



Transport operations and vehicle maintenance trend analysis

This briefing provides details of the latest trend analysis of local authority performance on cost, quality and productivity within the transport operations sector. It is provided to local authority chief executives, council leaders and all APSE transport operations and vehicle maintenance contacts.

Key issues

1. Transport is an essential service within local government enabling other services in their delivery e.g. housing repairs, social services, education, etc.
2. APSE performance networks for transport is now in year 7 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 transport 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

Transport is an essential support service within local government and APSE performance networks has been comparing transport data from a wide selection of local authorities throughout the UK since 2001/2, reporting results annually across a broad range of performance indicators.

2. Overview of trend information

The APSE performance networks programme for transport operations and vehicle maintenance provides performance indicators for various dimensions of performance; such as the cost, productivity and quality. The following briefing aims 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 the APSE benchmarking group could consider. The transport model is complex because of the wide variation in vehicle types, the difference in services provided by different types of authorities, and the strategic element of planning the service; but it is comprehensive as a result of this.

The analysis in this briefing is based on averages across all family groups and so is service-wide. This year's analysis is based on 44 participating authorities.

3. Key cost and productivity indicators

The refuse collection model collects two indicators relating to transport. PI 10 identifies transport costs as a percentage of total expenditure as this is a major element of costs. PI 25 measures vehicle availability which is a key to how effective maintenance and servicing schedules may be. The table below indicates performance over the last 6 years.

Transport costs as % of total expenditure (PI 10)

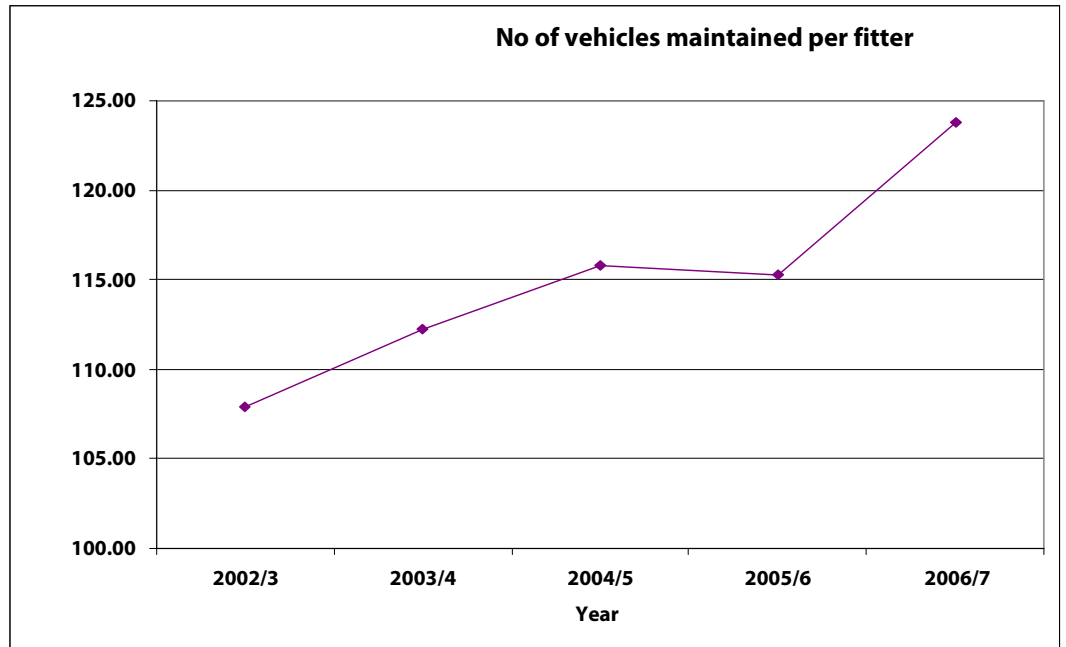
2001/2002	30.00%
2002/3	28.35%
2003/4	26.35%
2004/5	28.13%
2005/6	25.32%
2006/7	23.86%

Percentage non availability of vehicles (PI 25)

2001/02	2.30%
2002/3	2.53%
2003/4	1.52%
2004/5	0.99%
2005/6	1.53%
2006/7	0.82%

The proportion of costs relating to transport have again fallen to their lowest level in waste management despite the increasing specialisation of refuse collection vehicles with the emphasis on recycling and prevention of overloading. The figures for non availability of vehicles have also fallen to their lowest level in 6 years.

The performance indicator relating to the weighted number of vehicles maintained per fitter (PI66) has improved - the overall average has risen to 123.75 vehicles this year from 115.25 in Year 8.



In terms of the effectiveness of the maintenance regime, 3 performance indicators can be used to demonstrate performance. These are PI 73 - percentage of vehicles passing the DoE test first time; PI74 - percentage of vehicles serviced within 7 days of schedule and PI76 - percentage of workshop jobs completed within 24 hours.

The table below indicates the performance across the last three years:

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/7
PI73 Vehicles pass 1st time	89.86%	90.56%	88.31%
PI74 Vehicles serviced within 7 days of schedule	96.16%	94.91%	95.08%
PI76 Jobs completed in 24 hrs	78.60%	77.34%	75.65%

The table shows a fairly consistent level of performance over the last three years.

3. Quality indicators

The model also collects a range of data relating to qualitative aspects of providing a transport service.. Human resources and people management (PI71) includes issues such

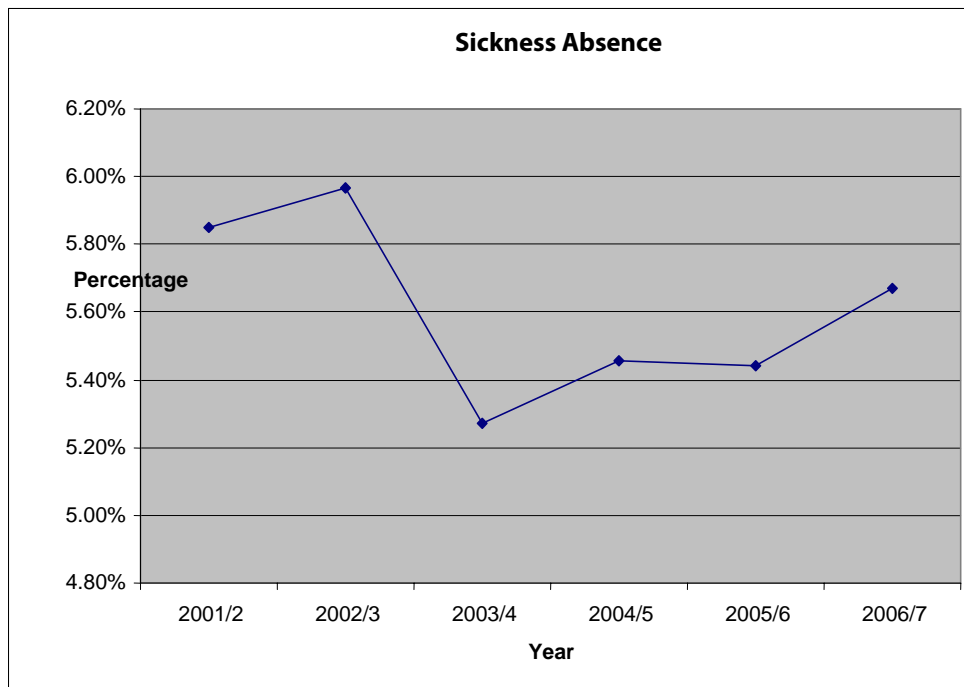
as sickness levels, staff training, access to qualifications and Health and Safety, and the table below shows that the trend continues to show an improvement.

PI 71

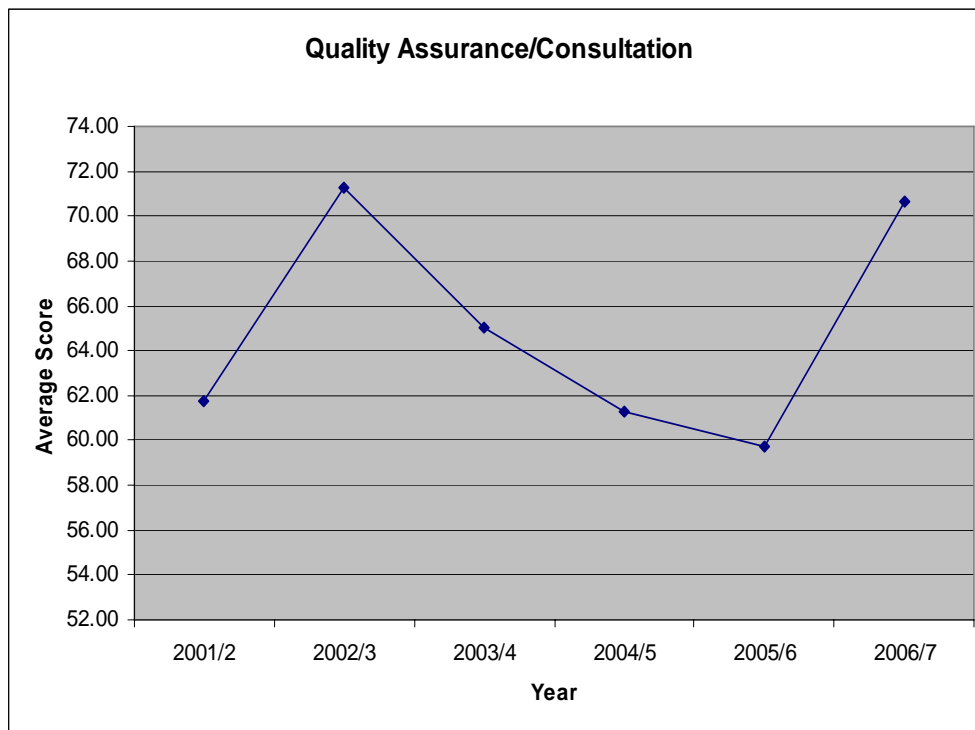
Human resources and people management

1999/00	44.77
2000/01	48.53
2001/02	43.58
2002/03	49.00
2003/04	51.89
2004/05	50.74
2005/06	51.54
2006/07	56.32

In terms of sickness levels, PI67 shows that levels of absence have remained consistent over the last few years. Sickness absence has been rising over the last 3 years but is still below the highest return of 5.97% in 2002/3.



Quality Assurance and Consultation systems measured within Performance Networks include quality systems such as ISO, IIP, Chartermark, service standards, service complaints and customer satisfaction. These indicators have shown a marked improvement on the previous three years, almost attaining the previous high score achieved in 2002/3.



4. Enforcement indicators

The suite of performance indicators (PI 110 to PI 116) covers a range of enforcement issues such as speeding, parking and accidents. Most authorities have submitted data and a range of tables have been produced showing a reduction across the whole range of indicators. The number of vehicle accidents per 100 council vehicles has reduced from 51.3 to 47.4 over the 2006/7 period.

5. Interpretation of data

Overall, analysis of these trends and other data provides evidence of continued improvement across a range of indicators covering cost, productivity and quality. Costs are reducing consistently despite higher specialisation of vehicles and productivity is improving in most areas but it is acknowledged that age and lifecycle of individual vehicles can affect productivity.

In determining individual effectiveness, authorities should check their own performance on these indicators against their figures for weighted number of vehicles maintained per fitter. If an authority has a low ratio for vehicles maintained per fitter but high percentage figures for the maintenance effectiveness, it may relate to a high quality servicing regime. Additionally authorities should view these indicators with the family group profile data giving average age of vehicles and optimum average lifecycle as they can have an impact. The performance indicator standings tables are produced by APSE along with the Performance Reports and sent to the main contacts within a local authority. These tables give authorities the opportunity to quickly determine performance against each indicator and also show the level of improvement necessary to achieve upper quartile or ten percentile performance. If you would like a copy of the PI standings tables please contact Anne Clayton or Sarah Pooley on 0161 772 1810.

Quality indicators have improved this year with the average Human Resources score continuing to rise and consultation scores improving on 2005/6.

6. Future focus

The emphasis on improving productivity, service quality and environmental impact are all likely to continue in the near future, particularly in the importance of transport services contributing to a local authority's wider sustainability strategy. The transport model is now established and allows participants to show that they are making real improvements. Further work will continue into customer satisfaction, compliance, enforcement and passenger transport indicators that provide consistent measures which can allow for local, regional and national variations.

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.

7. APSE comment

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 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 performance indicators within the model currently mainly relate to "internal" transport issues. However transport services are essential to the delivery of most other local authority services and there is a need to determine if the performance given to clients as diverse as social services, building maintenance, education and refuse collection are actually improving. To assist this, the family group profile now gives data on wider issues including compliance, health and safety, processes/policy and community passenger transport. Additionally performance indicators relating to education and welfare transport services have now been added.

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.

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