know, because we see that time and time again. It's a really-, I've just called a slide up on my laptop and it's, we did some local authority research back in 2017, that's why I didn't feature it in what I shared earlier 'cause it is, it's a little bit out of date, but it will still hold true.

The two channels that people are more likely to read in full, even when they don't agree with the content, 'cause let's face it councils sometimes have to communicate stuff that people don't like. It's door drop first, followed by mail, and then by newspaper. So, the two top channels for getting people to at least engage with it, and I think that's where you've got, you know, if you have got things that cost you money where you want to reduce cost, and it's probably worth investing in a channel that's really going to perform. And I would make the case for mail in cases like that because you're agent to be quids in.

**Moderator: Thank you, Sophie, that's super interesting, learnt a couple of things there, greenwashing. I hadn't heard that term before so thank you, every day's a school day.**

F: It's (inaudible 01.08.28).

**Moderator: Yes, no you're quite right because I have seen on peoples' signatures they're like, 'Excuse me, I'm trying to reduce my carbon footprint so I might not keep responding to say thank you', or something like that.**

F: Yes, emails have a massive carbon footprint.

**Moderator: Yes, so I think we need to do a bit of repositioning of the old direct mail, don't we? And thank you to Andy who copied in the Two Sides.org. There's all the Two Sides info, Google will find you that. Yes, fantastic. And Shima has just put in that and I went through, I feel your pain Shima because I did this a couple of years ago, doing a borough-wide drop for local plan consultation. So, that's a really interesting one of trying to get some really, really technical information and lots of different messages into plain English, and I'd be interested to know, Shima if you're doing it in any other languages as well. 'Cause that's another, another area that we put a bit of money towards in direct mail, in putting that in our top five languages as well. Shima? Hi.**

F: Hi, just a quick intro, I'm the marketing manager at Enfield Council so as Carly just said, yes we're in the middle of doing a borough-wide door drop for our local plan consultation. We're not planning in any other languages actually at the moment, that hasn't, kind of, come up. But the team are doing specific consultation with groups. I'm hoping that's been picked up through our voluntary and community sector in terms of engagement exercise that will be, kind of, co-running with the, kind of, marketing campaign. But we thought it, I mean, we had the political, kind of, backing for this and actually it was instigated by our leader because we wanted to ensure that we were getting, kind of, feedback from not the typical, kind of, audience that we always do on things like the local plan. It affects everybody in the borough, there is a, you know, huge shortage of homes and we've got a very, kind of, East West divide in our borough and we wanted to ensure that we were getting more engagement from the East where living conditions are more cramped, more smaller. To ensure, 'cause they're the people that are going to benefit, and it's also to highlight the importance that it's not just for us now but it's for future generations to come. So, we, sort of, when putting it through the door it's exposed to more people, whereas I suppose digital it'll only go to the recipients in terms of who it's directly targeted at, whether it's social media or on email.

So, let's see, we've had good engagement so far. Website interest is very, it's good, we're really happy with that. But as usual we'll probably get a flurry or responses towards the end. We've still got a while to go, it doesn't close until the 13th of September but the borough-wide mail drop is just, kind of, one channel of many that we're using. But we did think it was really important for this, for this consultation campaign.

**Moderator: Okay. Shima are you popping in, how are you measuring the-, like we asked, like I asked Andy, how are you measuring the direct mail door-drop?**

F: So, we, we're in the process of doing it and I've just quickly taken a note because there was a delay because there was a bit of, kind of, to-ing and fro-ing between, kind of, what the leader wanted and what we could legally do, as always they try and, you know, push it. So, it's actually gone out, going out later and I've just literally got the final amends today so I've just quickly made a note about the QR code actually. 'Cause as you said, Carly, yes it's made a huge, kind of, comeback in a very positive way. Once upon a time when nobody was clicking on them it's almost become the, kind of, way to do everything whether you're ordering food at a restaurant, checking-in, looking up information. So, I've just made a quick reminder for myself to maybe put the, add a QR code if I can, if it's not too late. But our main area I guess is, kind of, website hit. We monitor our analytics on our website to see where the source data is coming from. So, if they were typing in the URL as a direct URL, that would be flagged up on our analytics there, as opposed to coming through from some of our social media which I think would then be identified, either on Facebook or Twitter, as traffic coming through them. So, that's how, it's a bit vague I guess, but that's, I think that's probably the nearest we're going to get in terms of-, unless we do a specific URL, but we try and keep our URLs universal so they're consistent all across the piece, rather than tweaking them for different channels.

**Moderator: Yes, fair enough.**

F: So, they're visible, I think.

**Moderator: Yes, QR code would be hugely interesting and if you do go down that path I'd love to find to more-,**

F: Sure, yes, no, I'm quite keen to try and squeeze a little corner on somewhere, they don't need to be that big so.

F: And Shima, we did a bit of research, actually, on, on how mail and social work together, and actually if you-, if you do your social media before they've seen mail, basically it, it was an index so bear with me, but it's 30 percent, you get higher engagement if you do your social after you've sent the mail, plus 30 percent. So, it really improves performance. Because, if you think about social media, it, it's, kind of, quite fleeting, but if you send the mail, you've lodged the idea and then they get-, they get the social and you get much greater engagement levels, because they recognise it, because mail has got this ability to do what we call long-term memory encoding which sounds quite complicated, doesn't it? It is quite complicated, actually, 'cause-,

F: It actually makes sense 'cause it's floating around for a bit longer. I've got stuff that's sitting downstairs that's supposed to be for the bin or the recycling bin rather I should say but it hasn't seemed to find its way there.

F: Yes, and it also, mail enhances peoples' memory of social ads. So, when they've seen the mail first, they'll remember the social better. So, it, kind of, makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? It seems quite logical, but we actually did this by doing neuroscience and attaching things, neurons to peoples' heads and showing them the ads and getting it read that way. So, I don't know if that's helpful at all in terms of some-,

F: Yes, I think this-, had we stuck to our original plan the letter probably would have gone out a lot earlier, but due to the, kind of, approvals and changes that we had to make it's going out a lot later, it's probably going out halfway through the campaign which probably hasn't worked out that bad because it will be topped and tailed on social media on either side.

F: No, that's still fine.

F: So, it's probably falling stuck bang in the middle of, I think. So, we've done a lot of social.

F: It might be interesting to see that when your mail lands whether you get a bit of an uplift in social.

F: Yes. I think there is some social planned almost directly the week after it's supposed to land. No, great, thank you.

**Moderator: Thank you, Sophie, that's hugely interesting. Who knew all that science, that there was so much science behind mail. I'd love to find out more and I'm sure the group here would like to find out more if there's any, like, kind of-, just those few stats that you gave then, that higher engagement if social mail is sent after the mail, if there's some stats about that because, you know, a lot of us work in comms and campaigns, if we can use that in our arguments for direct mail or for when we're putting together an integrated marketing plan, it certainly helps convince people, especially if you've got those politicians or that political buy-in isn't quite there that and you need that to strengthen your argument. So, would love to know that. And thank you, Shima, for talking us through that, I lived through a local plan about two years ago so I'm always keen to hear how other people approach it 'cause it is a hugely huge technical piece but, you know, you really, really need that community engagement in order for it to be a success. Do we have any other questions from anyone? We've got ten minutes to go. I've-, you'll be pleased to know I've run out of questions. But if no-one does and there's no hands up, Andy do you want to add anything to what we've discussed today?**

M: No, I, I'd just like to thank Sophie for her time and her insight, it's been fascinating and challenging which is, it's always good to have some of those assumptions that we make and that we drop into it shaken up. I hope the case studies that we've provided have been helpful. We'd be delighted to have further conversations with colleagues on the call or in general and if we can offer any more insight or experiences there then we will. But massive thanks to Sophie for what she's has shared and I hope colleagues who joined the call today have enjoyed it and found it valuable.

**Moderator: Yes, thank you.**

F: Yes, and I think, Andy, just one last thing from me, I think it would be really great, because you guys are all quite well-networked aren't you? But if you think once the recording's out, that if you think anyone's going to be interested in, you know, who uses mail and wants to get maybe more out of it, because, you know, or even hasn't used it before, you know, do push it out to people. I'm sure I'll get PCRA to put it into the newsletter, but I know what newsletters are like, you know, you get some people but not everybody. And the other thing to mention is that you do have a dedicated person from the area of my business which is market reaching raw mail who can help you with all of those stats and stuff. So, probably what it might be worth me doing is just forwarding on his details and you can, he will get all of that stuff for you if you need, especially if you need that, kind of, real case for mail that you've got to push up the more senior people to, you know, justify budget spends, 'cause that's really hard, I know it is.

**Moderator: Yes, thank you.**

M: Thanks Sophie, and if you send us that content through we will absolutely get that out to the wider membership via the website, social media and potentially even some mail, who knows?

**Moderator: Yes, it would be remiss of us not to, wouldn't it? So, thank you to all our speakers and thanks to Ali as well who can't be here but who recorded the interview with Andy. Thank you Andy, thank you Sophie, Francis at the very beginning, and thank you to those that came and listened and asked questions. The video will be available later, share it with your colleagues. I'm certainly going to take back quite a lot from this and bring it back to my team and I hope to see you all soon, so thanks very much.**

F: Thanks for chairing, Carly.

**Moderator: No worries.**

M: Thank you Carly. Bye everybody.

F: Bye bye.

**Moderator: Bye.**