



Street Cleansing Trend Analysis

This briefing provides details of the latest trend analysis of local authority performance on cost, quality and productivity within the street cleansing service. It is provided to local authority chief executives, council leaders and all APSE street cleansing contacts.

Key issues

1. Street cleansing is an essential element of neighbourhood management
2. APSE performance networks for street cleansing is now in year 9 of data collection examining a range of indicators including cost and quality
3. This briefing highlights the key findings and looks at the future direction of street cleansing services in local authorities
4. Analysis referred to in this briefing is based on first batch data returns. Summary reports will be published in March 2008.

1. Introduction

Street cleansing is seen as an essential element of neighbourhood management and is increasingly being measured alongside other neighbourhood services.

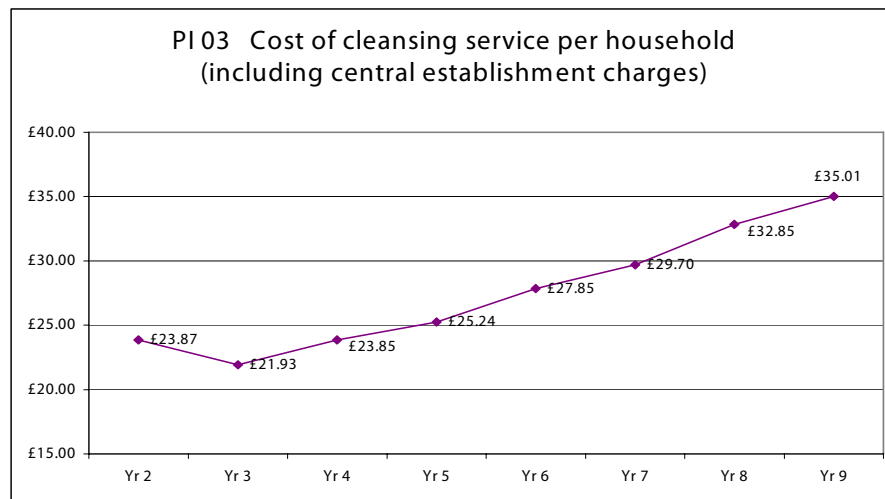
APSE performance networks has been comparing street cleansing data from a wide selection of local authorities throughout the UK since 2000/01, reporting results annually across a broad range of performance indicators. More recently APSE has developed a Neighbourhood Management Model which incorporates Street Cleansing performance measures alongside other services such as refuse collection, highways, street lighting and parks.

2. Overview of trend information

The APSE performance networks service for street cleansing provides performance indicators for cost, quality, satisfaction, enforcement and education. This briefing looks at the continuing trends within the service to provide participating authorities with a picture of what the service trends are, what this infers, and what further activity and analysis individual authorities and their benchmarking groups could consider. The analysis is based on averages across all family groups and draws on 2006/7 data alongside that which has been submitted over the preceding seven years.

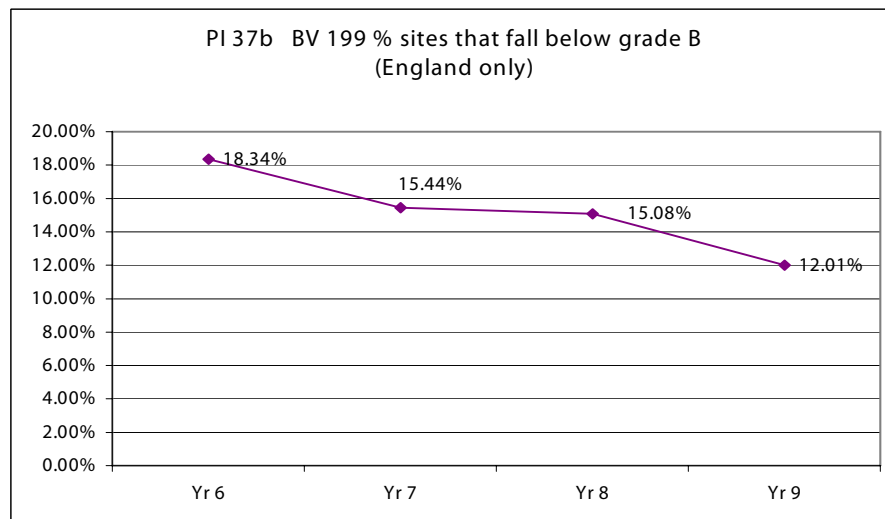
3. Key cost and productivity indicators

The average cost per household (PI 03) has increased year-on-year since 2000-01 and the trend has continued in 2006/07, rising 6.58% to £35.01.

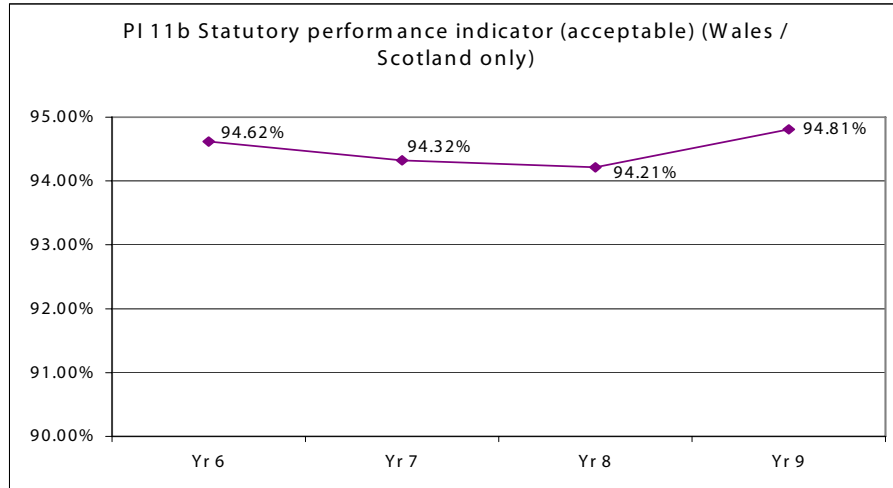


4. Quality indicators

The indicator linked to the national BVPI 199 (PI 37b: the percentage of sites that fall below grade B - England) has shown a significant improvement with the average now 12.01% across all participating authorities. This represents a 20% reduction from the previous year.



The statutory performance indicator for acceptable levels of cleanliness, which is still in use as national indicators for the Scotland and Wales (PI 11b) has also shown a small improvement of just under 1% with an average of 94.81% of sites proving to be acceptable in those two countries.



The community consultation and quality assurance Indicator (PI 17) has maintained a consistent level over the past 4 years and is now reporting an average score of 78.86.

5. Satisfaction indicators

PI 39, community/customer surveys undertaken has demonstrated a 2% increase on last year's figures, now averaging 65%. No trends are available as 06/07 was only the second full year of data collection.

6. Other indicators

As authorities continue to make greater use of the new enforcement powers resulting from the Clean Neighbourhoods Act, the number of fixed penalty notices issued for litter offences (PI 25a), which had risen by 31% the previous year, increased again by an average of 33% in 2006/07. The average of around 250 fixed penalty notices issued per



authority has almost quadrupled over the past four years.

The numbers of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling (PI 25b) also continues to rise each year, albeit not quite at the same spectacular rate as for litter, but nevertheless still 15.5% above last year's average.

There has been a steady reduction in sickness since 2002/03 and this year was no exception with a further reduction from an average of 6.09% to 5.82% (PI 22a).

Two new indicators were introduced last year in order to begin tracking the role being played by education in the improvement process. The first year data showed that each authority organised an average of 11.41 educational/publicity campaigns (PI 41) with an average of 1.71% of the total budget being allocated to this aspect (PI 40). The corresponding data for 2006/07 shows a slight decline in both, down to 11.16 and 1.19% respectively.

7. Interpretation of data

Cleanliness continues to be a major factor within the "cleaner, greener, safer" theme and the neighbourhoods context that underpins many of the national improvement processes. Consequently, it is no surprise to see further investment in street cleansing services. Significantly, subsequent improvements have been shown in quality standards and customer satisfaction, that were not so obvious in previous years.

The major increase in numbers of fixed penalty notices issued for litter (and less dramatically for dog fouling) will have contributed to each of the cost, quality and customer satisfaction themes. The new powers that authorities have as a result of the Clean Neighbourhoods Act have been taken up to differing degrees. Invariably there have been financial implications but the improvement in quality in particular will be seen as justification.

Education on litter issues was originally considered an essential part of the improvement process. Despite the increase in overall cost of service, it would appear that education and publicity may have lost its priority in many budgets to the increase in enforcement.

8. Future Focus

Over the past year we have been working on proposals for the development of a comprehensive local performance framework for neighbourhoods, which utilises the vast array of data contained in the performance networks model. We have held discussions with ENCAMS, CABE Space, the Local Government Association National Environmental Officers Network (NEON) and others about developing a flexible local performance framework that takes into account processes, standards and outcomes. An interim report was produced in July 2007, which provides comparative data on a range of services, including street cleansing and a pilot scheme with 4 local authorities is currently underway.

Government considered that performance management arrangements have in the main been successfully embedded into local government. As part of the Best Value agenda, it was considered a vital tool to help improve the quality of public services. One implication over recent years has been a general move to lessen the amount of performance measurement which has to be reported back to Government as well as a reduction in terms of audit and inspection of the better performing local authorities.

This focus has been consistent across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the different contexts in each country. The focus on accurate and robust data is important but is seen as only the first stage in a performance management framework. Data must be used to track performance, inform priorities, highlight particular issues and direct resources. There is also a responsibility on local authorities to inform people about the level of performance so they are aware of changes and can make the link between how the council is managing and providing services and what they are experiencing as service users.

The need to consider outcomes, reflecting the impact on people's lives of services provided, as part of a performance management framework (as well as inputs and outputs) has gained momentum. As such, the performance networks templates will be developed further to incorporate more outcome focused performance indicators as they arise.

The move towards more regular performance management reports has fuelled a call for more frequency in comparison across the local authority family. The practicalities of developing performance networks in this way will also be investigated.

9. APSE comment

Street Cleansing continues to be a high profile service but continues to face cost pressures. The recruitment and retention of staff is a major problem for local authorities and additional funding is needed to fund the training required to multi-skill the workforce. The rise in the number of fixed penalty notices issued has led to a need for increased numbers of enforcement staff but has provided a limited source of income to fund training requirements.

APSE would welcome a more equal balance between education and publicity and enforcement. Education and publicity events raise public awareness and should be an integral part of any enforcement.

Although customer satisfaction has risen in 2006/7 a consistent approach to measurement was recommended by delegates attending the street cleansing workshop at the performance networks seminar. APSE will be considering more information around how surveys have been conducted, what types of questions have been asked, what sample sizes have been used, and other information, to develop a like for like comparison.

The requirement to collect, analyse and compare performance will remain with local authorities meaning the benefits of using benchmarking arrangements such as those provided by performance networks will continue to increase but better streets requires investment in training to ensure continuity of improving performance and keep health and safety risks to a minimum.

Anne Clayton
Principal Advisor