

# APSE Facilities Management Seminar 2023: A Report Back

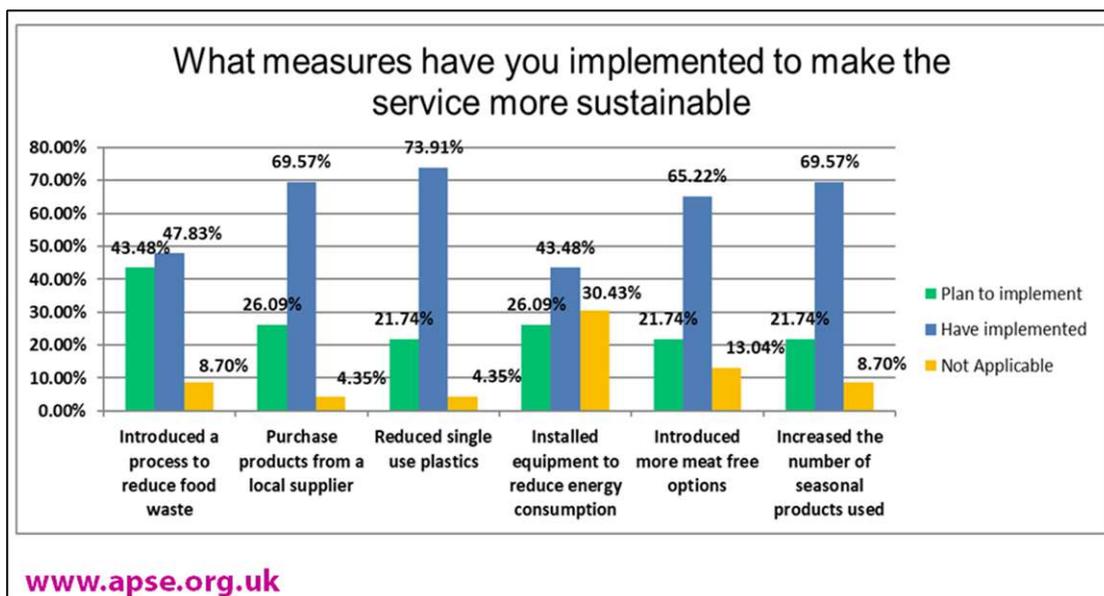
## 1 Executive Summary

A unique event in the local government calendar, delegates from across the UK local authority catering and cleaning landscape joined APSE in Oulton Hall Leeds on 26-27 January for an action-packed seminar of presentations, networking and exhibition viewing.

## 2 The Strategic Picture

Our two morning sessions, chaired by Cllr Shelley Powell, Chair of APSE’s Building Cleaning Advisory Group considered how catering and cleaning services are dealing with the legacy of the pandemic, facing a cost-of-living crisis, and grappling with workforce retention and recruitment.

Vickie Hacking, APSE Principal Advisor for Catering and Cleaning, was first to the podium to outline some of the emerging findings from APSE's State of the Market surveys. The COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis have served to highlight the important role that local authority building cleaning and catering services play. The State of the Market findings outline that FM services are currently facing a perfect storm of challenges. Despite this, councils are delivering quality services that support the needs of their communities and services are innovating and adopting approaches to achieve net zero targets, to ensure that they are sustainable for the future.



Next up, delegates heard from Delia Canning and Simon Hollingbery from the British Cleaning Council (BCC). First, Simon Hollingbery highlighted the crisis in cleaning; namely the recruitment and retention issues the sector faces. Simon noted how these issues had been exacerbated first by Brexit and then by a lack of funding for training post-pandemic. Delia Canning then made the case for respecting the cleaning industry, reflecting on the paucity of acceptable standards and advice provided to the industry and poor regulation during COVID. This had culminated in the proliferation of pop-up companies with questionable knowledge of cleaning standards. Both reiterated the BCC's support for the creation of an All-Party Parliamentary Group to represent the cleaning and hygiene sector.

## Apprenticeship Position



- In recent years there was the Cleaning & Support Services Apprenticeship
- First attempt to launch a fully cleaning related Apprenticeship was declined
- In 2021, the first Healthcare Cleaning Apprenticeship was launched
- In 2023, we are set to see the launch of the Cleaning and Hygiene Apprenticeship
- Apprenticeship tariffs are now commensurately in proportion with the quantity and quality of the work involved
- Apprenticeship providers for cleaning related qualifications may be found at:  
[Apprenticeshiptrainingproviders.org.uk](https://www.apprenticeshiptrainingproviders.org.uk)



Opening the second session, Kelsey Hargreaves, BICS Assistant Technical Specialist and Youth Ambassador for Youth Employment UK, analysed what the sector is missing with regards to youth employment. Kelsey Hargreaves spoke of her experience as a young person in the industry, and what can be done to attract more young people to the cleaning industry; namely selling the profession as an professional industry without using jargon and selling it in a positive way.

The cost of living crisis was the theme of our next speaker, James Bielby, Chief Executive of the Federation of Wholesale Distributors (FWD) and member of the co-presenting team on the Talk Radio Breakfast Show. FWD provided delegates with a specialist insight into the role of suppliers in meeting the twin challenges of the cost of living crisis and net zero.

APSE's Mo Baines was the final speaker of the second session, there to outline the implications of the Procurement Bill for local authorities. Consideration was given to the criticism from some commentators that it needs to be simple and not create bureaucratic burdens, as well as the criticism from others that it does not enshrine principles such as integrity, social value and climate change matters. Mo Baines then emphasised the need for a local council to review its own procurement policy and social value frameworks.

## **Social value and climate change**

The NPPS does now contain: -

- An obligation on Ministers to consult on the NPPS as appropriate
- Give due regard to strategic national priorities including economic, social, environmental and public safety issues
- Lay that statement before Parliament

And include

- Achieving priorities set out in the Public Services (Social Value Act (2012)
- Achieving targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 and Environment Act 2021

### **3 Innovating to remain competitive and commercially successful**

APSE's third session, chaired by Cllr Julie Simpson, Chair of APSE's Catering Advisory Group, looked in detail at how two award-winning services, and how they are innovating to ensure their catering and cleaning services are sustainable for the future.

The first speaker was John Freeney, Cleaning and Janitorial Co-ordinator for East Renfrewshire Council. Having scooped Building Cleaning Best Performer at the APSE Performance Networks Awards 2022, East Renfrewshire explained how the Council are maximising the efficient deployment of staff. It also highlighted how the Council are meeting or surpassing the industry standards by the investment of new machinery, as well as investing in new schools to allow an efficient flow clean with more open space.

Next up delegates heard from Gail Witchell, Operations Manager – Catering, Oxfordshire County Council, winner of the Catering Most Improved Performer Award at the APSE Performance Networks Awards 2022. Gail Witchell had spent the last five years as the Catering Service Lead for the Council following the collapse of Carillion in January 2018, where she undertook the successful transition of the catering service back into an in-house operation. Delegates heard about how the Council is successfully promoting a healthy relationship with food by using fresh, locally sourced ingredients where possible and raising the profile of plant-based foods. There was also a look at how the Oxfordshire team are stimulating interest and encouraging uptake of healthier food through rebranding and serious investment in staff training.





## Investing in Staffing and ongoing Training

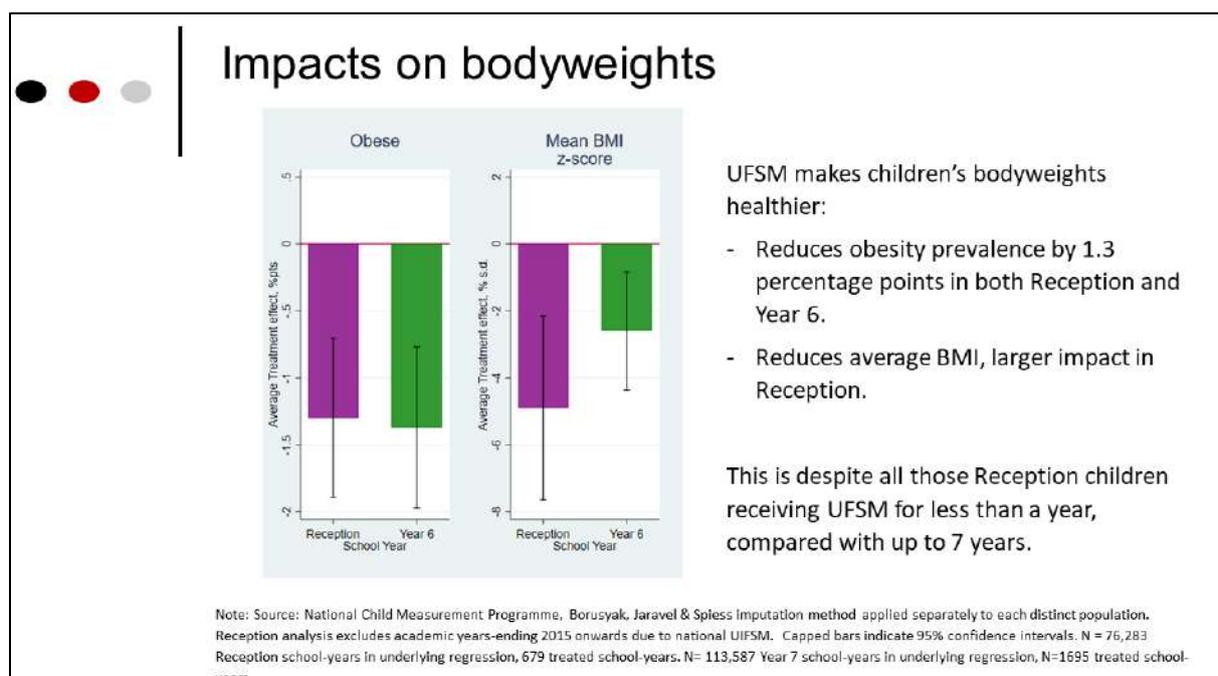
- Low staff turnover contributes to improved consistency in delivery
- Managing for Performance Framework v Performance Management
- Continuous improvement
- Statutory and Mandatory training
- High quality food presentation and display



OCCCS. Proactive. Productive. Partnerships.

## 4 Making the case for school meals

The final session of Day One focussed on how local authorities can make the case for school meals. Part of the issue with campaigning for school meals is obtaining good data. The session's first speaker, Dr Angus Holford, Senior Research Fellow in Economics in the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex, drew on the findings of his research, and noted that children consume a large fraction (~1/3) of their food energy during school hours. Therefore, school meal provision is potentially a policy lever to increase rates of healthy weight among children and improve educational attainment. Dr Holford then offered the conclusion that extending universal FSM entitlement to all primary school children would be a well-targeted measure to help households with school-age-children with the cost of living now.



The closing speaker for Day One of the Seminar was Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for School Food, Sharon Hodgson MP, providing delegates with the view from Parliament. Having set up the APPG in 2010, Sharon highlighted the myriad issues facing public sector caterers in procurement and funding during this particularly challenging time.

Delegates reconvened for Day Two at 10am for the Building Cleaning and Catering Surgery. This interactive session allowed delegates to discuss the issues facing their services in the current climate. Facilitated by APSE Principal Advisor Vickie Hacking, topics included workforce recruitment and retention, the cost-of-living crisis, and meeting net zero targets.

## **5 Promoting the value of building cleaning and catering**

APSE will continue to be an advocate for local authority catering and cleaning services by promoting their value at every opportunity. As the foremost specialist in local authority frontline services, APSE continues to support local authority cleaning and catering teams via our extensive network of over 250 local authorities.

Through our training suite, advisory groups, research programmes and benchmarking service, membership of APSE can bring significant benefits to those who work in local government – from officers to directors to elected members to chief executives – by helping them comprehensively get to grips with the latest policy and technological developments. Not a member? [Sign up today.](#)

APSE also provides support through its secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) with APSE's lead advisor Vickie Hacking. The group takes evidence from a range of organizations, academics and individuals on school food issues. For more information, please visit our [website](#) or contact Vickie on [vhacking@apse.org.uk](mailto:vhacking@apse.org.uk)

## **Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits.**

APSE member authorities have access to a 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](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk).

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Building cleaning
- Catering
- Cemeteries and crematoria
- Cost of Providing / Cost of Living Network
- Commercialisation network: Local authority trading, charging and income generation
- Housing, construction and building maintenance
- Parks, horticultural and ground 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

Visit [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) for more detail

Association for Public Service Excellence  
3rd floor,  
Trafford House,  
Chester Road, Manchester M32 0RS.  
telephone: 0161 772 1810  
fax: 0161 772 1811  
web: [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk)

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