



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 street scene/public realm services and a component of neighbourhood management
2. APSE performance networks for street cleansing is now in year 10 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 2009.

1. Introduction

Street cleansing is seen as an essential element of street scene/public realm services and is also an important component of neighbourhood management 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. APSE's annual Neighbourhood Management Report incorporates Street Cleansing performance measures alongside other services such as refuse collection, highways, street lighting and parks.

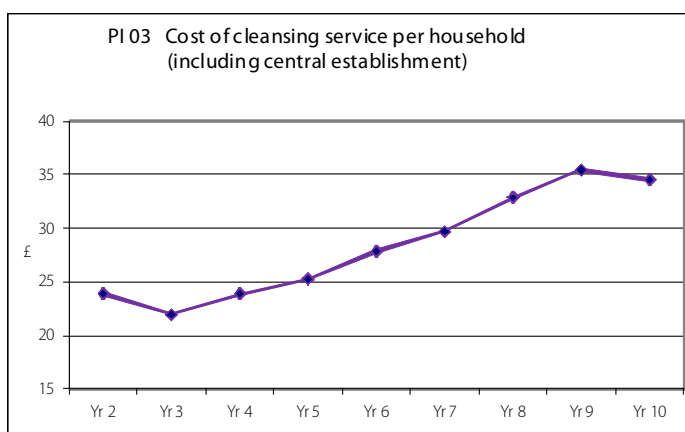
2. Overview of trend information

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 2007/8 data alongside that which has been submitted over the preceding eight years.

3. Key cost and productivity indicators

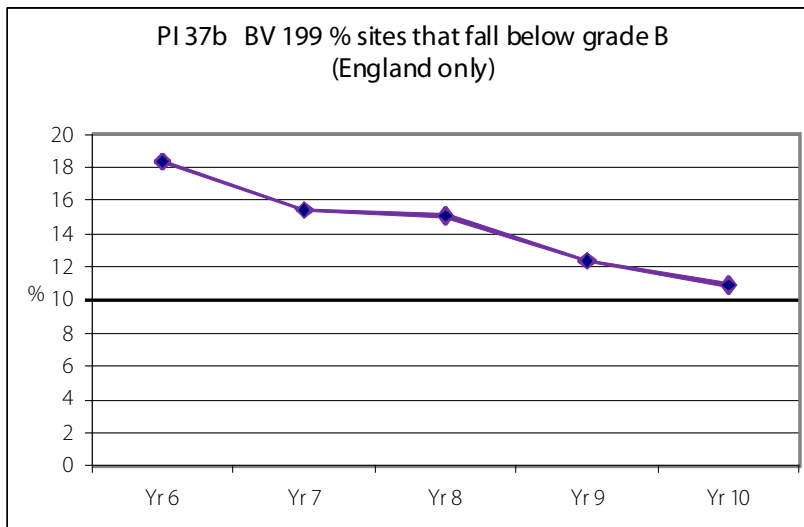
For the first time since 2000/01, the average cost per household (PI 03) has fallen this year by 2.6%. Prior to this decrease, there had been six years of annual increases (always in excess of inflation rates), reflecting public concerns regarding environmental standards, increased budgets for street cleansing and responding to enforcement legislation contained in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act.

The graph below shows the average cost of street cleansing since 1999/2000. In 2000/01 this cost was £21.93, rising over the years to £35.45 in 2006/07. The slight decrease in cost to £34.52 is possibly the result of general financial expedience and efficiency savings. However, it could also be due to the fact that many authorities have now established neighbourhood enforcement teams, making service improvements that have resulted in upturns in quality and customer satisfaction.

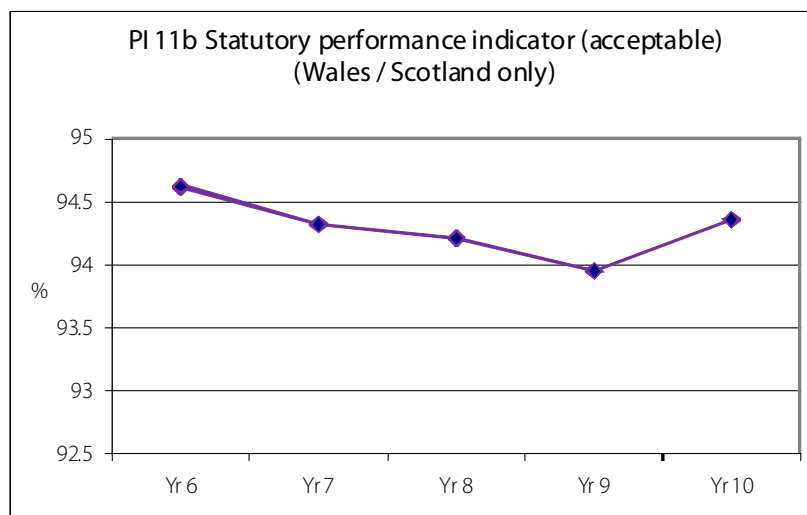


4. Quality indicators

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 10.92% across all participating authorities. This represents a reduction of 11.5% from the 2006/07.



The statutory performance indicator for acceptable levels of cleanliness for Scottish and Welsh authorities (PI 11b) represents a reversal of the trend towards lower standards that have been previously plotted. The introduction of Local Environment Audit and Management Systems (LEAMS) which, like BVPI 199 in England, enables resources to be targeted where they are most needed to achieve improvements in cleanliness, will be reflected in future data collection.



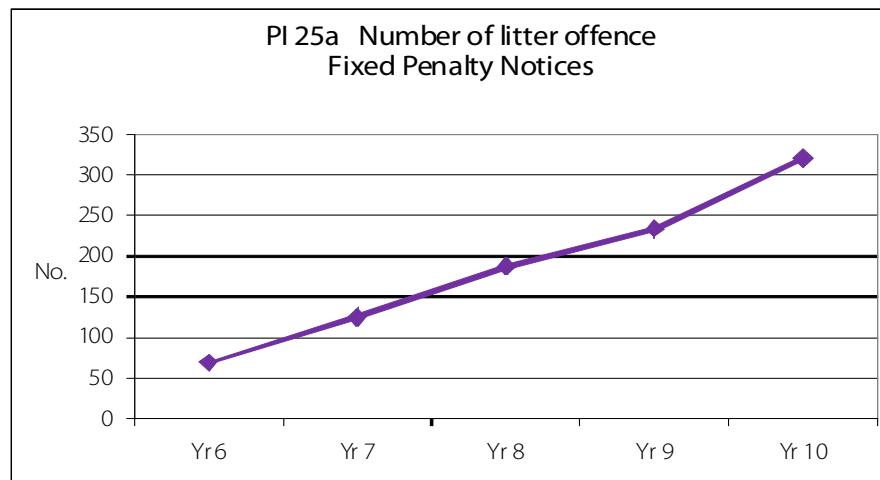
The community consultation and quality assurance Indicator (PI 17) has maintained a consistent level over the past 5 years and is now reporting an average score of 78.42.

5. Satisfaction indicators

PI 39, community/customer surveys undertaken shows that satisfaction levels have been consistent over the three years of data collection and continue to average around 65% for street cleansing. This consistency may indicate a need for local authorities to continue to promote their successes to meet the levels of public concern regarding environmental standards.

6. Other indicators

Since the introduction of the Clean Neighbourhoods Act in England and Wales, the number of fixed penalty notices issued for litter offences (PI 25a) has shown dramatic annual increases demonstrating the establishment of arrangements for councils to use enforcement. The average number of FPN's issued per authority increased by 37% in 2007/08 to over 320. However, despite these increases, there are wide-ranging individual results across local authorities with some still to issue their first ticket and others making vigorous use of their new powers.



The level of sickness absence within Street Cleansing services (PI22a) remained consistent at 6.15%.

Two new indicators were introduced in 2005/6 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 showed a slight decline in both, down to 11.16 and 1.19% respectively and 2007/08 has seen the budget allocation reduced further to just 0.67% on average, although the average number of campaigns has almost doubled to 21.32.

7. Interpretation of data

All street cleansing service providers face the challenge of striking a balance between cost, customer satisfaction and quality output and the trends for 2007/08 show a leveling off across cost and customer satisfaction but also indicate that quality continues to improve even though costs have not increased.

With enforcement procedures generally established, the continuing increase in numbers of fixed penalty notices issued for littering may have been a significant factor in those improvements in quality.

Education and publicity continue to be a very minor part of many street cleansing budgets, although the increase in the actual number of campaigns undertaken suggests smaller scale targeting of problem areas. This has been made possible by the inspection regime associated with national performance indicators such as BVPI 199 and LEAMS, linked with the ENCAMS Local Environmental Quality Surveys (LEQS).

Direction of travel reports have been produced within Performance Networks for the first time in 2007/8. These bespoke reports are 5 year trend reports for authorities participating in the street cleansing model over that time period and are available on the APSE Performance Networks Web Portal.

8. Future Focus

The neighbourhood theme continues to gain national momentum with street cleansing one of the main services with an impact on the quality of the local environment. APSE's annual neighbourhood management report provides a more rounded view of the services making up street scene type arrangements. Authorities participating in more than one of the neighbourhood services (refuse collection, parks, street cleansing, highways or street lighting) are automatically included in this additional report, but street cleansing must be one of these services.

Part of the neighbourhood approach has involved the development of partnerships with other agencies and APSE will continue to strengthen working ties with organisations such as ENCAMS to identify the correlation between performance networks and other performance tools such as Local Environment Quality Surveys.

The Performance Networks Street Cleansing Working group will ensure that changes in the national performance indicators link into performance networks, and will also to develop systems to facilitate collection of data from external service providers. There is also a need to improve UK wide consistency across the indicators, particularly those for environmental standards, possibly matching up to European standards.

Customer satisfaction remains a high priority development area and working groups across all services will consider the inclusion of further profile information around consultation in the data template.

A more geographical mix of family group and core city benchmarking could be considered which will assist with increasing participation for the street cleansing service.

9. APSE comment

Street Cleansing continues to be a high profile service but continues to face cost pressures and in the current economic climate, financial issues are likely to be high on the agenda for most local authorities during 2008/09. APSE will continue to monitor cost implications and to identify and showcase best practice within the service, especially where an authority has managed to achieve the difficult balance between cost, quality and customer satisfaction.

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 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.

Anne Clayton
Principal Advisor