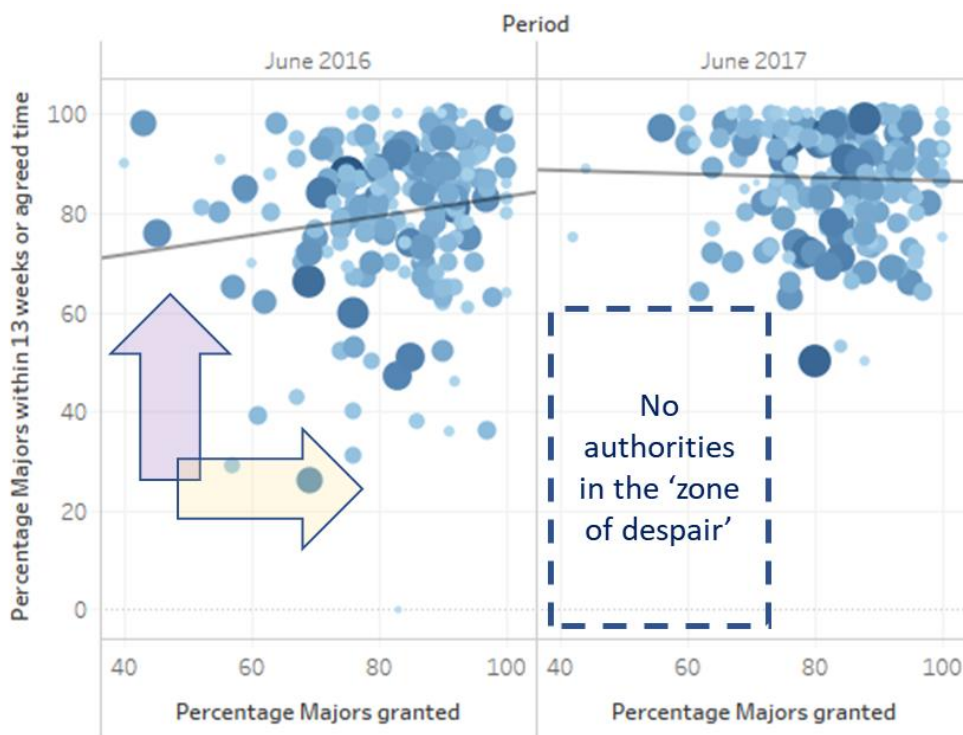# Development Management Insights 2- Better quality applications makes for faster decisions.

We've been working hard with a number of LPAs recently looking to improve the Development Management (DM) process in local authorities and a few things have struck us. This short series of mini insights highlights just a few points that we hope might help others looking at improving efficiency, effectiveness and outcomes from DM.

Insight

The national picture shows that LPAs are continuing to successfully drive up performance in the speed of Major applications.

Some LPAs are blessed with a higher proportion of Major applications that they can readily say 'yes' to quickly with minimal need for revisions, amendments and negotiations which helps meet the

Relationship between the percentage of Major applications that are granted and the percentage determined within time
Produced by i-three analyics Oct 2017

Number of Major applications by LPA

∘	5.0
○	20.0
○	40.0
○	60.0
○	80.0
○	100.0
○	119.0

1 Fewer authorities achieving lower percentage Majors within time

2 Fewer authorities with low percentage of applications granted

performance goals. This may create an unlevel playing field when it comes to performance league tables. However the less fortunate LPAs are still successfully driving up performance despite starting from a more challenging position.

Analytics

We've been tracking how the quality of Major applications impacts on performance. The left hand chart above shows results for the year to June 2016. Back then there was a clear relationship between how many applications were approved and the percentage done within agreed timescales.

Very obviously if an application is 'high quality' (defined as ready for a 'Yes') an LPA will be able to make a decision more quickly. A good quality application needs less discussion or amendment especially if the applicant has done its homework and successfully prepared the ground by engaging with the community. This can reduce the time taken to make a decision and also makes a 'yes' more likely. The top chart shows how important this is. Those LPAs blessed with more 'yes-able' applications make more decisions in time. This link has been a feature of these charts for a number of years. But not in the 2017 chart (right). The relationship between percentage granted and performance has disappeared from the data over the last year. As a result there are now no authorities in the 'Zone of despair' with low number of applications granted and few being done in time.

This isn't just to do with the use of performance agreements (we checked) and three explanations seem plausible. 1). LPAs have worked hard with applicants to improve the quality of applications (perhaps through pre-app discussions, policy and improved guidance) or 2). The pressures to make decisions quickly is leading to a lowering of standards (just say 'yes' to get it off the books) or 3) LPAs with the most challenging applications have managed to improve performance, even despite the difficulties this causes.

We think this is mostly down to the hard work of LPAs who have improved results despite increasing difficult financial constraints by working hard with agents to improve application quality making this a good news story all round.

Application

One way to improve performance is to receive more 'yes-able' applications. There is clear evidence that authorities are successfully improving performance while increasing the proportion of Majors granted.

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