



Refuse and recycling: Emerging issues in performance 2015/16

This briefing provides details on the performance information available from APSE's performance networks service excluding waste data flow data and also explores other performance and development issues within the sector as a summary of issues from the performance networks refuse and recycling workshop hosted as part of the APSE performance networks seminar 2016.

Key issues

- APSE will be consulting members on the problematic issues emanating from 'Question 100' from WasteDataFlow
- The refuse and recycling sector are keen to share information on improving safety including random drug and alcohol testing in the sector
- The sector is keen to establish sharing further information on the successes of changes to refuse collection frequencies as an increasing number of authorities move to three weekly or longer on residual waste services

Overview

The APSE performance networks programme for refuse and recycling provides performance indicators for a range of matters such as the cost of refuse collection per household, cost of recycling per household and profile data such as the proportion of labour costs on average across the service.

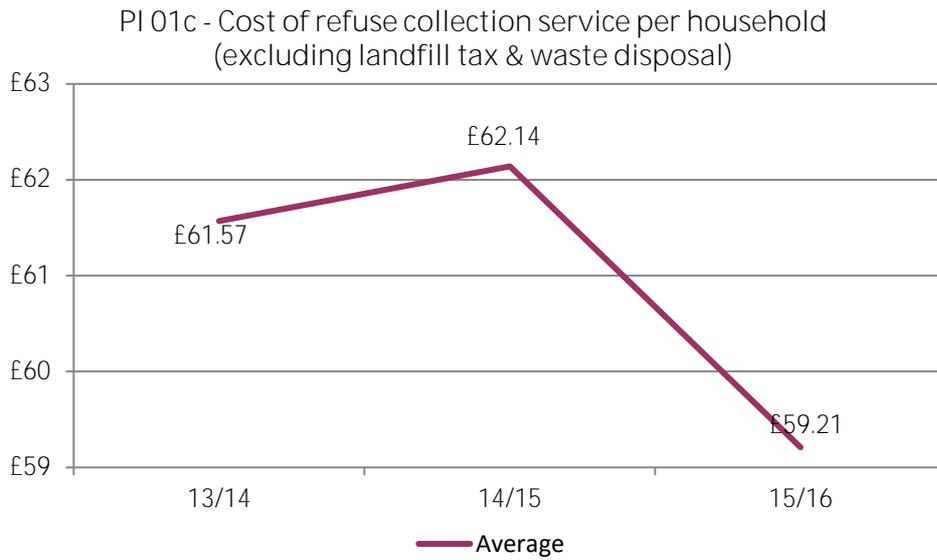
As the performance networks template for refuse and recycling incorporates data from WasteDataFlow, to save member authorities replicating data collection, the production of performance reports is consequently dictated by the availability of WasteDataFlow data; therefore this briefing provides the headline data on indicators relating to cost, and other outputs only.

Key performance indicators

PI 01 Cost of refuse collection per household (excluding landfill tax and waste disposal)

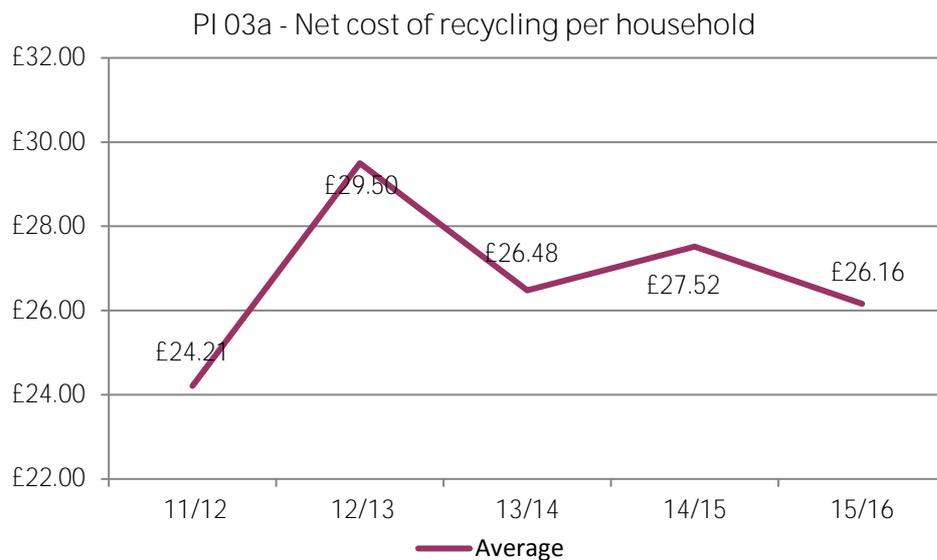
This year's data suggestS further efficiencies have been squeezed from the sector with a not insignificant drop in costs to £59.21 per household. This reflects efforts being concentrated on route optimisation, public sector wage restraints and in some areas a flattening of management structures / integration of environmental services. However a

word of caution as last year's data delivered a slight spike in costs so whilst this years' data indicates a reduction it is not as dramatic looking back to 2013 / 14 at £61.57 as opposed to 2014 /15 at £62.14



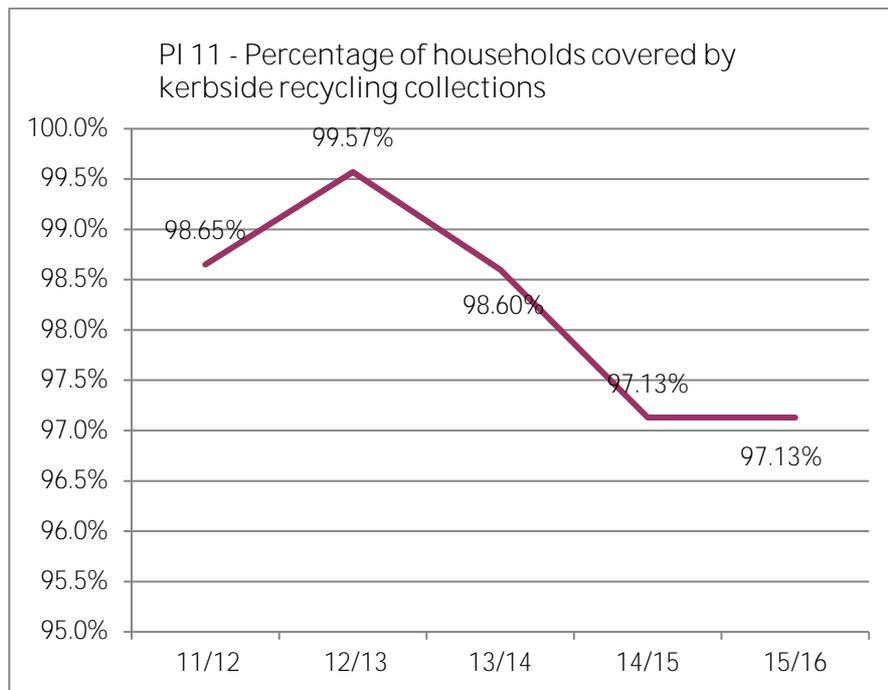
PI 03a Net cost of recycling per household

This is another positive trend showing a further decrease to £26.16 reflecting the gains made in recycling with increases in volume and efforts to reduce contamination issues. However it is still highly variable from year to year and subject to changes by participating authorities in areas such as charges for garden waste, and new recycling streams being brought into the equation or stopped if there is limited success or take-up.



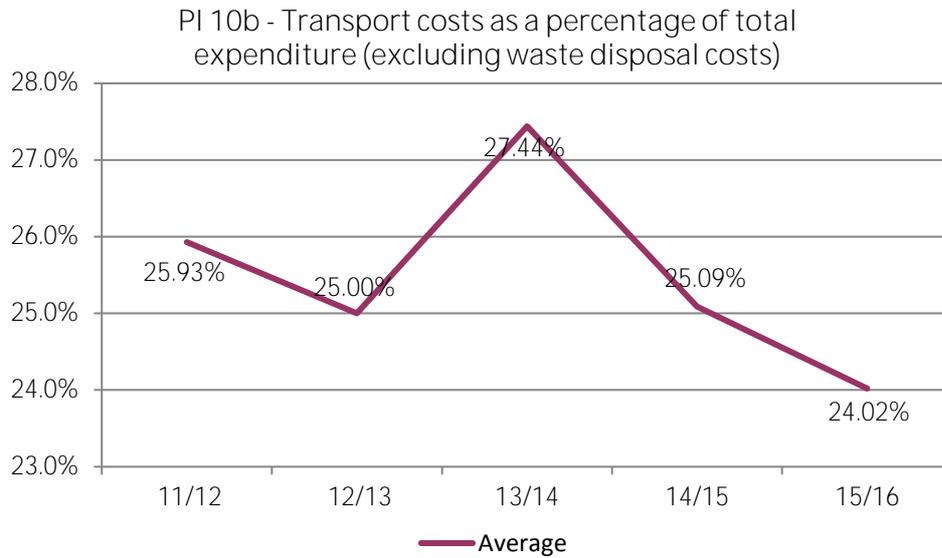
PI 11 - Percentage of households covered by kerbside recycling collections

The percentage of households covered by kerbside recycling has probably now reached saturation point although the members of performance networks would wish to explore the ability for greater recycling in Houses in Multiple Occupation, student accommodation and flats; in particular with the growth in single households and calls for more of these types of properties.



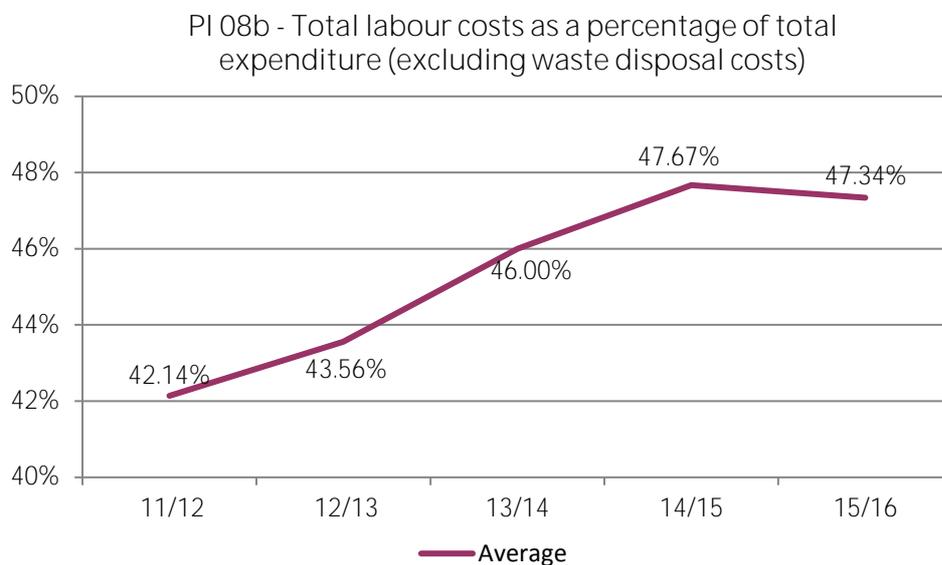
PI 10b - Transport costs as a percentage of total expenditure (excluding waste disposal costs)

Transport costs have decreased again this year most likely due to the lower global prices on oil and when looking back to the spike in 2013/14 when global prices filtered through from 2013 into the 2013/14 data. However in spite of improvements such as route optimisation, and working patterns, which free up vehicles for more timely inspections, and which subsequently reduce replacement hire costs for refuse vehicles, fuel prices can be highly variable and beyond the control of local councils .



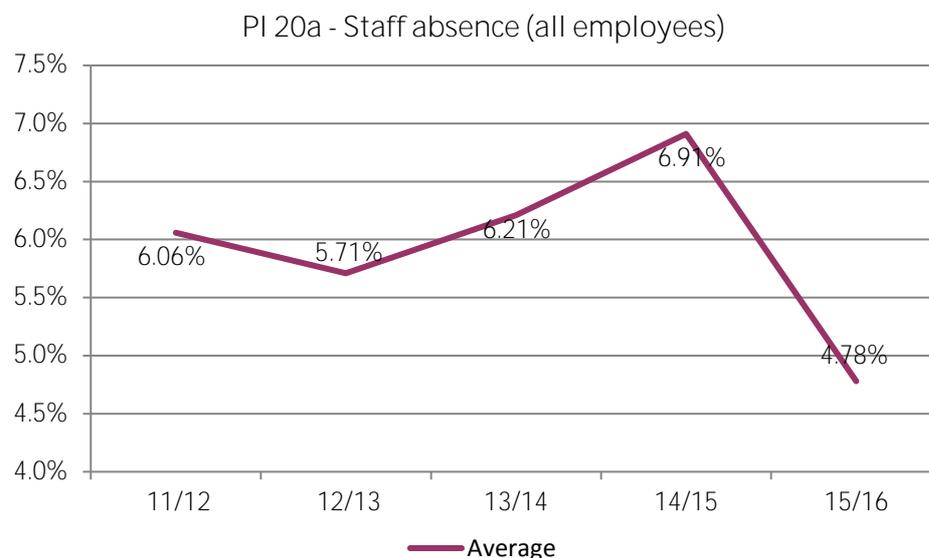
PI 08b - Total labour costs as a percentage of total expenditure (excluding waste disposal costs)

Labour costs have seen a marginal increase but this is in line with increased recycling activity and the need in many cases for new crews to accommodate service priorities. Although the sector is not highly paid it is unlikely that the increases are due to the new higher national minimum wage as lower grading bands / pay rates are generally already above that level within the sector.



PI 20a - Staff absence (all employees)

Staff absence has seen a further decrease and whilst this may appear marginally higher than whole economy averages, given the physically demanding nature of the job, and working in all weather conditions, it is not unduly high or worrying.



Further issues from the Performance Networks working group

The performance networks group met as part of the APSE performance networks working seminar in Blackpool at the beginning of December 2016.

Matters arising from that working group include the following:

1. Collection frequency

The performance networks templates collate the frequency and types of collections but given the numbers of authorities now moving to three weekly collections of residual waste, or reducing bin capacity in order to drive behavior change (such as smaller residual bins to force better recycling) the group will now look to the creation of one-off or bespoke reports for inter-authority trends or comparisons to inform others about the success of changes to collection frequencies or containers.

2. Financial data – special projects funding

It was requested that an analysis of special project funding should be carried out with any data available from member councils to ascertain if this has an impact on successes in generating higher levels of recycling.

3. Percentage of rubble at Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Consideration will be given as to whether the rest of the UK should follow Wales and gather this data, particularly as concerns remain as to the misuse of HWRC by construction related businesses.

4. Recycling for multi-occupation buildings and blocks of flats

Given recycling rates have stabilised / slowed the sector is looking for ways in which they can enhance recycling opportunities in flats or multiple occupation sites. The presence of chutes in many such buildings fetters recycling. Councils with good examples of successful recycling in these types of properties are asked to share information using the email link below.

5. Drug and alcohol testing

Random drug and alcohol testing is increasing in prevalence as many authorities are keen to ensure that both members of the public, and staff working as crews, are protected from the impact of any misuse of drugs or alcohol. Recent high profile tragedies have heightened awareness of the dangers and the scale of harm from refuse vehicle accidents. APSE is already providing training to member authorities to develop the implementation of fair and equitable testing policies.

Whilst this can be viewed as controversial of equal controversy is the risk presented to the public or co-workers of a person in charge or a vehicle or machinery who lacks the necessary mental alertness due to the impact of drugs or alcohol. However any testing policies should be fair and equitable and free from bias. [APSE training](#) can assist in this area.

6. Charging policies for garden waste and charging policies for replacement bins

A number of working group members have raised the question as to charging policies in relation to garden waste and in relation to replacement bins. Local councils will adopt their own policies and it is a matter for local determination. In some areas elected members are resistant to the introduction of charges, as an indirect tax on services, whilst in other areas significant income has been raised from charging policies, particularly in area with larger gardens where some view this as residents without gardens (flats, terraces etc.) are effectively cross-subsiding collections for other residents. APSE has a range of information on this subject which is shared at advisory groups, seminars and through the network query service. Contact Wayne Priestley APSE's principal advisor for environmental services of more information on wpriestley@apse.org.uk

7. WasteDataFlow 'Question 100' and DEFRA

APSE members have been concerned that Question 100 is adding unnecessary burdensome processes to the collection of WasteDataFlow. However DEFRA have made it clear that the data is needed and supports ambitions and the evidence towards a circular economy. It was agreed at the meeting with DEFRA, held within the performance networks group meeting that APSE would seek further details of the problematic areas to communicate issues of interpretation or any ICT matters back to DEFRA. In addition APSE will explore what

information is provided in what ways from MRFs to the waste data officers and whether the formatting or content of this could be improved. It was also agreed that given 'Question 100' is now working smoothly in Scotland a small task and finish group between APSE and DEFRA could be set up to also gather further information from APSE member councils in Scotland, where the process is flowing more smoothly, to inform improvements or any further training requirements.

Conclusions

A recent APSE / Survation public perceptions survey found that refuse and recycling services score the highest levels of satisfaction amongst the general public. However as the sector has faced pressures on budgets, and in many cases lost funding for public information campaigns, such as recycling credits, it is important to maintain the service standards. In the context of Brexit, and the many environmental directives emanating from Europe, the sector is firmly of the view that post-Brexit there is no appetite to return the UK to the title of 'dirty man of Europe'. Therefore the public support for recycling should continue to be nurtured and local spending plans reflected in the public's clear high regard for waste and recycling services. Performance information on cost, quality and productivity remains highly valued and essential to the future service development within the waste, refuse and recycling sector.

To join in with APSE's advisory group activity in Waste and Recycling [click this link here](#). To put forward your views on tackling recycling in HMOs or flats and any successes please use this [email link](#).

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