apse membership resources

State of the Market Survey 2016

Local Authority Sports and Leisure Services

Briefing 16/22
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The state of the market survey was conducted by Rob Bailey, APSE Principal Advisor with assistance from Garry Lee, Research & Coordination Officer.

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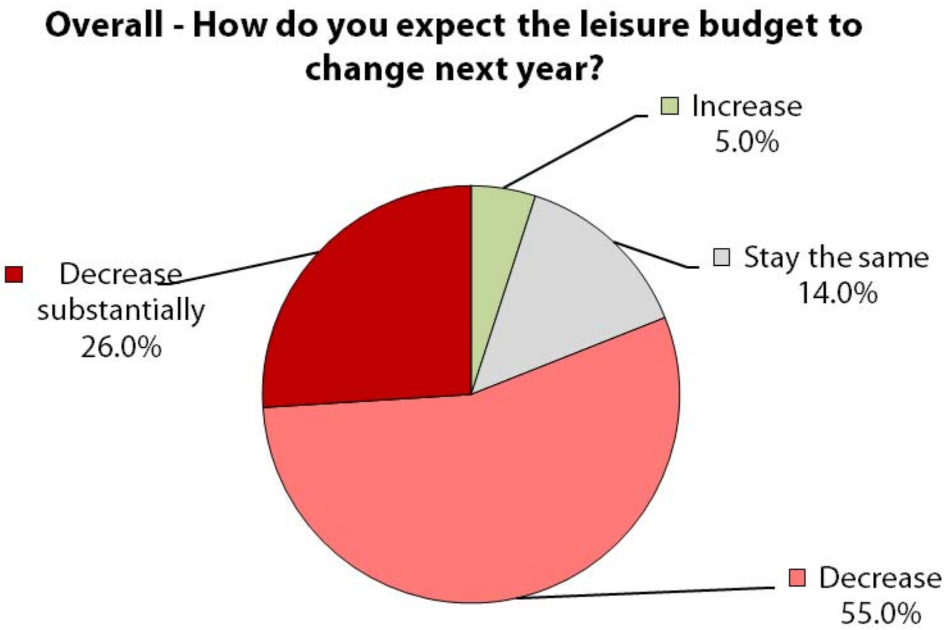
Local Authority Sports and Leisure Services

State of the Market 2016

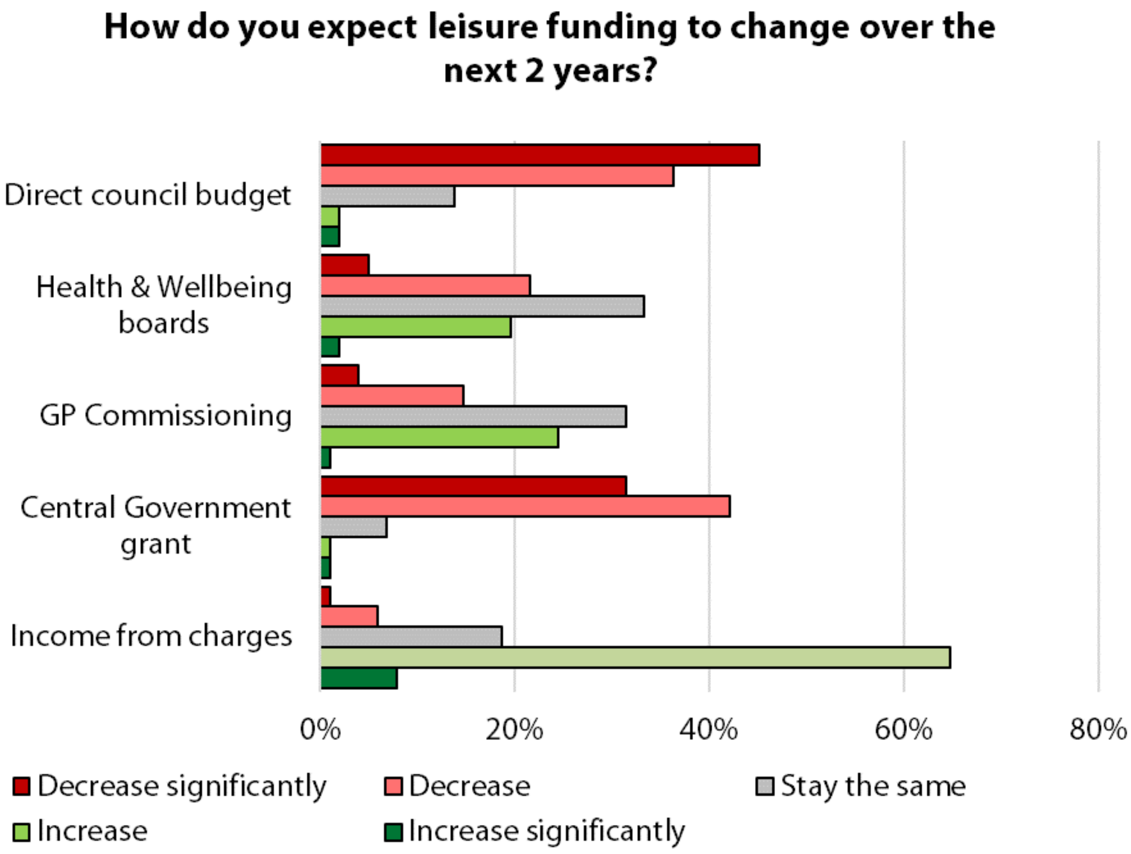
APSE conducted an online survey during April 2016 which had 102 respondents across local authorities in England (74.6%), Scotland (12.7%), Wales (8.8%) and Northern Ireland (3.9%).

Opinions on workload, budgets and funding

80.4% of respondents expect the workload of the leisure section to increase over the next 12 months compared to 7.8% of those who expect it to decrease. At the same time, respondents also largely expected the leisure budget to either decrease (55.0%) or decrease significantly (26.0%).



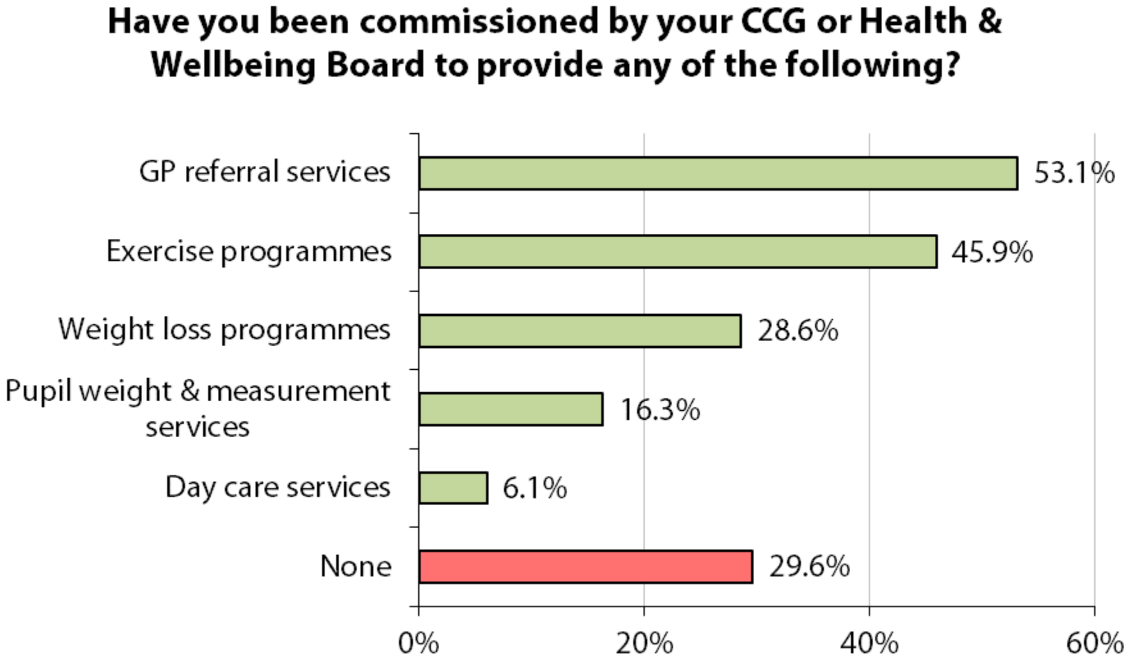
In terms of leisure funding, respondents expected the following changes over the next 2 years:



Answer Options	Increase significantly	Increase	Stay the same	Decrease	Decrease significantly
Direct council budget	2.0%	2.0%	13.7%	36.3%	45.1%
Health & Wellbeing boards	2.0%	19.6%	33.3%	21.6%	4.9%
GP Commissioning	1.0%	24.5%	31.4%	14.7%	3.9%
Central Government grant	1.0%	1.0%	6.9%	42.2%	31.4%
Income from charges	7.8%	64.7%	18.6%	5.9%	1.0%

The results above show that respondents are expecting a shift away from direct Council budgets and Central Government grants towards a mix of income from GP commissioning, health and wellbeing boards and most notably, income from charges

(72.5% are expecting either increases or significant increases). 70.4% of responding local authorities reported being commissioned to provide services including GP referral services (53.1%), exercise programmes (45.9%), weight loss programmes (28.6%), pupil weight and measurement services (16.3%) and day care services (6.1%). Comments noted that local authorities have also been commissioned to provide NHS health checks, falls prevention services and sports (such as walking football), and several reported running these services without the support of their CCG.



There was broad agreement with the statements other than 'traditional swimming pools are doomed' (72.0% disagreed). There were also some differences of opinion with the statements 'free swimming for over 60s is unsustainable' (71.0% agreed, 25.0% disagreed) and 'national funding for sport ignores local government' (60.0% agreed, 35.0% disagreed).

Answer Options	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	No opinion
Free swimming for over 60s is unsustainable	2.0%	23.0%	38.0%	33.0%	4.0%
National funding for sport ignores local government	0.0%	35.0%	39.0%	21.0%	5.0%
It is right to subsidise leisure	0.0%	7.0%	51.0%	37.0%	5.0%
Traditional swimming pools are doomed	9.0%	63.0%	18.0%	4.0%	6.0%

Leisure's future lies in its integration with health	2.0%	10.0%	48.0%	36.0%	4.0%
Council leisure provision must rival the private sector to survive	2.0%	20.0%	39.0%	35.0%	4.0%

Respondents also expected the following service changes over the next year:

Answer Options	Response Percent	2015 Response	Difference
Reductions in Council subsidy	77.4%	89.8%	- 12.4%
Better energy management	66.7%	64.4%	+ 2.3%
Reductions in management	58.1%	55.9%	+ 2.2%
Reduced opening hours	38.7%	30.5%	+ 8.2%
Emphasis on visitor marketing	34.4%	37.3%	- 2.9%
Increased vending	21.5%	23.7%	- 2.2%
Reductions in lifeguard numbers	11.8%	13.6%	- 1.8%
Cafe closure	10.8%	5.1%	+ 5.7%
Decreased use of agency labour	4.3%	1.7%	- 2.6%
Increased use of agency labour	0.0%	1.7%	- 1.7%

Compared to the results from 2015, there has been a 12.4% reduction in those expecting a reduction in the Council subsidy, although this still remains the highest expected service change at 77.4%. An additional 8.2% since last year are expecting reduced opening hours over the next year, and an additional 5.7% are expecting café closures. Comments from respondents about upcoming changes to the service included:

- increasing marketing through digital means
- increasing their focus on invest to save schemes and investing in new products (e.g. trampoline parks)
- developing facilities and services to increase footfall and income
- working with social services and education to generate further income
- generating income through commissioning, events, memberships and a learn to swim scheme

Managing leisure

59.0% of leisure services surveyed are currently managed in-house, 31.0% are managed by a leisure trust, 8.0% by a private contractor and 10.0% by a not for profit company. The expected differences in a year's time are shown in the table below.

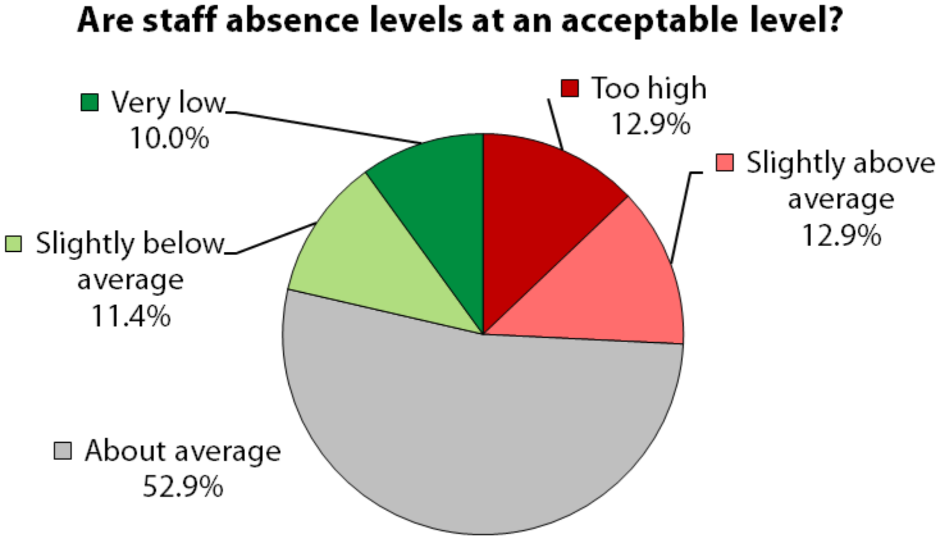
Answer Options	Response Percent	One year's time	Difference
In-house	59.0%	34.0%	- 25.0%
Leisure Trust	31.0%	37.0%	+ 6.0%
Private Contractor	8.0%	14.0%	+ 6.0%
Not for Profit Company	10.0%	15.0%	+ 5.0%

The majority of respondents reported as being members of CIMSPA (77.9%) with many also being members of CLOA (30.9%), REPs (26.5%) and SPORTA (20.6%). Other respondents also noted having membership with the Scottish Leisure Network Group (SLING) and the Chamber of Commerce.

Staff

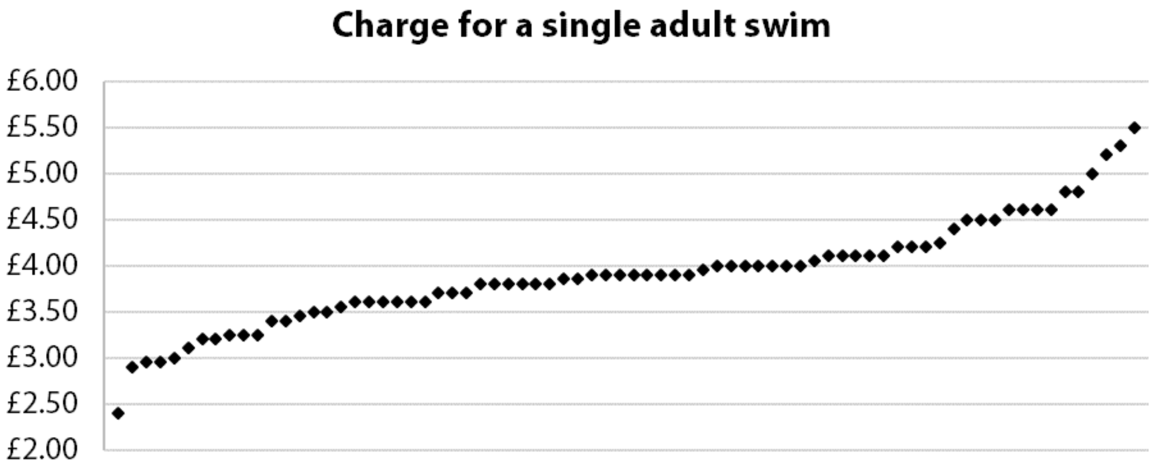
The average basic hourly rate for leisure staff before tax was £8.06, with a minimum of £6.20 and a maximum of £9.80.

35.7% of respondents currently hold the Investors in People award and 37.1% are Quest accredited. 87.1% have regular staff appraisals, 91.4% have regular staff training, 71.4% conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys and 45.7% have a regular leisure newsletter.



Staff absence levels were reported by 25.8% of respondents as being above average compared to 21.4% who thought this was below average and 52.9% who felt this was about average. APSE performance networks data for 2014/15 from local authorities showed that the average staff absence rate was 2.87%.

Cost and membership



The average charge for a single adult swim is £3.90, with a minimum of £2.40 and a maximum of £5.50. 49.4% of respondents have a joining fee with an average cost of £21.92, with a minimum of £10.00 and a maximum of £47.00. The majority of respondents have both monthly contracts (73.6%) and monthly non-contracted memberships (54.2%), with others also having prepay options available for 3 months (20.5%), 6 months (19.3%) and 12 months (78.3%). One authority also noted that they offer university students a 'pay per term' option. The average monthly cost for full membership was £33.10, with the average off-peak membership being £23.42, average swim only membership being £22.55, average gym only membership being £26.86 and the average fitness classes membership being £26.46. The membership base was predominantly peak (75.54%) rather than off-peak (24.46%).

28.6% of respondents charge for parking at some or all of their leisure centres, with an average charge of £0.99 for one hour and £1.46 for two hours, which 20.0% of respondents refunded a proportion of to centre users.

The majority of respondents reported encouraging participation from particular groups within the community, either through promotions, charges or specific closed sessions, with 89.0% offering this for over 65s, 81.0% for under 16s, 65.0% for the unemployed, 64.0% for women and 36.0% for ethnic minorities. 7 respondents also noted that they actively encourage participation from people with disabilities (including learning disabilities), and other commenters also mentioned offering sessions for those with health problems and/or long term conditions, serving military/veterans and carers.

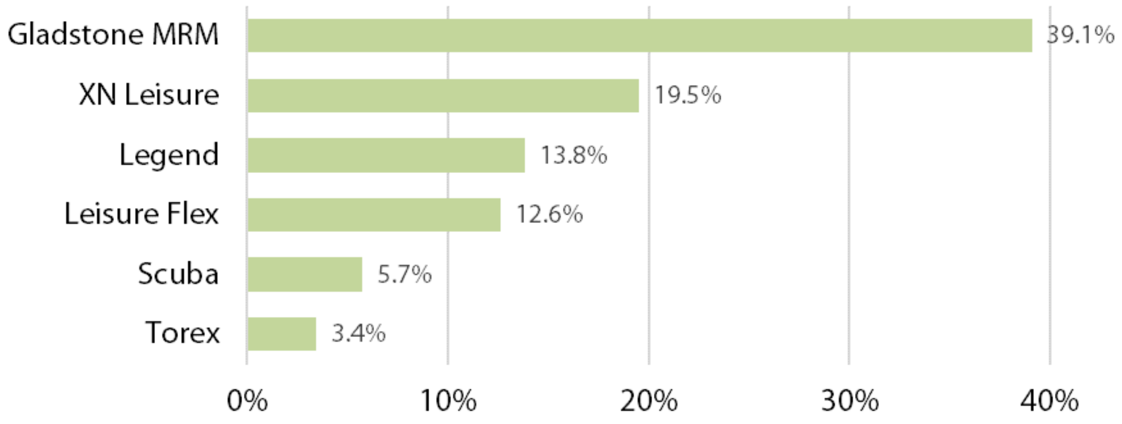
The table below shows the level of membership package discounts offered to different groups.

Answer Options	None	10%	20%	30%	40%	More
Low income	28.6%	11.4%	22.9%	12.9%	10.0%	14.3%
Over 65	19.4%	11.9%	23.9%	22.4%	10.4%	11.9%
Disability	24.2%	10.6%	21.2%	19.7%	6.1%	18.2%
Couples	50.0%	18.8%	27.1%	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Corporate	15.6%	25.0%	43.8%	10.9%	4.7%	0.0%
Students	10.4%	17.9%	34.3%	23.9%	6.0%	7.5%

Software

Gladstone MRM is the most commonly used software package to manage leisure with 39.1% of respondents reporting its use; 19.5% use XN Leisure, 13.8% use Legend, 12.6% use Leisure Flex, 5.7% use Scuba and 3.4% use Torex. Other respondents noted either not having a system in place, or using their own in-house system.

Which software package do you use for managing leisure?



Sports pitches

38.0% of respondents have established new pitches over the last 2 years, with the average respondent maintaining 34 pitches. 28.2% of respondents reported that the financial cost of pitches to the Council 'cost a fortune', while 49.3% report that some subsidy is required, with 2.8% breaking even and 5.6% making a profit.

Comments for the future

Growth areas over the next 12 months:

- A more commercial focus for the service (e.g. aggressively selling gym memberships)
- Budget gyms
- Outdoor fitness (e.g. boot-camps) and different uses for open spaces (hires/leases)
- Fitness classes and other group fitness sessions
- Personal training
- GP/health referrals - smoking cessation, inactivity
- Growth in partnerships (schools, third sector, local leisure trusts) and increases in work within the health sector
- Swimming
- Extreme sports / adventure activities and sports
- Weight management

Areas of decrease over the next 12 months:

- Reduced opening hours

- Funding
- Reception staff and operational staffing reductions (replaced by technology)
- Building closures (to address maintenance and quality issues)
- Income as a result of customers moving from direct debit to ‘pay and play’ memberships
- Assets and the direct delivery of services (with some being transferred to community partners due to the Community Empowerment Bill)
- Creche provision / subsidised activities for children
- Café closures
- Traditional sports and sports hall bookings
- Lifeguarding provision (as technology is introduced)

The Association for Public Service Excellence

APSE member authorities have access to a wide range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Building Cleaning
- Catering
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Environmental Health Advisory Group
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authorities Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, Highways and Street Lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

If you require any further information on the findings of this State of the Market survey 2016 please contact Rob Bailey at rbailey@apse.org.uk or by phone at 0161 772 1810.