

Briefing 22-09

February 2022

Impact of COVID-19 on local authority building maintenance: 2020 – 2021

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key Points

APSE introduced a new quarterly data collection exercise in 2020 to assess the impact of COVID-19 on a range of front-line services.

This briefing considers the impact of Covid-19 on Building Maintenance Services

1.0 Introduction

APSE introduced a new quarterly data collection exercise in 2020 to assess the impact of COVID-19 on a range of front-line services. To facilitate this process, APSE established service specific working groups to identify questions under the headings of cost, income, productivity and quality which could be assessed for the first quarter of the year. The findings of the first quarter of 2020 (April – June) were published by APSE, showing the averages for individual services from participating authorities. We received 115 returns for this project from local authorities throughout the UK. The full report can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Following on from this, the working groups incorporated a number of new measures into the data templates for the full 2020-21 financial year performance indicators, to show what the impact of COVID-19 has been on frontline services; not just in cost terms but in productivity, impact on staff and service performance. This briefing focuses on the key findings for the data collection year 2020-21 for local authority building maintenance services.

This is the year that was greatly affected by the pandemic and the briefing provides a comparison with the previous financial year, 2019-2021 which allows a snapshot analysis of the impact of the pandemic. The figures quoted are averages across authorities.

2. Income and expenditure

The average expenditure additional spend over and above usual spend, on PPE and other covid related costs such as materials, equipment, signage, etc. is reported as 1.13%.

The table below provides an overview of the percentage change in costs when making a comparison with the data from 2019-20.

	Employee costs	Vehicle costs	Sub contractors	Income
Housing	7%	-5%	-33%	-5%
Non-housing	-4%	-10%	-28%	-33%
Both	6%	-4%	-22%	-20%

It is clear from the data that there has been a significant drop in the cost relating to sub-contractors for both housing and non-housing which can be attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions. There has also been a reduction in the vehicle cost for the service which can also be explained by the restrictions in place during the pandemic.

Although, all costs excluding the employee cost have reduced when compared with 2019-20, there has also been a reduction in income especially for non-housing and the average difference in income is reported as being -13%.

3. Impact on staff

The table below provides an overview of the average FTE's lost as a result of COVID related absence.

Average FTE lost as a result of:	
COVID positive test (self-isolating) up to 10 days, Track and Trace / advisory self-isolation, quarantine, business closure	2.91
Advisory shielding	0.85

4. Voids

There was a decrease in the average percentage of different occasions that properties were vacant at any one time which was reported as -20%. However, there was an increase in the average increase in re-let times for local authority dwellings which was 27 days and the average increase in voids turnaround (average total number of days keys held by contractor) was 9 days.

In addition to the increases in turnaround time and relet time the average change in average cost / charge per void property has increase by 34% when compared with 2019-20.

5. Service Performance

The average difference of applicable properties accessed for gas servicing within 365/366 days has seen a decrease of 8% when compared to the percentage reported in 2019-20.

The table below provides an overview of the average percentage change in job numbers:-

	Routine jobs	Emergency jobs	Planned jobs	Void jobs
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Housing	-31%	1	-30%	-8
Non-housing	-27%	-5%		
Both	-37%	16%	-22%	-26%

The data shows that the greatest areas of decrease have been in the routine jobs for housing and non-housing and in planned jobs for housing which is consistent with their being restricted access to properties during the pandemic. However, emergency jobs were being undertaken during 2020-21 at a consistent rate with the averages being reported in 2019-20.

APSE Comment

Housing and building maintenance services were clearly impacted by a need to ensure social distancing, and regulations preventing households from mixing indoors. Essentially this left many housing repairs and maintenance services to operate on an 'emergency repairs only' basis for the earlier weeks of the pandemic. Once services were able to resume the backlog of repairs in many areas was quickly addressed. In addition, service managers concentrated on ensuring critical safety work, such as gas safety and gas servicing, were delivered with minimal interruption.

APSE would like to thank all the authorities that participated in the working groups and the data collection exercise for 2020-21 on the impact of COVID-19. APSE has a range of services that are designed to support member authorities through this challenging time.

[APSE COVID – 19 Information Hub and WhatsApp groups](#) – The hub has been set up to deal with frontline service issues as they arise; ensuring greater resilience and learning between each other during this difficult time.

[APSE Online Training](#) – APSE Training is designed to help local authorities invest in their greatest asset – their staff. With staff working at home, or remotely, APSE Training can assist staff with developing new skills during this time to help maximise opportunities.

[APSE Performance Networks](#) – The Performance Network teams have developed a variety of ways to support councils with data collection. APSE strongly recommends ensuring the collection of data is ongoing, so changes in service performance are explicable during budget setting processes or when revising business plans.

[APSE Solutions](#) – Providing in-house consultancy and interim management services, available to both APSE members and non-member authorities and organisations.

[APSE Energy](#) – Working on greening frontline councils' services, including energy management issues, which may be critical to saving money in services where budgets have been impacted by COVID-19.

[APSE membership resources](#) remain committed to supporting our member local councils with the ongoing briefings service, network queries, access to Principal Advisor advice and meetings, advisory groups and events. There are opportunities for councils to share best practice and learning through advisory groups and thematic sessions

For further information on the services that are available, please contact Vickie Hacking on vhacking@apse.org.uk

Vickie Hacking
Principal Advisor
vhacking@apse.org.uk