



Environmental Health services: Trend analysis 2016/17

Key Issues

- This briefing provides information on the cost quality and performance of Environmental Health services for the year 2016/17.
- It is clear there has been significant efficiencies in service delivery with costs in most service areas reducing.
- From the number of food hygiene complaints received it is clear the promotion of better food standards has been successful and from a food premises/producer point of view, the fall in food standard complaints suggest they are now more fully aware of their responsibilities.
- One area which will need to be considered more closely is the overall fall in income levels reported, as in a period of austerity income generation is an important weapon in staving off the effects of shrinking budgets.

Overview

This year marks the third official year of the benchmarking model for environmental health services. The programme has been further developed by APSE performance networks along with the support and guidance of the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health Scotland (SOCOEHS). The programme provides performance indicators for food hygiene and standards, health and safety, noise, enforcement and financial performance for the service throughout the UK.

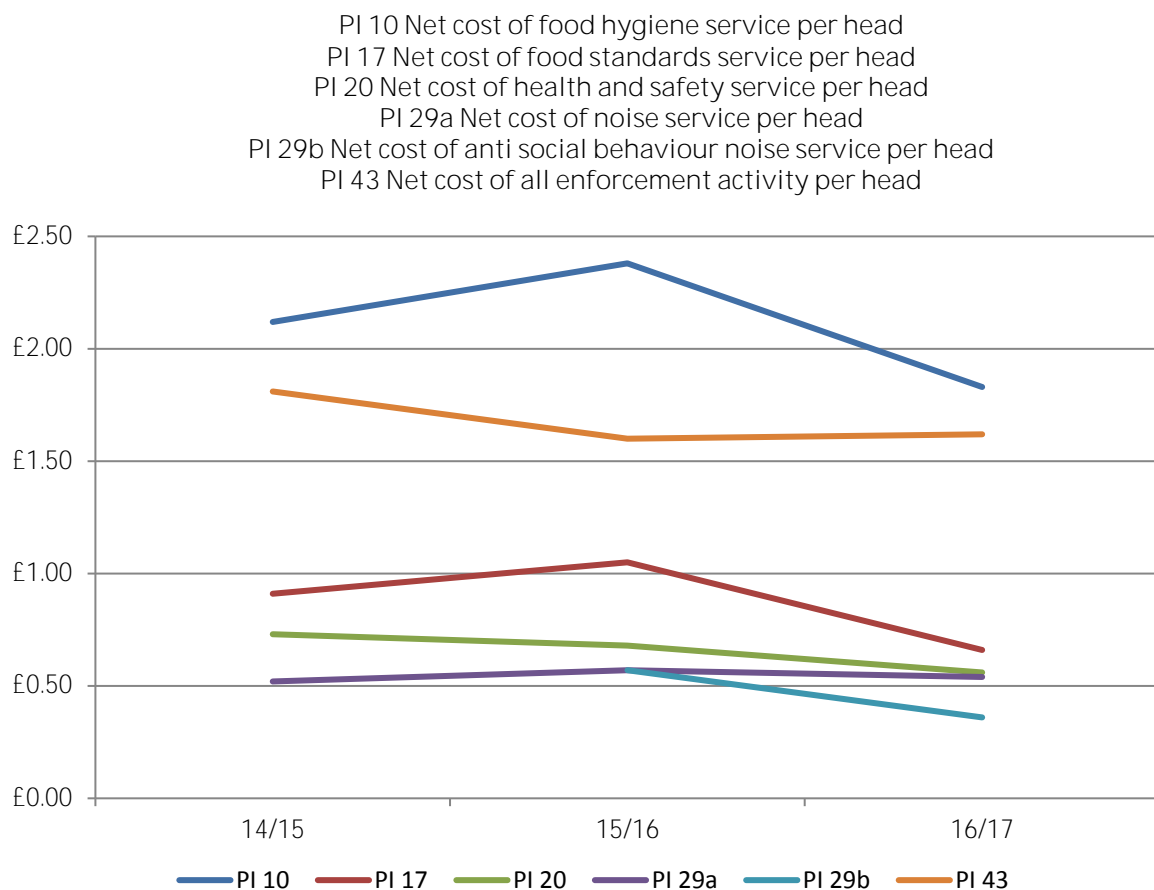
The following summary aims to provide participating authorities with an overview of service trends, what this infers, and what further activity and analysis individual authorities and their benchmarking groups could consider. The analysis in this summary is based on 'service wide averages' across all participating local authorities for 2016/17.

Trend analysis

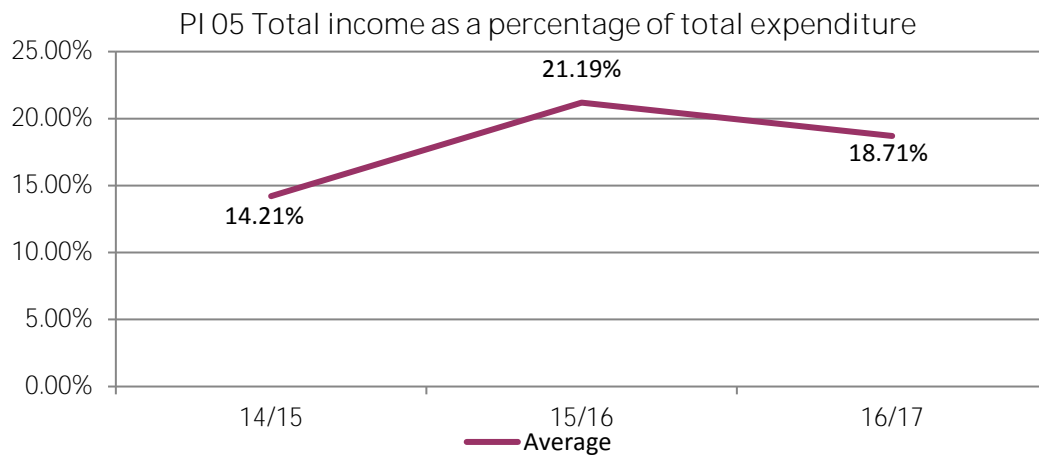
The aim of the trend analysis is to try to, predict the future direction of service performance based on past data, with a view that what has happened in the past may help give an idea of what will happen in the future.

Cost

Despite reductions across many of the service areas covered by this report, the increase in costs per head of population for anti-social behaviour noise complaints has caused the eventual average for whole service costs to increase slightly. The problem has been that as anti-social noise complaints are costly to carry out, this has led to the good work elsewhere in reducing costs, to be somewhat negated. However, despite this, there should still be a large degree of satisfaction amongst service managers about the general trend that across most service areas costs per head of population have fallen.



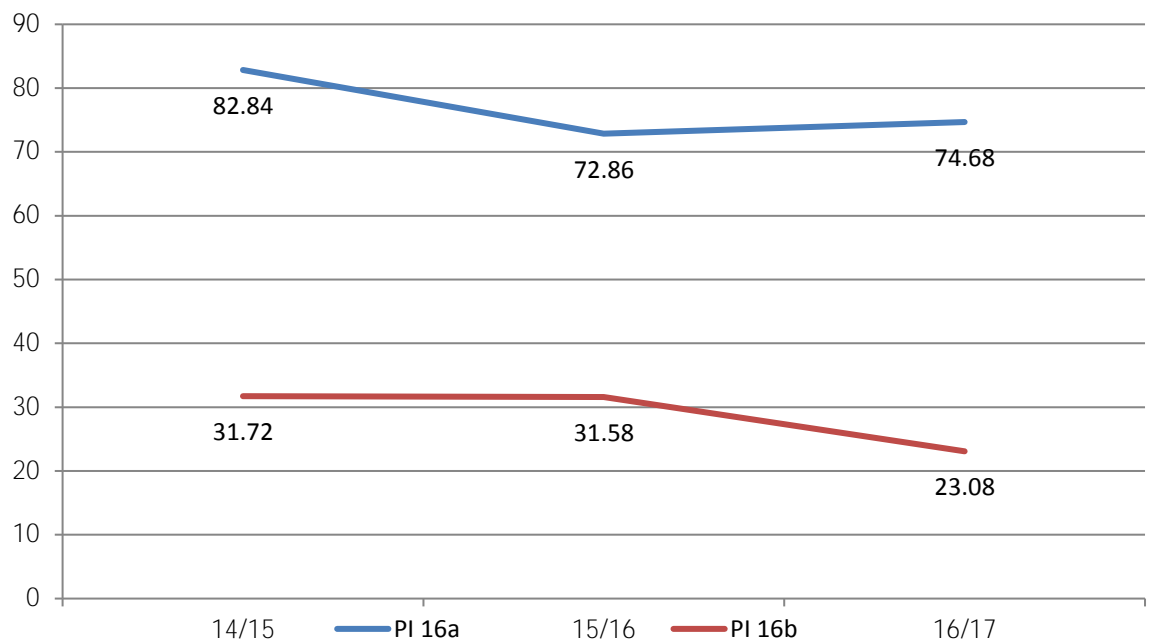
Income levels as a proportion of total expenditure have fallen when compared to the previous year. This could be due to a number of factors including falling levels in demand for service, reduction in staff numbers to carry out chargeable services or even changes in service priorities. This fall in income could also be a contributory fact to the overall increase in whole service costs per head of population referred to previously.



Productivity

There has been an increase in the number of food hygiene complaints being recorded and dealt with per thousand premises. This should not be unexpected as the public become more aware of how to report concerns via national and local publicity campaigns and the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Perhaps not surprisingly with public scrutiny now more effective, complaints about food standards are falling which may indicate restaurants and producers are more aware of their responsibilities.

PI 16a Number of food hygiene complaints (excluding food poisoning) per 1,000 premises
 PI 16b Number of food standards complaints per 1,000 premises

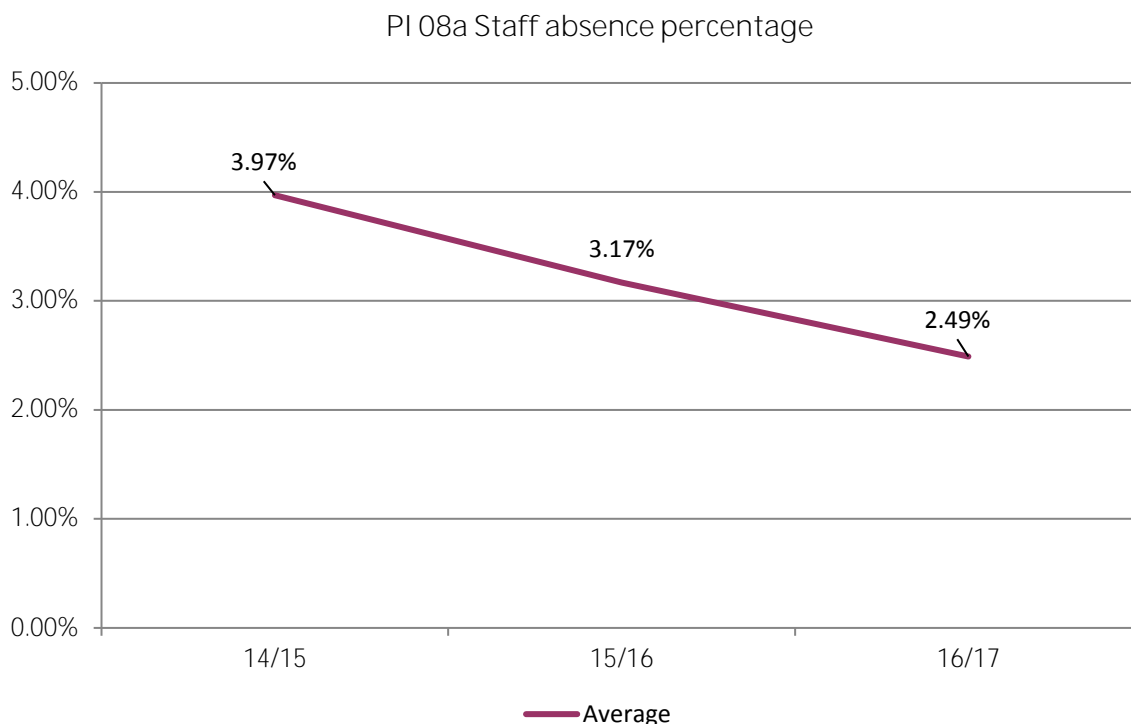


In relation to productivity these results can be seen as the result of the work of EHO's and other officers promoting better practices and behaviour amongst food producers and retailers.

Staffing

Staffing costs as a percentage of total expenditure have risen by just under 4% to 78.07%, but this is still 2% lower than the baseline year, showing a gradual reduction in costs over the last 2 years.

Staff absence levels have fallen significantly to well under 3%, which considering the increasing demands being placed on staff through continuing austerity measure must be applauded.



APSE Comment

The services reflected in the performance data for Environmental Health are recognised as 'quality of life' services for many residents; to live in peaceful environments without noise nuisance, to enjoy safe food outlets and so forth. The cost of enforcement falls largely to the public purse but increasingly councils are exploring the means to both control costs and generate income to assist with the services ongoing success. To share best practice in this area APSE operates a free to attend Environmental Health Advisory Group. This group meets on a quarterly basis with guest speakers from APSE member authorities and industry experts sharing best practice, challenges and opportunities with each other. To participate in this group [please use this link to register your interest](#) or alternatively for a chat about getting in involved please contact Wayne Priestley on wpriestley@apse.org.uk

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