

What about the numbers?
Understand them and use storytelling to
get your message across

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Level Vision

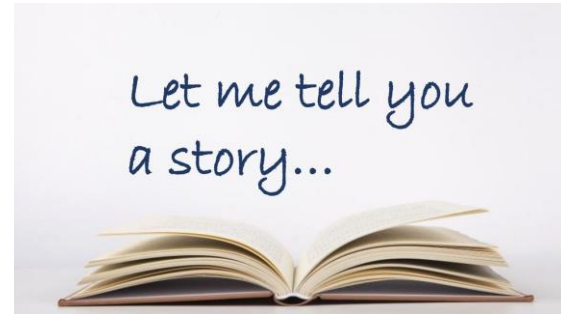
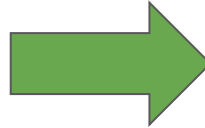
11th July 2024

Local
Government
Association

The logo for the Local Government Association features a purple rectangular background. On the left, the word "Local" is written in white. To the right of "Local" is a white silhouette of two human profiles facing each other, with their heads touching. Below this graphic, the words "Government" and "Association" are stacked vertically in a dark grey, sans-serif font.

What do we mean by 'Understanding numbers and using them for storytelling?'

Budget	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Wage	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	1200.00	14400.00
Maintenance	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	6000.00
Interest	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	36.00
Wage 2	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	6000.00
Income 5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Income	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	2203.00	26436.00
Rent	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	900.00	10800.00
Utilities	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	1020.00
Food	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	6000.00
Council Tax	81.00	81.00	0.00	0.00	81.00	81.00	81.00	81.00	81.00	81.00	81.00	81.00	810.00
Loan	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	1020.00
Car - Petrol, repairs	90.00	90.00	90.00	90.00	90.00	130.00	90.00	90.00	90.00	90.00	90.00	90.00	1140.00
Going out	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	2400.00
Bank charges	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	120.00
Credit card	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	540.00
Insurance	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	360.00
Gifts	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	400.00
Savings	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pension	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	960.00
Total Expenditure	2106.00	2106.00	2075.00	2025.00	2106.00	2266.00	2106.00	2106.00	2156.00	2156.00	2106.00	2106.00	25370.00
Profit/Loss	97.00	97.00	128.00	178.00	97.00	-63.00	97.00	97.00	-7.00	97.00	97.00	-103.00	866.00



Numbers and storytelling

Ground rules

- Confidentiality
- No party politics
- Let's hear from everyone

"The ability to take data—to be able to understand it, to process it, to extract value from it, to visualize it - is to communicate it."

Adapted from Google's Chief Economist Dr. Hal R. Varian, 2009



The model

Project	Revenue Y1	Revenue Y2	Revenue Y3	Revenue Y4	Date	Capital
Leisure Centre	£450,000	£500,000	£550,000	£600,000	24/05/1940	£24,000,000
Road repairs	£14,000,000	£15,000,000	£16,000,000	£17,000,000	30/08/2024	£54,000,000
Adult SC	What numbers?		£54,000,000	£60,000,000	31/03/2025	£1,500,000
Temp housing	£525,000	£540,000	£600,000	£800,000	02/10/2024	£3,400,000
SEND	£5,600,000	£6,500,000	Why stories?		04/07/2024	£45,000,000
Licensing	-£45,000	-£50,000	-£57,000	-£64,000	05/10/2024	£140,000
Planning	£42,000	£60,000	£43,000	£44,000	20/07/2024	£0
Biodiversity	£32,000	£34,000	£36,000	£38,000	How to do it!	
Safeguarding	£1,400,000	£1,500,000	£1,600,000	£1,700,000	2/2/2025	£520,000
Legal	£390,000	£410,000	£450,000	£490,000	4/6/2024	£10,000
IT	£1,200,000	£1,250,000	£1,400,000	£1,300,000	5/7/2024	£2,500,000
Corporate centre	£560,000	£580,000	£600,000	£620,000	16/12/2025	£24,000
Waste	£2,400,000	£2,500,000	£2,600,000	£2,700,000	31/3/2025	£7,000,000

Kind of numbers you'll come across, simply explained

Understand how people take in information

Tips for telling a compelling story

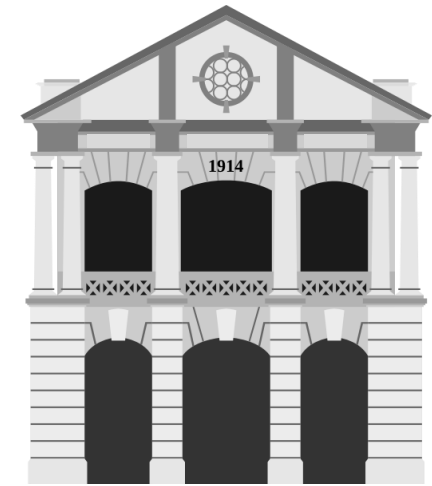
Finance models

Business



$$\text{Sales} - \text{costs} = \text{profit}$$

Public sector



$$\text{Expenditure} - \text{income} = \text{net expenditure}$$

What numbers?

Example

Expenditure - income = net expenditure

Leisure centre in Old Town

$$£500k - £290k = £210k$$

i.e. negative net expenditure



Leisure centre in New Town

$$£300k - £380k = (£80k)$$

i.e. positive net expenditure



Understanding the terms

What numbers?

Council speak	Your household budget
Revenue income	Your monthly pay
Revenue expenditure	Your monthly outgoings like rent and bills
Capital income	One-off sale of your car
Capital expenditure	Buying a new sofa
General reserves	Your savings account for emergencies
Ring-fenced reserves	Savings for a holiday
Budget	Plan for your monthly bills compared to pay
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Your longer plan to make sure pay covers your bills

Understanding the terms

What numbers?

Council speak in revenue budgets	What it means to you
Salami slicing (savings)	Reduce overall spend on food by %
Transformation (savings)	Change from Waitrose to Aldi
Service reduction/removal (savings)	Stop buying cake and chocolate
Increase fees and charges (income)	Teenager starts paying rent
Inflation (growth)	Bank puts up monthly mortgage payments
Contractual (growth)	Kids' pocket money goes up on birthday
Capital borrowing (growth)	Need an extension so increase mortgage
New/increased service (growth)	Start monthly wine delivery service

Ask Questions

What numbers?

- Financials of multi-million councils are complex
- Hundreds of services, thousands of staff, tens or hundreds of thousands of service users
- You're not an expert and you don't need to be
 - You do need to ask questions to be clear what the decisions you are making mean
 - If you've read the information provided and it's not clear, they haven't explained it well enough!



NO SUCH THING AS A SILLY QUESTION

Our example - what questions to ask?

What numbers?

Leisure centre 1 in Old Town

$$£500k - £290k = £210k$$

Leisure centre 2 in New Town

$$£300k - £380k = (£80k)$$

Net revenue expenditure for both leisure centres is £130k and there is pressure to reduce it. What questions would you ask?

Example questions

- Why does leisure centre 1 cost so much more to run than 2?
- Why is the income lower at 1 and can overall income be increased?
- Can capital improvements reduce net expenditure at either?

Bigger picture questions

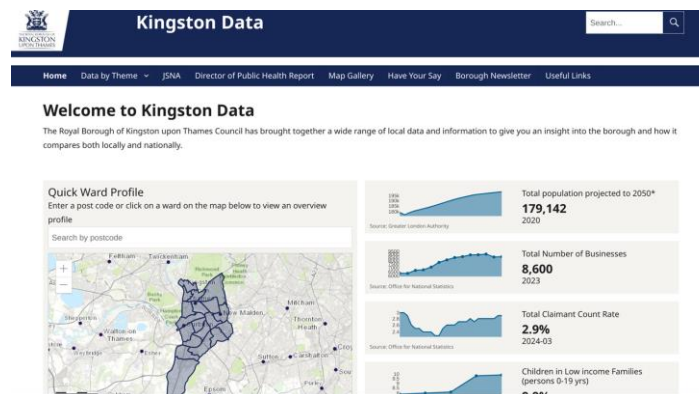
- What are the implications of any of any actions?
- How does it all align with the administration's objectives?



Demographics

What numbers?

- Understanding your community
 - Age, gender, education, nationality
 - Deprivation/economic activity
 - Housing types
 - Health, crime, energy, transport
- Finding data
 - Local council data centre
 - Census data
- Comparisons
 - LG Inform





Improving services through information

- LG Inform is free to all and includes more than 12,500 metrics. For some features, such as building your own bespoke reports authorities need to register to use, but at no cost.
- The data is kept up to date. The LGA has a target of updating LG Inform within five working days of it being put on the data publisher's website and, in reality, we update it much quicker than this^[1].
- Much of the data in LG Inform is in easy-to-read bar charts and line charts. There are more than 80 ready-made LG Inform reports on our 'Themed Reports' page, which bring data about a theme together and which can be tailored to any authority in three clicks.
- Each LG Inform metric report has a link to the collection's page on the data publisher's website. The LGA is transparent and clear about the data source and users can download the source material.

¹ Where data is revised after publication, and revisions are not publicised as required through [Research and statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk), they will be updated on notification by our active user community.

Surveys

What numbers?

- Consider before interpreting results
 - Who asked the questions?
 - Who was it aimed at - general residents/businesses/service users?
 - Was it for quantitative or qualitative purposes?
 - How did people choose to take part?
 - Self-selecting or randomised (e.g. citizens' assembly)
 - What was the methodology and sample size?



[LGA survey support](#)

Data & statistics

What numbers?

- Statistics
 - Average - Mean/median/mode
 - Raw data/interpreted
 - Reliable sources quoted
- How the information is given
 - Bar/pie charts
 - Histograms
 - Line charts
 - Scatter plots
 - Spreadsheet



Example

Residents are worried about speeding on their road, but the officer tells you there are 220 cars per day and average speed is 23mph.

So it's not a problem?

You find out 140 of those cars are in rush hour and average 10mph, so average speed outside rush hours is 45mph.

Is there a problem with speeding now?

Lies, damn lies and statistics!



10 top questions to ask

What numbers?

1. What will be the actual effect on residents of this change in budget allocation?
2. How are our reserves split between ring-fenced and general and what is the ring-fenced being saved for?
3. What are the risks associated with this budget change and how are we minimising it?
4. What preventative measures are being taken to reduce demand-led growth?
5. Why have we underspent on this budget?
6. How do we compare with our statistical neighbours in the service area?
7. Will the effect on residents vary by different demographic groups?
8. Why do you think this data seems to be saying something different to what I hear from residents?
9. What is the survey methodology so I can understand what it is telling me?
10. Could there be unintended consequences if we follow what the data is telling us?

Who won?

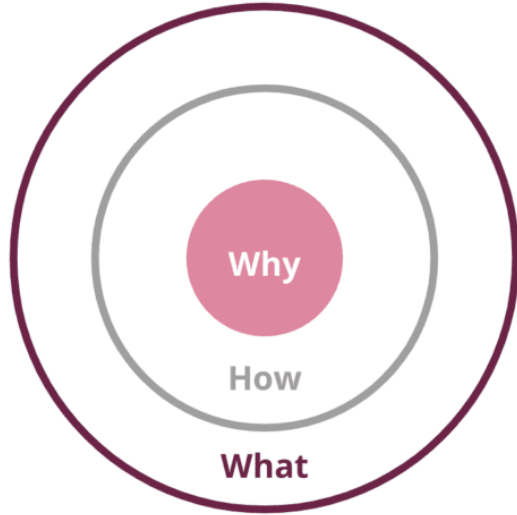
Why stories?



Simon Sinek's "Why, How, What" framework

Why stories?

The Golden Circle



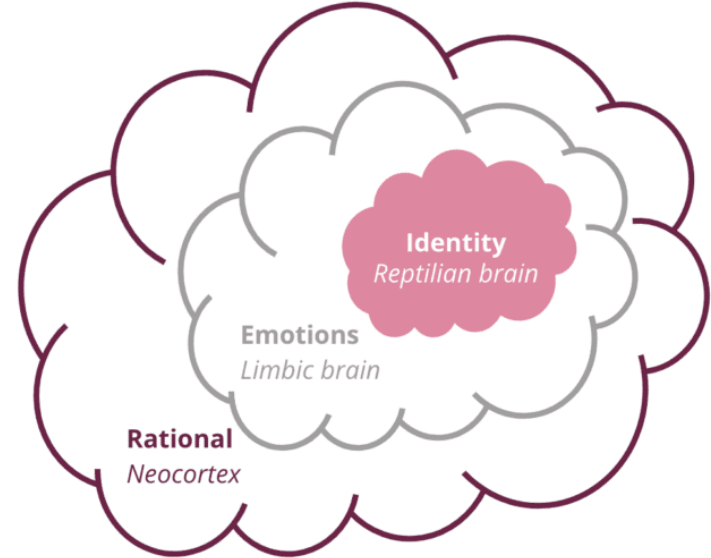
Start with **why!**

The purpose, the motivation

The process, the actions to realise the why

The result, the proof

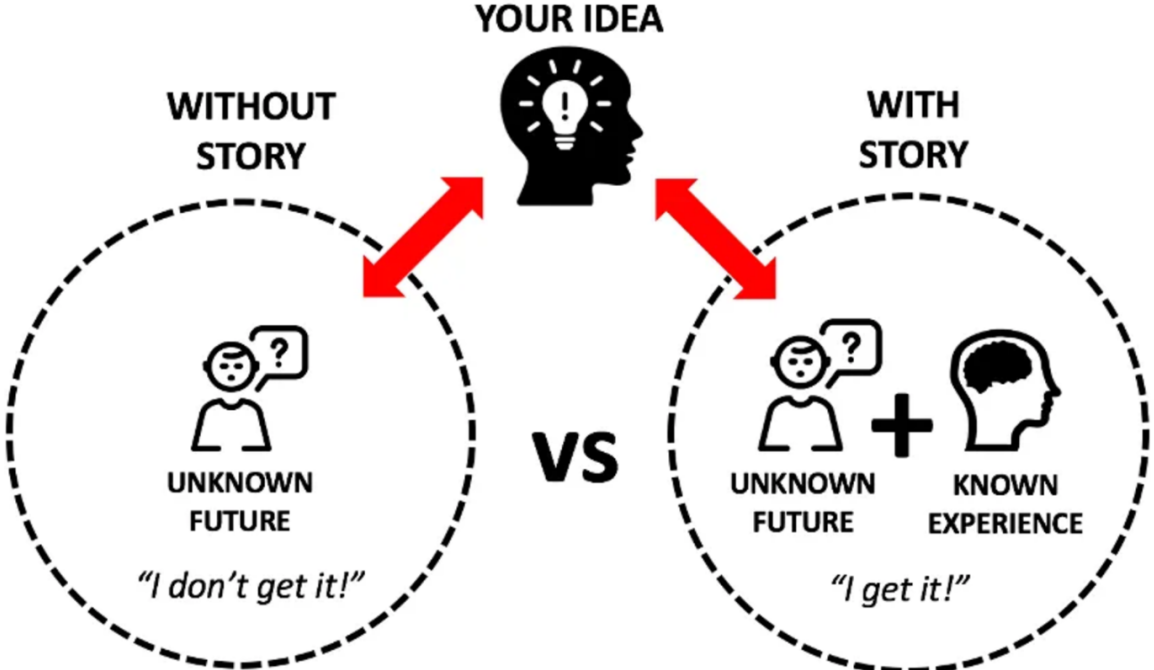
Human Brain



<https://www.inkstrategy.com/post/storytelling/>

THE STORYTELLING EFFECT

(The Storytelling Playbook for Entrepreneurs by Graham Brown)

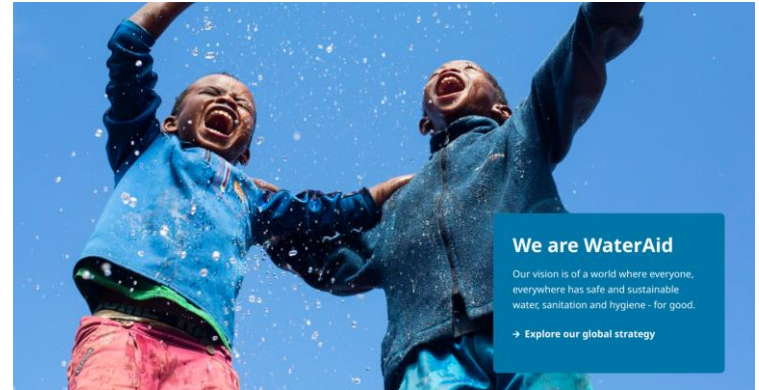


Charities know it's about emotions to get you to open your wallet

Why stories?

- Simple figures
- Good images
- Positive action ('yes we can')
- Clear message

- Playing on emotions



- Almost **one in five** people don't have a decent toilet of their own.
- Almost **one in ten** don't have clean water close to home.
- By working together, we can reach everyone, everywhere within a generation – and change millions more lives for good.

Why turn your numbers into a story?

Answers in CHAT

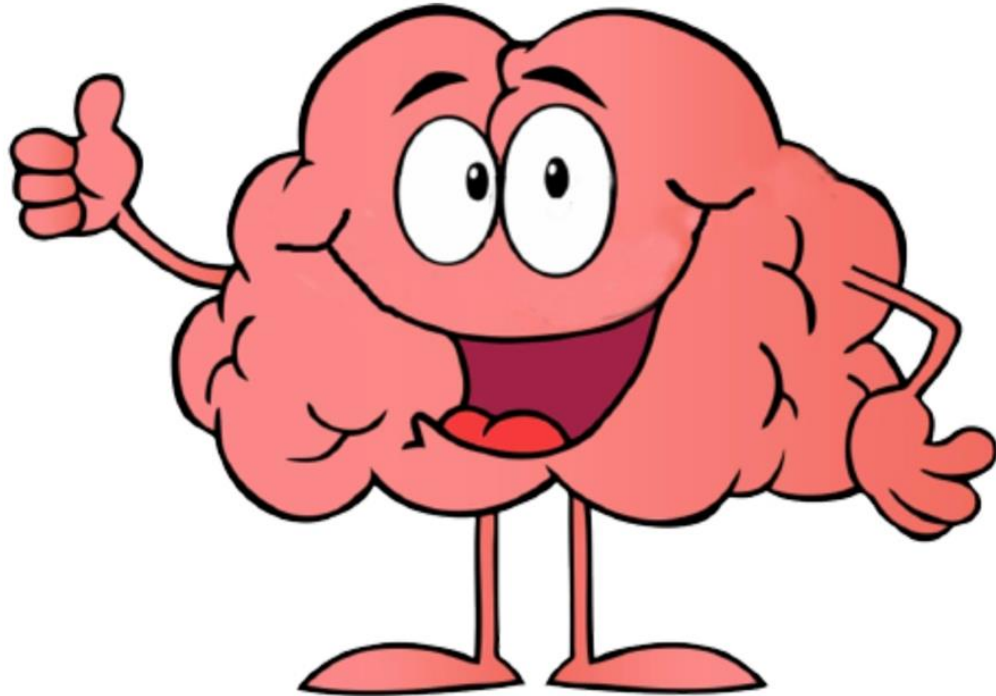
Stories are:

- more memorable than numbers
- easier to understand - house example
- creates a connection that people can relate to
- emotion connects better than facts and figures

***PUT SIMPLY A STORY IS MORE LIKELY TO
GET OTHERS TO DO WHAT YOU WANT***



BRAIN BREAK!



Influence not just inform

How to do it!



What did you think?

[power of words 🔥💯 || A girl changed blind man day || #viral #powerofwords #shorts](#)



READY to convince?

- Speak from the heart / be authentic
- Make a connection with your audience - enter their world
- Use metaphors, analogies, stories and examples
- Educate and inform
- Use 'killer facts'
- Use repetition (wisely)
- Use humour

Real

Engaging

Appropriate

Dynamic

You

Preparing your story

- Can you do an 'elevator pitch' for your story?
- What 3 things do you want people to take away?
- How do you fit into this, how will you make it personal?
- Who are the people you'll be talking to - what are their experiences, how do they feel, where do you want them to be after you've met them?
- What images / examples / analogies can you use to bring the subject alive?
- What do you want them to do immediately after you've spoken to them?



Your story crib sheet

Your core message

Your killer facts



Your personalisation
Authenticity, vulnerability, humour, allies

Your audience
what are they thinking, feeling, doing

Before your story



After your story

Your images



Your call to action

Coherent message across a variety of channels to reach different audiences

- Printed materials
- Posters
- Social media
- Paid adverts
- Organic spread
- Events
- Online
- Videos/podcasts

[LGA guides on using social media](#)

Lambeth Kerbside Strategy January 2023

LAMBETH'S KERBSIDE STRATEGY

Today, 94% of our kerbside is used to manage parking, but only 40% of households own a car.

Edinburgh

579,000 linear metres

Lambeth

HOPE

Video Home Live Reels Shows Explore Saved videos Following

Edinburgh

579,000

Lambeth

Instagram

- Home
- Search
- Explore
- Reels
- Messages
- Notifications
- Create
- Profile
- Threads

Making Lambeth Neighbourhoods Fit for the Future

TRAILBLAZING

WELLBEING

NET-ZERO 2030

lambeth-kerbside.org

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	03
INTRODUCTION	05
HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS STRATEGY	07
WHERE ARE WE NOW?	10
THE CASE FOR CHANGE	12
REINSTATING THE KERBSIDE AS A PUBLIC SPACE	13
LAMBETH'S KERBSIDE IN 2030	14
LAMBETH KERBSIDE BASICS	16
PRIORITY ONE - ENABLE ACCESSIBLE AND ACTIVE TRAVEL	21
PRIORITY TWO - CREATE PLACES FOR PEOPLE	26
PRIORITY THREE - INCREASE OUR RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE	30
PRIORITY FOUR - REDUCE TRAFFIC AND EMISSIONS FROM TRANSPORT	36
THE WAYS WE WILL DELIVER THIS STRATEGY	39

London Borough of Lambeth

22,124 followers

Big announcement

Lambeth's new Kerbside Strategy launches today, one of the first of its kind in the UK!

Lambeth's kerbside space would stretch from London to Edinburgh if lined up, and 94% of it is used to provide and manage car parking. That's not sustainable or fair in a borough where 3 out of 5 households don't own a car.

Thanks to our new strategy this is all set to change

We will use our kerbside space to create a fairer and more sustainable borough. We need people that work for people, not just cars

The strategy has four priorities, and we need local people help us to deliver them

- Enabling accessible and active travel
- Creating social spaces
- Increasing climate resilience
- Reducing traffic and emissions

Together, we'll make Lambeth a healthier, more sustainable, and fairer borough

Read the strategy to find out more: <http://lambeth-kerbside.org>

Lambeth Council @Lambeth_council

Today, we're excited to launch Lambeth's new kerbside Strategy, one of the first of its kind in the UK!

It sets out how we will use our kerbside space to benefit everyone in our borough, by reinstating it as a public space

Your story crib sheet

Your core message

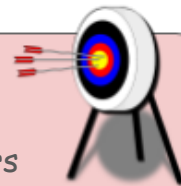
Change use to 4 priorities:

1. Enable accessible and active travel
2. Create places for people
3. Increase climate change resilience
- Reduce traffic and emissions



Your killer facts

579,000 metres long (Lambeth to Edinburgh)
94% is used to manage parking, but only 40% of residents own cars



Your personalisation

Authenticity, vulnerability, humour, allies

Jean has COPD and now doesn't go out if pollution levels are high
John is lonely, create a place for him to sit, chat & relax
Samir has difficulty negotiating the pavement clutter of parking signs



Your audience

what are they thinking, feeling, doing

Before your story

"The Council is trying to tell me how to live my life & restrict my freedom!"
"Where will the cars park?"



After your story

"I can imagine more green space & calmer streets so I can ride my bike!"
"It's an opportunity to improve the road not restriction"

Your images

194 football pitches / 3.5 Brockwell Parks
Community parklets: trees / shade / seats
Accessible pavements for those with disabilities



Your call to action

Read more about it
Support and spread the news about the priorities
Let us know what you'd like to see in your road



Summary

- Ask questions about the 'numbers' so you understand what they are telling you
- Consider are you getting the full picture including any unintended consequences
- Understand storytelling makes your message more memorable than plain numbers
- Are you READY to convince?
- Pulling out the killer facts from the numbers in a plain English way
- Remember your audience and think how to reach them

4 things to remember:

- 1. You have every right to be there and represent your residents*
- 2. If you don't understand what is being said, how will others? Ask questions*
- 3. You will make mistakes - learn from them, don't dwell on them*
- 4. Give yourself time for reflection*

Future actions



- What will I stop doing?
- What will I start doing?
- What will I accept?

“Data is like garbage. You’d better know what you are going to do with it before you collect it.”

Mark Twain



LGA Resources

- [Councillor Hub](#)
- [E-bulletins sign up](#)
- [Councillor e-learning platform](#)
- [Role of a Councillor](#)

Thanks!