membership resources

Briefing 08 -60 December 2008

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 8 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 2009.

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 38 participating authorities.

3. Key cost and productivity indicators

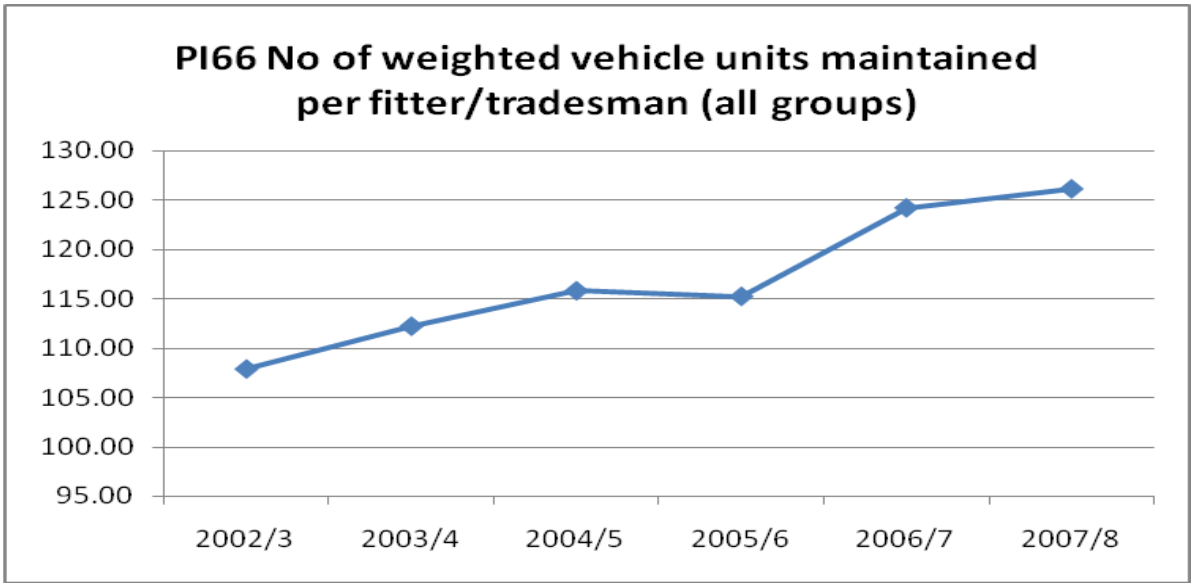
The refuse collection model collects data on one indicator relating to transport. PI 10 identifies transport costs as a percentage of total expenditure as this is a major element of costs. PI 25, which measured vehicle availability, has been removed from the refuse collection model for 2007/8. The table below indicates performance on expenditure over the last 7 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%
2007/8	25.47%

The proportion of costs relating to transport have increased in 2007/8 which may be as a result of the increasing specialisation of refuse collection vehicles to cope with a widening range of types of recyclable materials, and to avoid contamination on collections.

The performance indicator relating to the weighted number of vehicles maintained per fitter (PI66) has improved - the overall average has risen to 126.09 vehicles this year from 123.75 in Year 9.



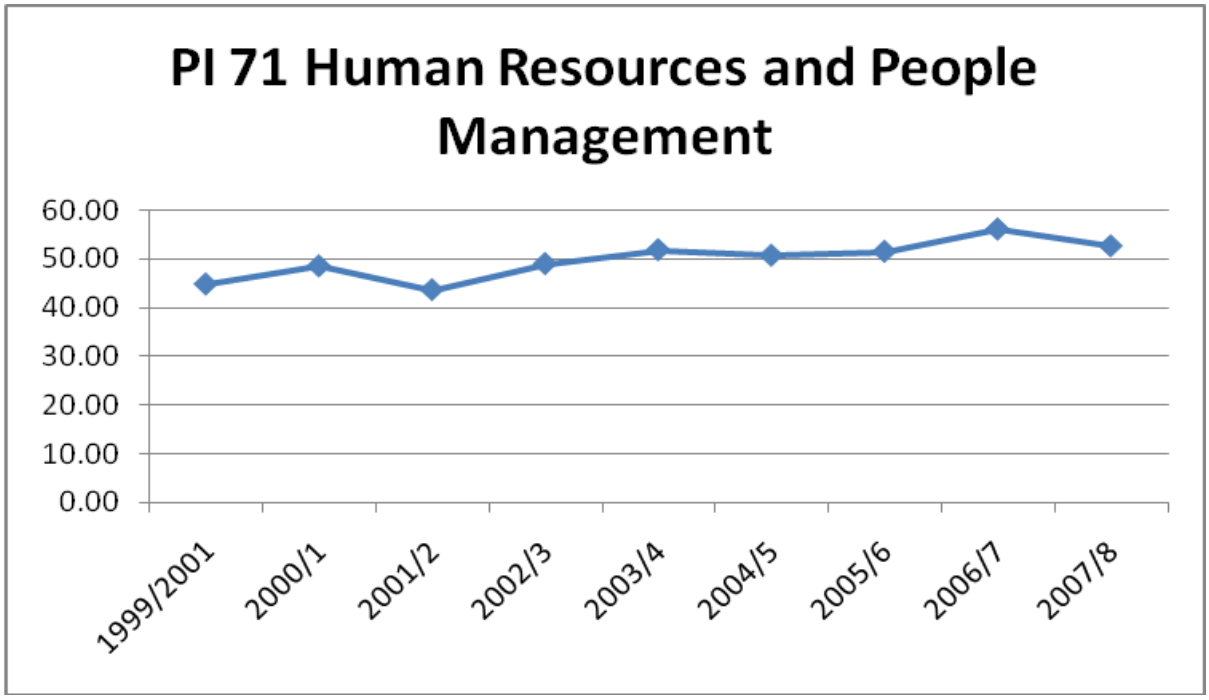
In terms of the effectiveness of the maintenance regime, 3 performance indicators can be used to demonstrate performance. These are PI 73 - percentage of vehicles passing the DoE test first time; PI74 - percentage of vehicles serviced within 7 days of schedule and PI76 - percentage of workshop jobs completed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

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/7	2007/8
PI73 Vehicles pass 1st time	89.86%	90.56%	88.31%	89.24%
PI74 Vehicles serviced within 7 days of schedule	96.16%	94.91%	95.08%	95.72%
PI76 Jobs completed in 24 hrs	78.60%	77.34%	75.65%	76.62%

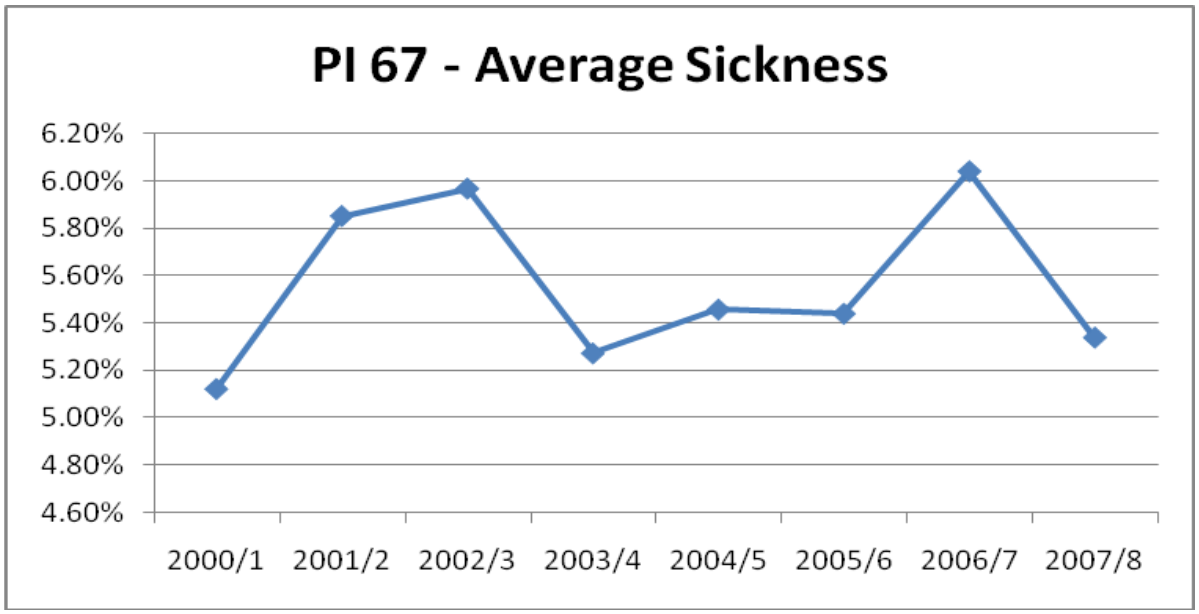
The table above shows a consistent level of performance over the last four years and improvement across all three indicators in 2007/8.

3. Quality indicators

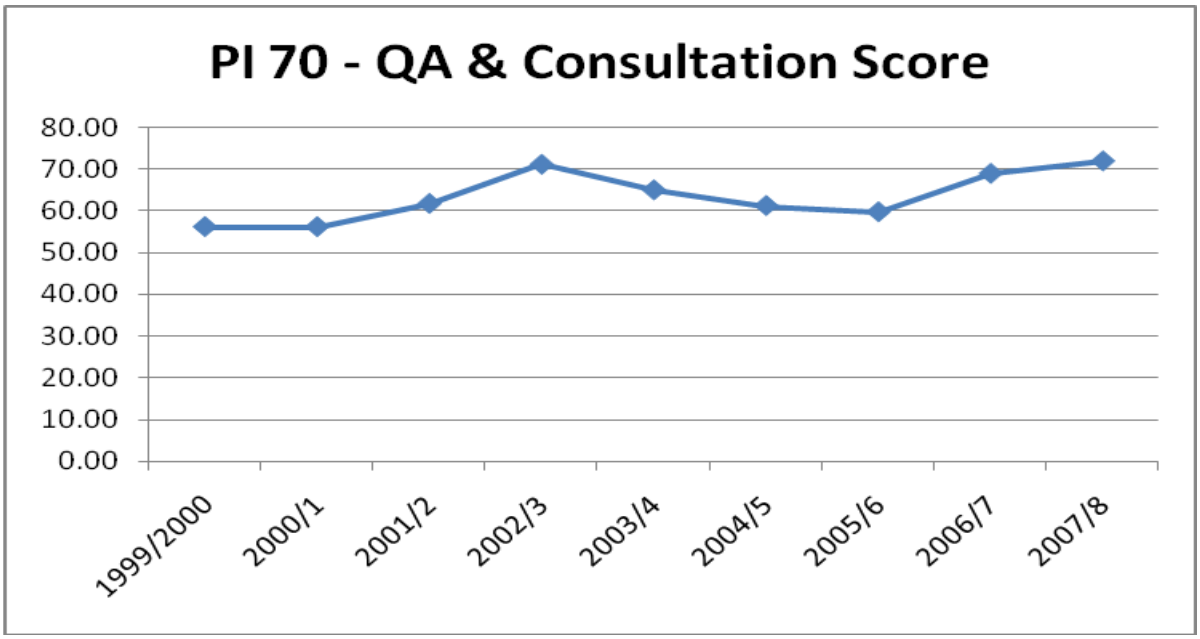
The transport model also collects a range of data relating to qualitative aspects of providing a transport service.. Human resources and people management (PI 71) includes issues such as sickness levels, staff training, access to qualifications and Health and Safety, and the table below shows that the average score for this indicator has reduced slightly in over this year although it still remains higher than the score for 2005/6.



In terms of sickness levels, PI67 shows that levels of absence have remained consistent over the last few years. Sickness absence had risen slightly over the previous 3 years but has reduced in 2007/8 to 5.34%, which is similar to the level in 2003/4.

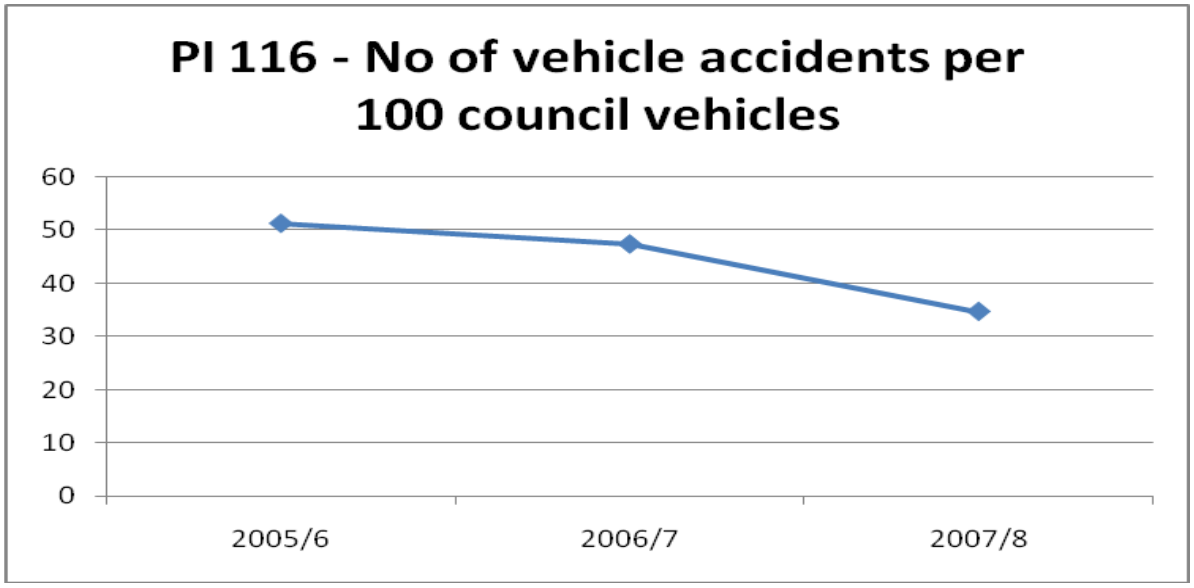


PI 70 measures Quality Assurance and Consultation systems within Performance Networks including quality systems such as ISO, IIP, Chartermark, service standards, service complaints and customer satisfaction. These indicators have shown a marked improvement over the last three years, and have reached an all time high average score of 72.08 in 2007/8.



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. These indicators were introduced in 2005/6 and most authorities are now submitting the required data. A range of tables have been produced showing a reduction across the whole range of indicators. The graph below shows that the number of vehicle accidents per 100 council vehicles has reduced from 51.3 to 47.4 over the 2006/7 period and stands at 34.63 for 2007/8.



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 have increased slightly over the year but this can be partly explained by the demand for increased specialisation of vehicles as the range of recyclates increases. Productivity

continues to improve in most areas but the age and lifecycle of individual vehicles need to be considered as this 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 Emma Nolan on 0161 772 1810.

Quality indicators remain consistent this year with the average Human Resources score at 52.68, sickness absence levels reducing and QA and consultation scores improving on 2006/7.

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 transport model over that time period and are available on the APSE Performance Networks Web Portal.

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 the transport model indicators to ensure the provision of consistent measures to allow for local, regional and national variations and APSE performance networks will ensure that any changes occurring within the transport services will be reflected in the data collection templates. In order to facilitate increased participation the Transport working group will consider the use of modular templates in 2008/9 and will examine further improvements to encourage extended membership, particularly in the South and South West regions.

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 across all services 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.

In addition to these developments within performance networks, APSE will continue to work with members and other transport associations such as the FTA and the Community Transport Association to develop good practice guides for Transport Operations.

7. APSE comment

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.

In terms of model development one focus will be to look at how the model can incorporate measures with other bodies. APSE has met with the Freight Transport Association exploring areas of possible joint working and 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; and to increase participation rates for this area of the model.

A particular focus of the APSE Advisory and 'All Family' Group meetings in 2009 will be to discuss the key points of the Year 10 analysis and trends and also to profile best performers.

The requirement to collect, analyse and compare performance remains with local authorities throughout the United Kingdom. The statutory guidance issued by CLG in July 2008 'Creating strong, safe, prosperous communities' stresses the need for local authorities to "regularly and rigorously assess and review the competitiveness of services against similar services", including those externally provided. There is also an emphasis on service improvement and the need to address under-performance within the guidance.

Audit Scotland are also highlighting the importance of effective performance management to corporate plans in recent audit reports, and councils must demonstrate that service outcomes have been maintained or improved to claim efficiencies under the Efficient Government initiative.

The consultation paper issued in 2008 by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 'Delivering a shared responsibility; performance improvement and community planning' reinforces the importance of benchmarking and the WAG has stated an intention to legislate for performance comparison amongst local authorities.

The Department of Environment in Northern Ireland has also pledged support for the development of appropriate performance management systems to deliver modern, high quality and efficient public services.

The fact that all the relevant assemblies and governments have emphasised the importance of undertaking benchmarking indicate that the benefits of using benchmarking arrangements such as those provided by performance networks to evaluate service performance and to assess competitiveness will continue to increase.

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