Street Cleanliness Report

Results of the 2018/2019 survey data sets

APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) is a not for profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK. Promoting excellence in public services, APSE is the foremost specialist in local authority front line services, hosting a network for front line service providers in areas such as waste and refuse collection, parks and environmental services, leisure, school meals, cleaning, housing and building maintenance.

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Foreword

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Used by over 190 local authorities it leads the way in local government benchmarking. The size of the membership of APSE Performance Networks gives added benefits to members by being able to offer a wide variety of comparator groups across different local government services; street cleansing is no exception and the sector within local government has a strong record of using performance information to improve services to the public.

As a consequence of the loss of the National Performance Indicator set in 2010, the significance of APSE Performance Networks data has grown and many local authorities that would otherwise have struggled to develop their own performance management indicators for their services, have relied upon the robust and reliable systems deployed by APSE Performance Networks, to enhance their performance information.

Following discussions with its member local councils APSE enhanced the collection of data in the area of local environmental quality through the development of LAMS (a land audit management system). LAMS has further developed the set of street cleansing performance indicators, allowing them to measure the cleanliness of their own local environments using engagement with both the workforce on the ground and local volunteers. It specifically allows a new standard for benchmarking local council performance against similar English local authorities in the area of street cleansing, alongside the wider public realm. This development complements the existing data sets within APSE Performance Networks enabling trend analysis, which is essential to effectively using data to improve public service performance. In short the corresponding data sets provide a rich source of information to all those committed to improving the quality of local street scene services for local residents and businesses.

There has never been a more important time to gather good data in a recognised and consistent manner that can be compared with other councils to provide a baseline for the impact that the past 9 months has had on services and help provide a context for COVID-19 recovery measures.

Whilst the methodology of LAMS is based on the previous National Indicator 195 'improved street and environmental cleanliness (litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting)', it also benefits from the robust sample size of participation. This is based upon 42 local authorities spread across England who have carried almost 40,000 transect inspections on street cleanliness levels (carried out during 2018 /2019) the findings of which are contained within this report. This makes it the largest survey of street cleanliness levels carried out in England.

The data contained within this report is therefore an invaluable data source to local councils in England and to public administrations and Government bodies alike.

I commend this report to you.

Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive, APSE

Origins of the report

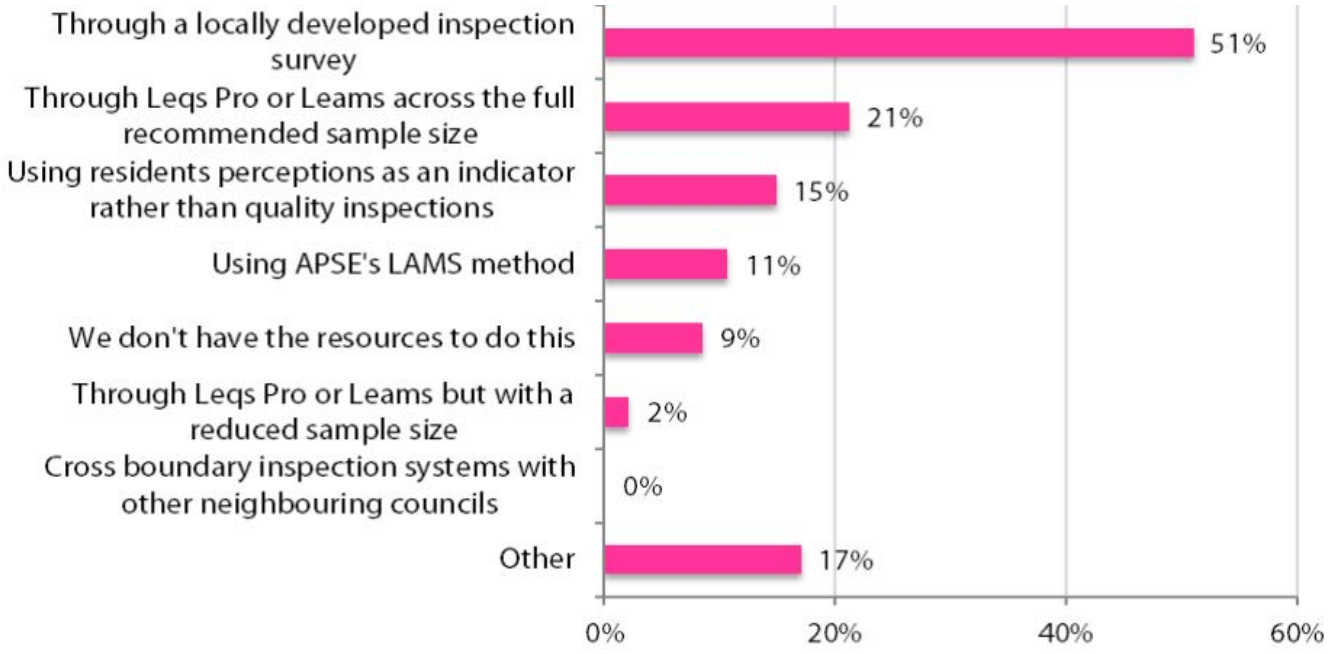
In developing responses to the Best Value requirements for performance information APSE was instrumental in developing APSE Performance Networks. This service facilitates benchmarking on a fair and robust basis; developing data which is then used to compare performance of key frontline services between local councils throughout the UK. Changes to the National Performance Indicator Sets in 2010 for English councils led to some gaps in consistency of approaches. This was of a particular concern to street scene services with the demise of NI 195, which most viewed as a key indicator in ensuring service quality in street cleansing services.

As a result of these changes APSE, working with its member local councils took these concerns on board. Working with local authorities across the UK, APSE responded to these issues by exploring ways in which consistency of data could be preserved as well as using other tools at its disposal to provide a robust set of comparative data to inform performance information. As a result, the following information is drawn from APSE's State of the Market Survey Data, Land Audit Management System (LAMS) data and reported data from APSE Performance Networks for Street Cleansing Services.

Origins of the survey data used

APSE's 2020 State of the Market Research Report identified a number of different street cleanliness measurement techniques being used by local authorities.

Table 1. Methodologies for measuring street cleanliness 2019 ***'How did you measure street cleanliness quality during 2019?'***



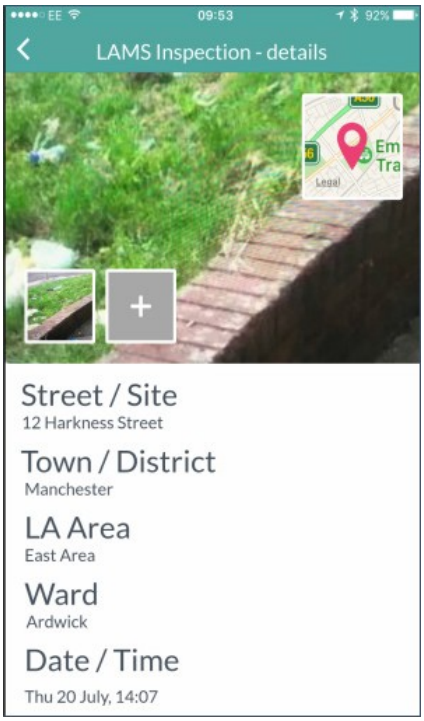
As a result of this use of a wide range of measures, there were few opportunities to measure comparative data sets across local authorities. APSE is one of the few organisations which has historically collected comparable local authority service data on an annual basis, its street cleansing information dating back as far as 1998/99. This data covers areas such as service cost, customer satisfaction levels, staffing, and environmental quality performance and is comparable nationally, within family groups and individually.

APSE currently has over 190 local authorities in membership of Performance Networks. The service is recognised as a trusted and robust source of performance data within local government. The model met all criteria in an assessment of consistency, reliability and comparability of data required by the Audit Commission. The model has been described as ***"well established and trusted to deliver information"*** by an independent validation by the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) at The University of Birmingham.

APSE was approached by its members as to the possibility of creating a cleanliness measurement system which was easy to use, robust and allowed comparison with other local authorities as a replacement to the previous **National Indicator 195** 'Improved street and environmental cleanliness (litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting)'.

After consultation with its members, APSE developed the **Land Audit Management System (LAMS)** which is a quality inspection system which measures the quality of localities, and at the same time allows councils to benchmark their results against other local authorities. The system can also be used to monitor grounds maintenance and cemeteries and crematorium services, to allow for the whole street scene to be inspected.

Initially a paper-based system, working with users this has now been enhanced via the creation of a digital app in partnership with Bbits, the organisation responsible for Love Clean Streets.



Local Environmental Quality Indicators used in the survey

To ensure that as many relevant local environmental quality indicators were used, APSE consulted with members to develop a number of key measures which were most requested. The following identifies the most up to date list of those indicators requested:

- Surface weeds
- Litter
- Detritus
- Fly tipping
- Fly-posting
- Dog fouling
- Bins overflowing
- Bin structure
- Bin cleanliness
- Graffiti
- Staining/gum

Carrying out the survey

LAMS requires users to identify a number of transects across a local authority area and undertake inspections over a given monitoring period. These transects must include a number of different locations and land types (e.g. town centres, main roads and industrial/residential estates). The full list is as follows:

- Main retail
- Other retail
- Transport facility
- High obstruction housing
- Medium obstruction housing
- Low obstruction housing
- Industrial, warehousing, retail
- Main road
- Other highway
- Rural roads
- Recreation site
- Public transport area
- Waterside

Once identified, each transect to be measured is chosen randomly from the list.

In 2018 APSE launched the LAMS App. Compared to paper-based systems, the App reduces the duration of inspections. It automatically identifies location through GIS and requires photographic evidence to support the grading for validation purposes. The quality grading/scoring registered during the surveys is available as live data for the individual authority completing the audits. In addition to this APSE provide benchmarking reports on a bi-monthly and also quarterly basis.

The App has been further developed this year through the introduction of a self-randomiser which automatically allocates an inspection list of sites to inspectors. The randomiser also includes a map and direction details (Sat-Nav) for all planned inspections via the App.

Survey participants 2018/19

In order to gain as representative a sample as possible both by local authority type and geographical spread, both performance network returns and LAMS surveys were used. The findings incorporated 42 local authorities in England in total, who returned survey results which identified 39,839 transects as having been inspected.

Figure 1 shows the regional spread of those authorities who contributed to the 2018/19 survey.

Table 2. ***Regional spread and number of transects undertaken***

Region	Number of transects	Total %
Central	9,340	23
Northern	19,452	49
Southern	11,047	28
Total	39,839	100

The survey findings gained from each authority were then positioned into columns which reflected the percentage of acceptable levels of cleanliness (based on litter only), found in the transects they measured, i.e. if an authority found that in all the transects they measured, on average 93% were of an acceptable standard of cleanliness, they were placed in the 90-95% column.

Table 3 shows the regional spread of authorities returning data and the percentage of acceptable levels of cleanliness they recorded during 2017/18.

Table 3. ***Acceptable levels of cleanliness 2018 - 19***

Region	80%-85%	85%-90%	90%-95%	95%-100%	Total
Central	-	-	4	7	11
Northern	2	2	7	7	18
Southern	-	2	6	5	13
Total	1	4	17	19	42

In addition to regions and levels of cleanliness, the survey also identified for each of the respondents their deprivation score (high, medium, low) to see if there was a correlation between levels of deprivation and cleanliness.

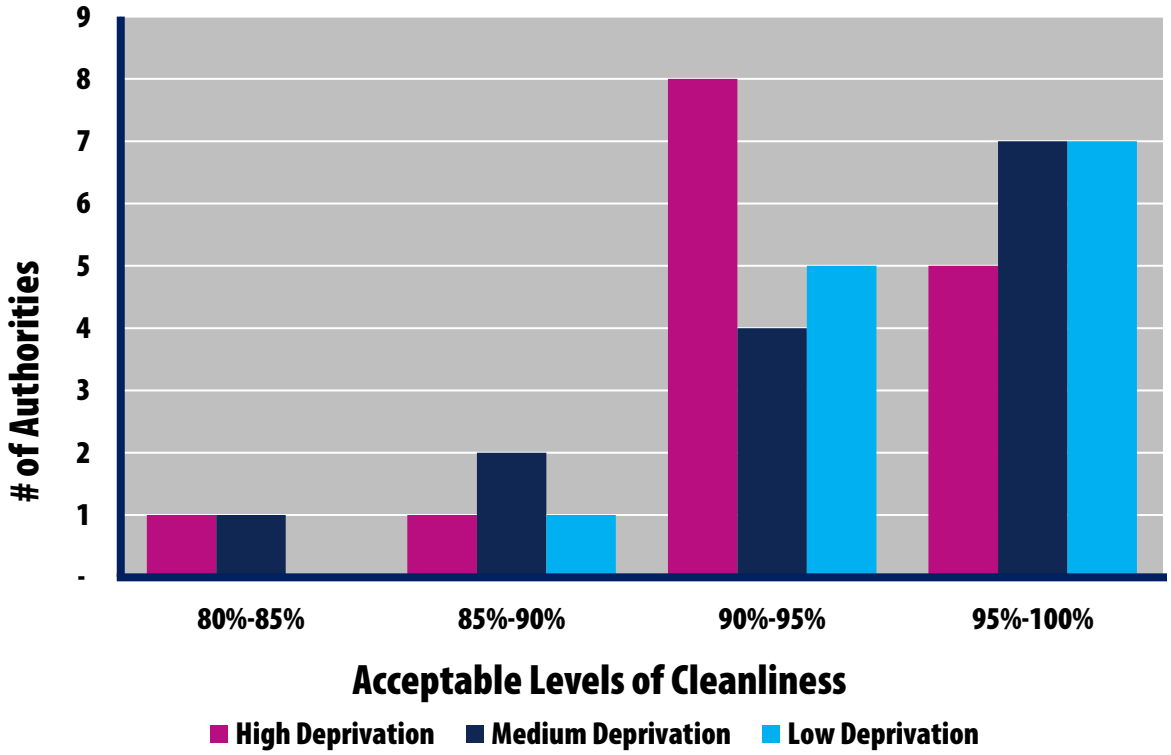
Table 4 shows a more detailed break-down of regions and their percentage levels of cleanliness as well as the deprivation rating.

Table 4. ***Acceptable level of cleanliness and deprivation level by region***

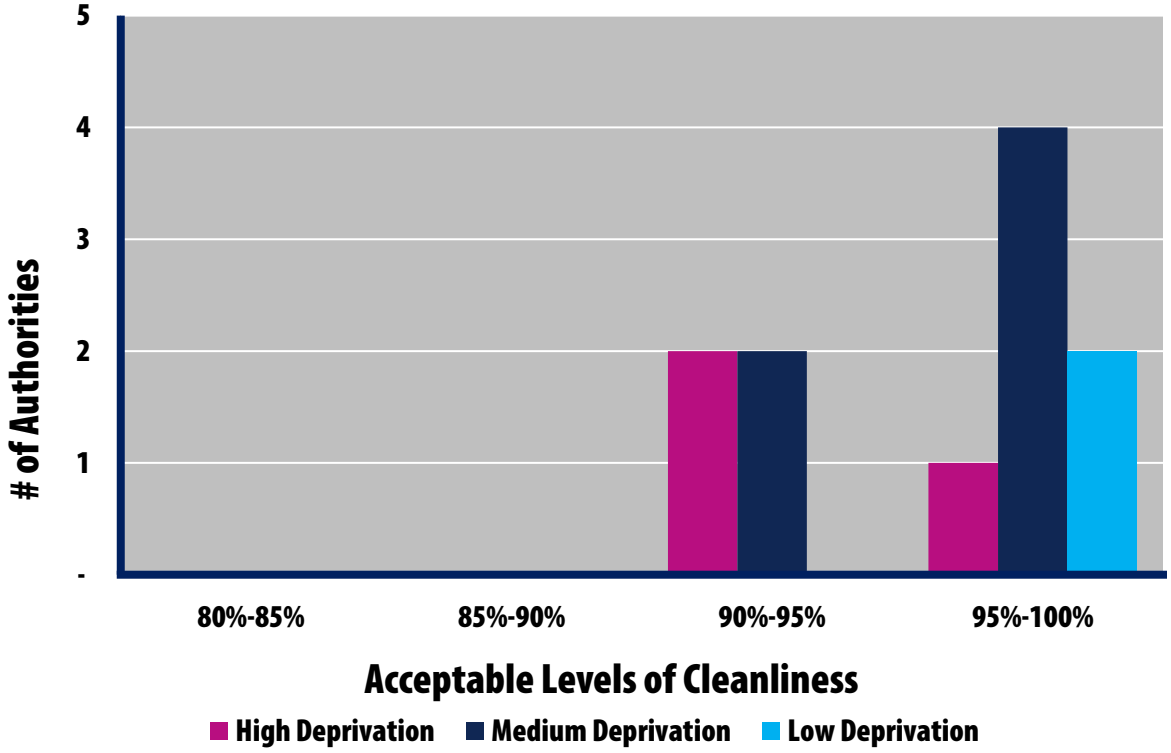
Acceptable level of cleanliness	Deprivation level by region									Total	All regions combined		
	Central			Northern			Southern						
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low		High	Medium	Low
80%-85%	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	-
85%-90%	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	4	1	2	1
90%-95%	2	2	-	4	2	1	2	-	4	17	8	4	5
95%-100%	1	4	2	4	2	1	-	1	4	29	5	7	7
Total	3	6	2	9	6	3	3	2	8	42	15	14	13

In relation to measuring each regions performance, APSE is therefore able to provide a summary of results showing region, number of transects taken, percentage of acceptable levels of cleanliness and also deprivation rating.

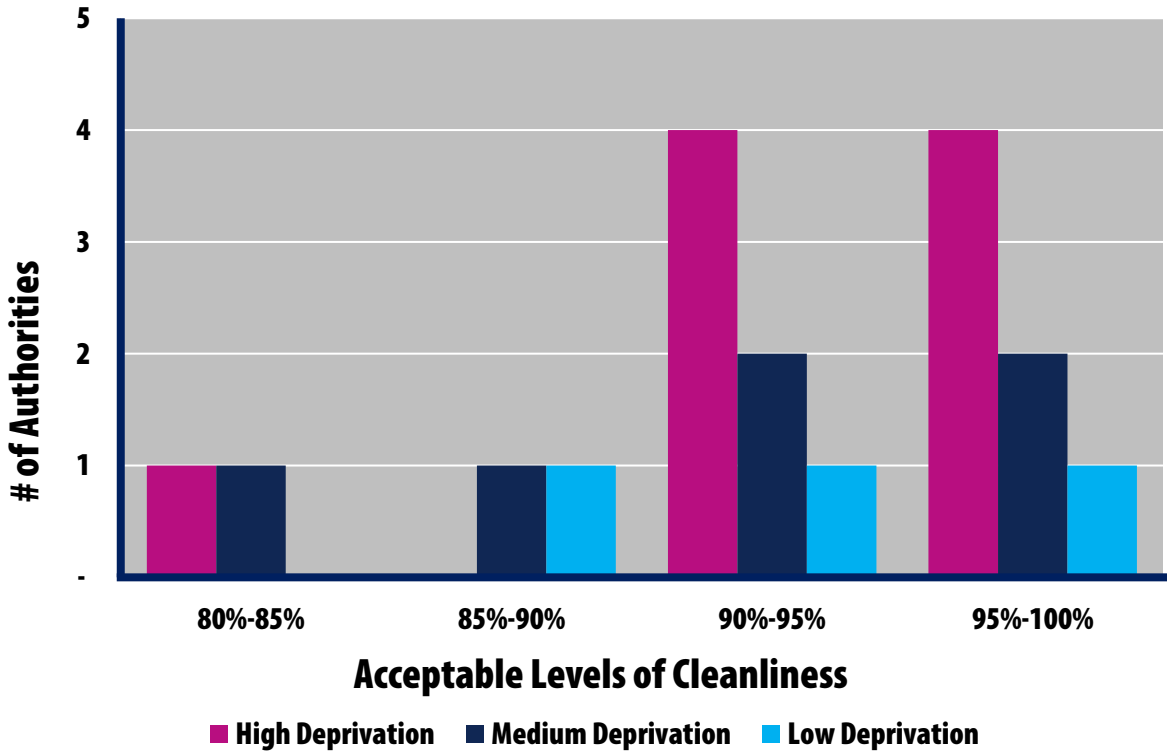
All Regions



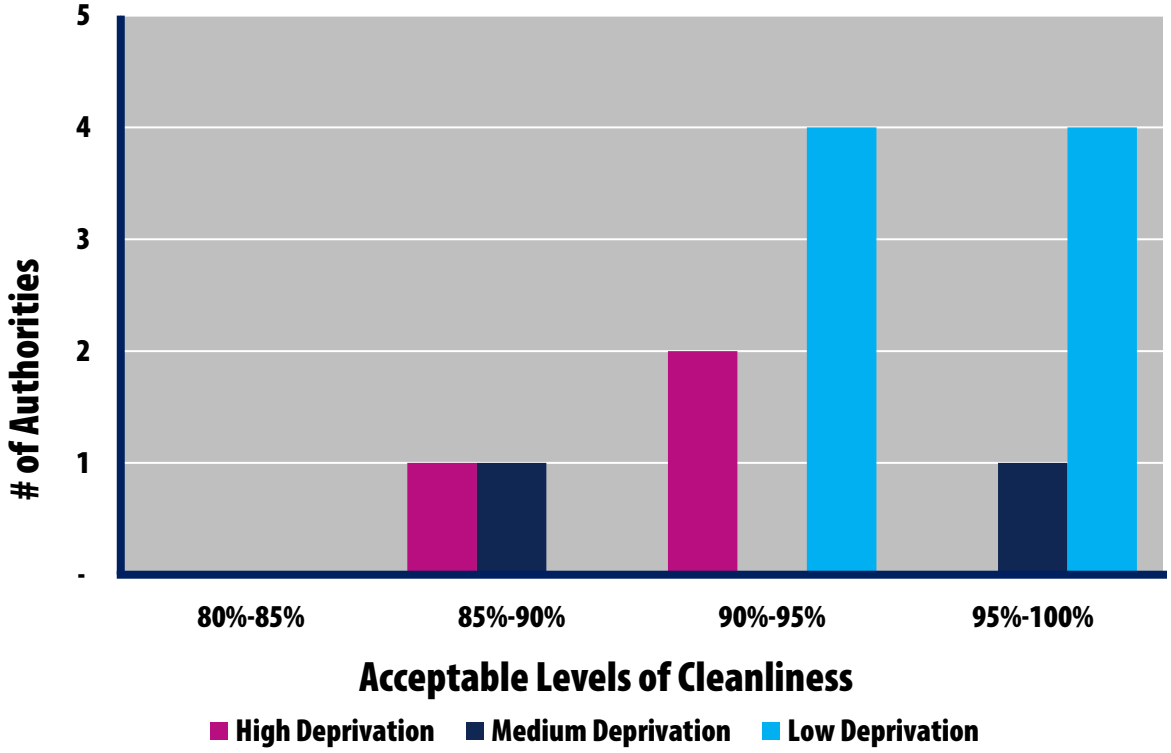
Central



Northern



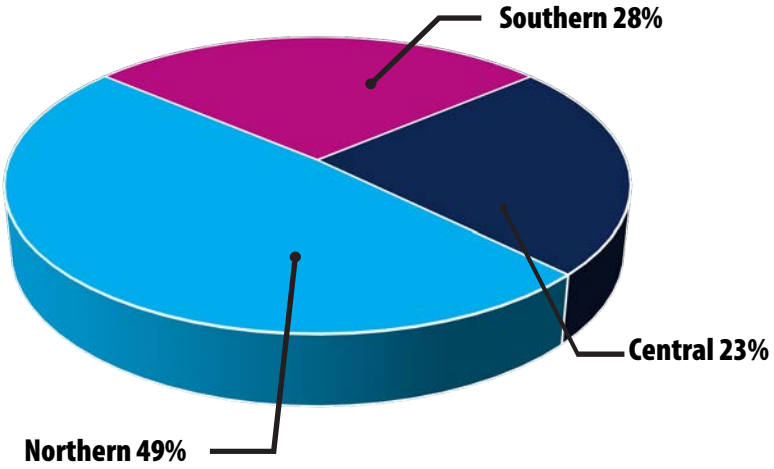
Southern



Analysis

The results for 2018/19 have been refined to show 'litter only' scores which showed that that of the 42 English authorities participating in the survey, that on average 94.33% of the sites inspected were of an acceptable level of cleanliness for litter. This figure compares to 95.91% for 2017/18, thereby showing a decrease of 1.58% in acceptable cleanliness levels. It is perhaps not surprising that a decline has occurred, as street cleansing budgets and local authority budgets continue to be cut year on year.

42 English authorities returned data for 2018/19



The use of deprivation scores against cleanliness levels recorded may have been expected to show a correlation between high deprivation scores and poor levels of street cleanliness. However, it is noticeable that deprivation scores did not seem to impact on levels of cleanliness to any great degree. This suggests that the strategies that local authorities have deployed in more targeted use of reduced street scene resources has helped to maintain service quality, albeit in difficult circumstances. How long this quality can continue to be maintained however is questionable and APSE's research in this area suggests that a long term funding solution to neighbourhood level services will be needed.

A further incentive for local councils to maintain quality in street scene services is the structural changes to local government finance. The move away from direct government funding for English local authorities to much greater reliance on council tax and business rates has underlined the importance of clean and attractive local environments in order to retain and attract residents and businesses. Therefore it is clear that for many local authorities,a quality local environment is essential if the future social and economic sustainability of an area is to be assured.

Local authorities are continuing to target resources at improving local environmental quality and APSE has numerous case studies of best practice and innovative service delivery. Through APSE's advisory groups and seminars we will continue to promote networking between local authorities in order to the share their knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, APSE will offer our wide range of membership services to help local authorities deliver the best quality of services in the most economically efficient and environmentally sustainable manner for the benefits of their local residents.

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