



Leisure Facilities: Trend Analysis 2011/12

This briefing provides details of the performance information available from APSE's performance networks service looking at performance indicators and current policy issues for councils who deliver sports and manage leisure facilities.

Key indicators:

- Participation with an average number of visits at 218,569 per facility is at historically high levels, with the emphasis moving to dry facilities against reductions at wet sites.
- The average subsidy per visit for all facilities in 2011/12 was £1.63, the lowest subsidy figure since 2001/02. The average overall recovery of expenditure is over 65%, again the highest figure since we began

Overview

This year, 225 facilities from 36 authorities are included although over 800 facilities remain within the database and 100 authorities retain the benchmarking service. The average number of facilities included in each authority's submission (multiple submissions being a unique benefit of this service area) was 6.27 facilities. Performance networks remains by some distance, the largest local government benchmarking database of its kind and is now seeing a robust consistency in the number of data submissions.

We continue to interrogate the data submissions to identify any trends that inform the expectations of performance success. Since the inception of performance networks in 1999 we have seen repeated evidence that direct provision can more than hold its own in any like for like comparison with other forms of Leisure provision but we recognise the drive to continue to improve, innovate and excel.

Many of the same performance indicators have been in use and unchanged since the original pilot year in 1999. For the most part they remain the cornerstone of the performance reporting and still retain the highest participation. Authorities who have returned data each year will now have a database with 14 years of performance reports by which to evaluate success, the return on investment and progress against their own local strategic objectives for Sports and Leisure facilities.

We continue to review the data collected through the advisory groups and the annual performance networks seminar in December. This is to ensure that the information can reasonably be collected and is of use in its collated form.

Participating authorities are also always encouraged to regularly review the service profile tables that provide the contextual information for the performance reports.

The latest data included in this report is referred to as year 14 in performance networks and relates to the financial year 2011/12.

Trend analysis

Data is collected from six discrete facility types ;

Type 1: (Public wet only facilities)

Type 2: (Public dry facilities)

Type 3: (Public wet and dry facilities)

Type 4: (Dual use wet only facilities)

Type 5: (Dual use dry facilities)

Type 6: (Dual use wet and dry facilities)

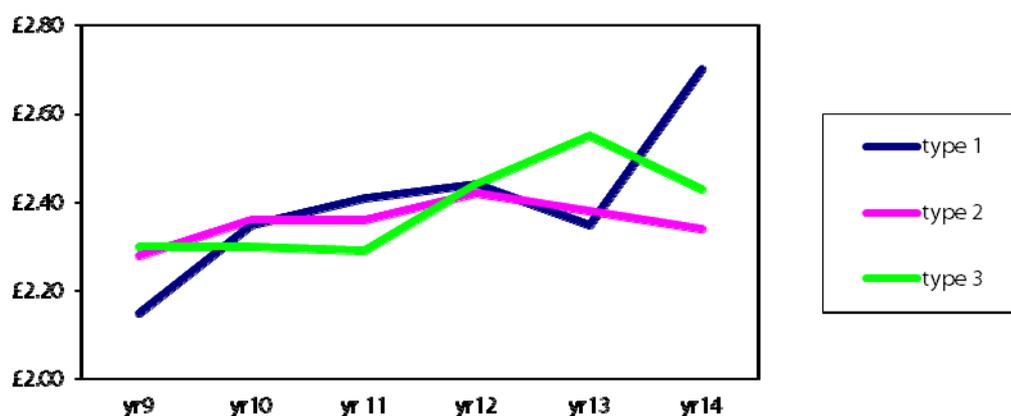
The average number of facilities per participating authority was 6.27.

Each year we have looked at some of the key performance indicators and have added some commentary in terms of apparent trends or preliminary conclusions. Individual indicators date back to 1999 but to provide consistency with the last few years, we have concentrated our initial analysis on the last 6 years using year 9 in 2006/07 as our reference point.

Customer spend per head (PI 04)

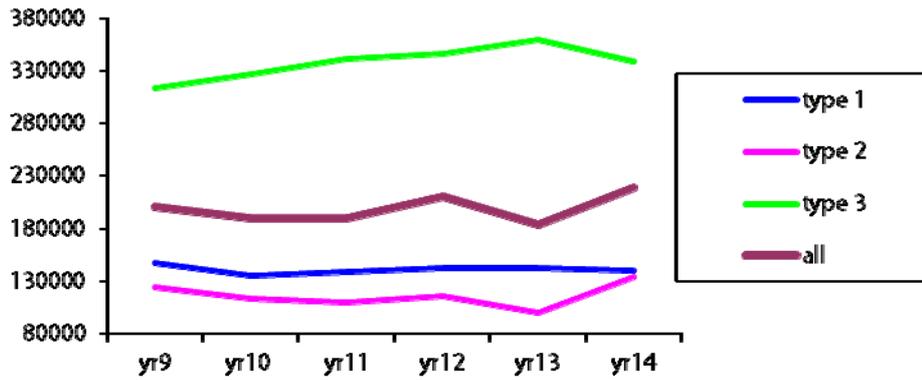
Customer receipts are essential to recovering expenditure not related to grant funding or ring fenced activity. The continuing economic position means many people will continue to be more selective in determining value for money in managing personal finances and disposable income.

It is worth noting that although recent years had seen a rise in spending confined to the type 3 facilities, which by definition tend to be larger, this has been reversed in 2011/12 with the sharpest rise in the type 1 wet only facilities. This may be a symptom of these facilities having to generate more income through programming/ pricing/ secondary spend initiatives in order to offset cost subsidies.



Average total usage

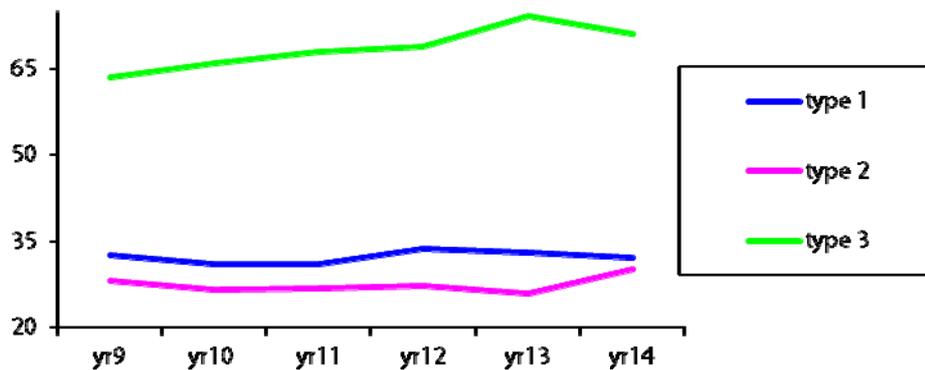
The suggestion that this increased spend in the type 1 facilities is likely to be a reflection of price increases is supported by flat trend in usage in type 1 facilities over the same period. (Average usage in type 1 facilities is almost unchanged since the initial increase following the free swimming incentive).



It is however pleasing to see the overall increase in average usage per facility in the last year given the previous year drop and the fact that the data can be viewed on the basis of a very similar sample base between the years.

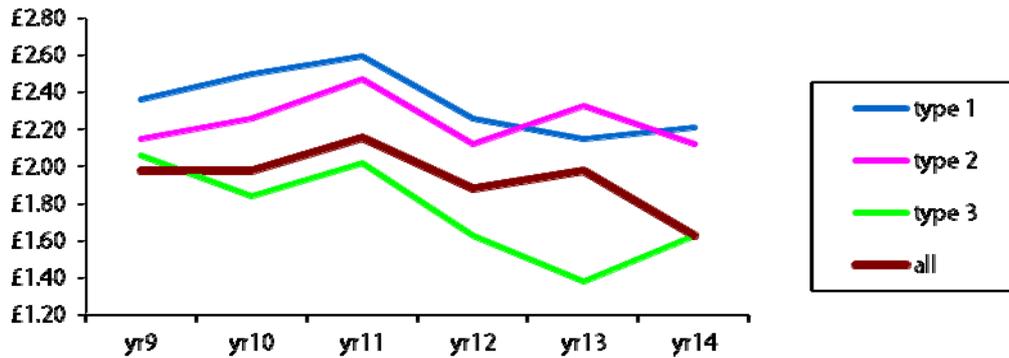
Average usage per opening hour (PI 31)

The trend in PI 31 confirms that shown above, with type 2 facilities alone in seeing a greater usage generated within the facility opening hours. This would normally see type 3 facilities looking at what impact on overall usage a review of opening hours would have, given the costs associated with the day to day operations of these larger facilities.



Subsidy per head (PI 01a)

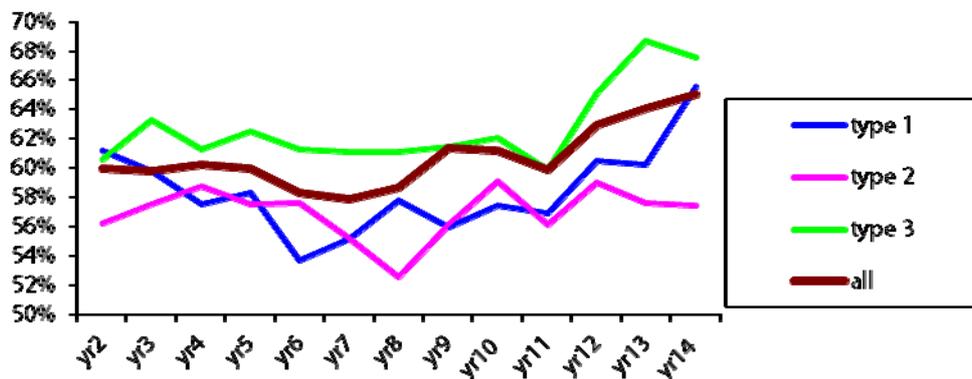
One of the original performance indicators is the average subsidy per visit (PI01a). This includes central charges and all active and non-participatory community use but excludes free school usage.



The overall average subsidy under this indicator for all facilities (including dual use) is £1.63, a significant decrease to last year's figure (£1.98) and is the lowest subsidy figure since 2001/02. This is even more remarkable in that it takes no account of inflation, (even more remarkable considering the upward movement of utilities costs in this period).

Operational recovery (PI 03)

Given the positive trend results above we should not be surprised to see that the average operational expenditure recovery rate has risen again this year overall. The last 5 years show more or less continuous year on year improvement and offers the strongest possible evidence of the continuing efficiencies within Leisure facility management.

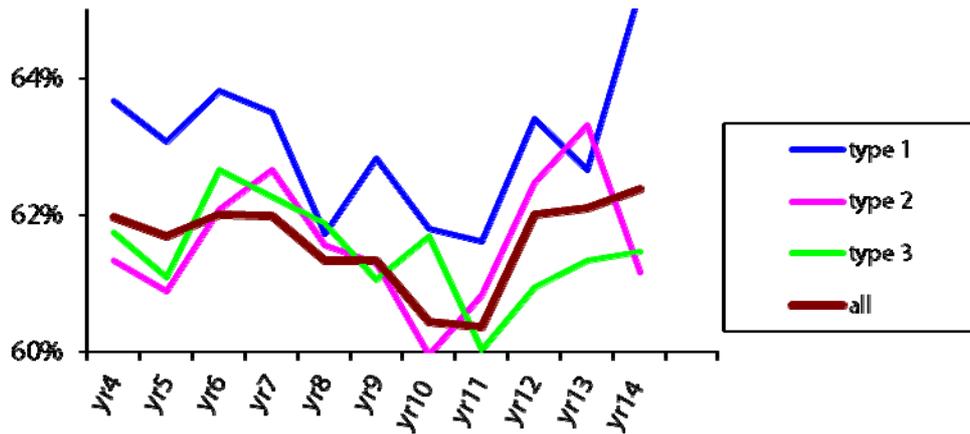


Staffing

Given the importance of staff in relation to income generation and customer satisfaction set against the high percentage of cost that is associated with staffing we have again considered the suite of indicators directly measuring staff costs and productivity. These indicators were first produced in 2001/02.

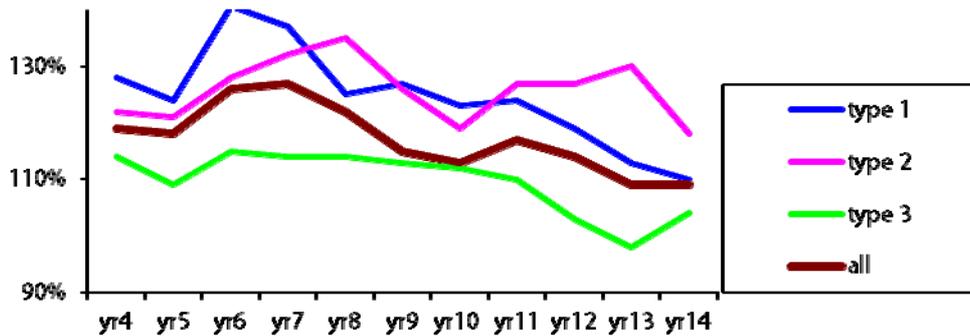
Staffing as a percentage of total expenditure (PI 09)

Staffing in respect of a ratio of total expenditure is useful for management information but is not a measure of performance in itself. Staffing remains the largest cost associated with facility expenditure. The dry only category (type2) is the only one where this has declined in the last year. Typically the percentage across all categories has remained between 60% and 66%.



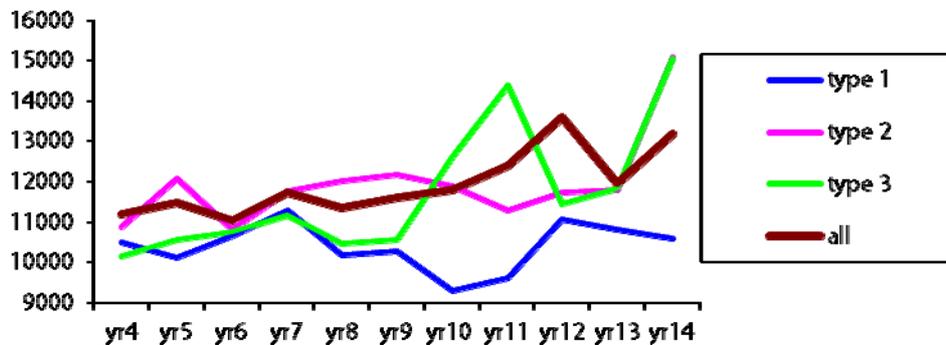
Staffing as a percentage of income (PI 08)

Staffing as a percentage of sales revenue is sometimes used as a productivity indicator. (A return of below 100% means that staffing costs are less than the generated income). The trend since 2001/02 in type 1&3 is positive, seeing more income generated in comparison to staffing costs, although this is not reflected in type 3 facilities. This is consistent with the earlier trends in relation to the type3 facilities.



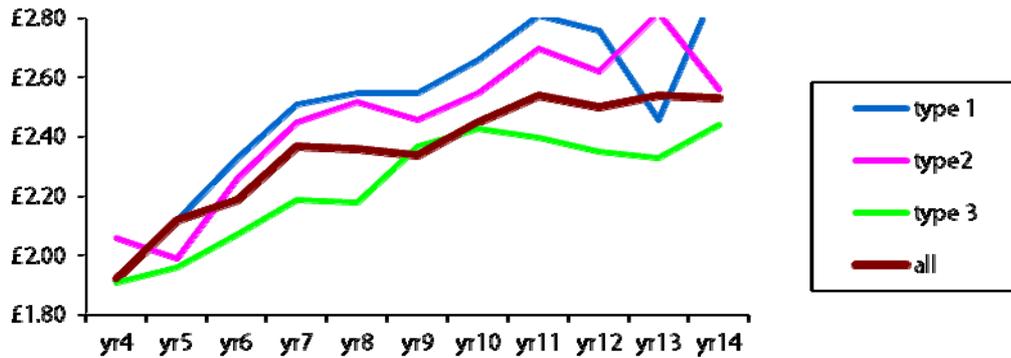
Usage per FTE

This comparison is seen as another productivity measure. Type 3 is clearly more volatile but the long term trend between usage and staffing numbers has been positive since 2001/02.



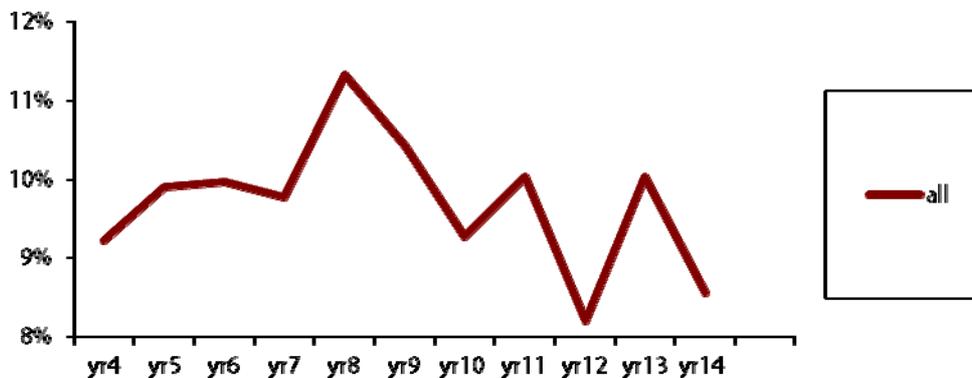
Staff cost per admission (PI07)

The final indicator in this suite of indicators is the of staff cost per admission.



CEC as a percentage of total expenditure

Lastly there is always some debate about the level and transparency of the application of central establishment charges. Across all facility types these now stand at their second lowest level as a percentage of expenditure, since 2001/02.



Interpretation of data

The data outputs are mostly informed by cost, income receipts and throughput.

Leisure has responded well to the continuing pressure for greater efficiency across local government and all productivity indicators show a continued trend in improvement. Although pricing and cost control will both impact upon cost economy, usage levels are critical to any argument for justification of public subsidy to leisure activity.

As always care should be taken in using a single indicator as a measure of performance. A basket of performance indicators will offer the balance and some triangulation of data outputs required to ensure that assumptions are well informed and providing both credible argument for debate and identifications of areas of excellence. Critically they offer the evidence and knowledge obtained through the peer network that can be used for generating targets for improvement.

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