

Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey 2023 and 5-year comparison of ALARM survey results

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

1 Executive Summary

The ALARM survey is an annual independent survey of local authority highway departments in England and Wales. This is the 28th annual survey with responses from 75% of authorities responsible for local roads in England and Wales.

This briefing summarises the main themes of the report including: funding, potholes, road surfacing frequency, utility openings, compensation claims and carbon reductions.

The full report can be accessed by clicking here:

<https://www.asphaltuk.org/wp-content/uploads/ALARM-survey-2023-FINAL-with-links.pdf>

2 Results of the survey

2.1 Funding

- The total average highway maintenance budget per authority is £25.8m (£24.7m last year)
- In England, the average was £33.3m (£32.3m last year)
- In London, the average was £10.7m (£8.1m last year)
- In Wales, the average was £9.0m (£9.7 last year)

The actual average budget for carriageway maintenance was £16.9m in England (£17.7m last year), £4.5m in London (£3.5m last year) and £5.3m in Wales (£4.0m last year). The average annual carriageway maintenance budget shortfall per authority was £8.5m in England (£7.4m last year), £7.3m in London (£5.1m last year) and £4.3m in Wales (£2.7m last year).

The percentage of the carriageway maintenance budget spent on reactive maintenance in England was 20% (18% last year), 22% in London (25% last year) and 29% in Wales (28% last year); according to the survey, this means all areas are above their ideal proportion of budget spending (16%).

The percentage of authorities overspending on their budgets was 24% (10% last year).

The percentage of the road network in poor structural condition (less than 5 years life remaining) was as follows: 18% in England (18% last year), 21% in London (24% last year) and 12% in Wales (11% last year). The majority of roads in all areas are in good structural condition (15 or more years life remaining): 50% in England (54% last year), 52% in London (52% last year) and 53% in Wales (61% last year).

Respondents indicated that the ideal term for funding was 5 years (61%) or 10 years (35%) rather than the current arrangement of 3 years (4%).

It will take an estimated £14.02 billion to bring back roads in England and Wales back into a reasonable condition.

2.2 Potholes

There were 1.4 million potholes filled over the last year (1.7m last year). The average costs for filling one pothole was:

- As part of a planned programme – £50.17 in England, £52.69 in London and £52.13 in Wales
- As part of a reactive repair - £73.49 in England, £121.22 in London and £70.30 in Wales

The average number of potholes filled by authority was:

- 11,229 in England, 1,583 in London and 3,485 in Wales

2.3 Road surfacing frequency

The average road surfacing frequency in England has an average of 143 years, London with 32 years and Wales with 103 years.

2.4 Utility openings

Utility openings of roads to install or maintain utilities in England was 16,553 (14,225 last year), 11,568 in London (9,117 last year) and 4,457 in Wales (4,368 last year).

2.5 Compensation claims

The amount paid in road user compensation claims is up to £11.6m with a further £11.1m spend on staff costs to deal with claims. Below is an average of each authority:

- Number of claims – 305 in England, 96 in London and 70 in Wales
- Cost of claims – £8.4m in England, £2.9m in London and £0.3209m in Wales
- Staff costs – £7.0m in England, £2.4m in London and £1.7m in Wales
- Total cost – £15.4m in England, £5.3m in London and £2.0m in Wales

2.6 Materials innovation

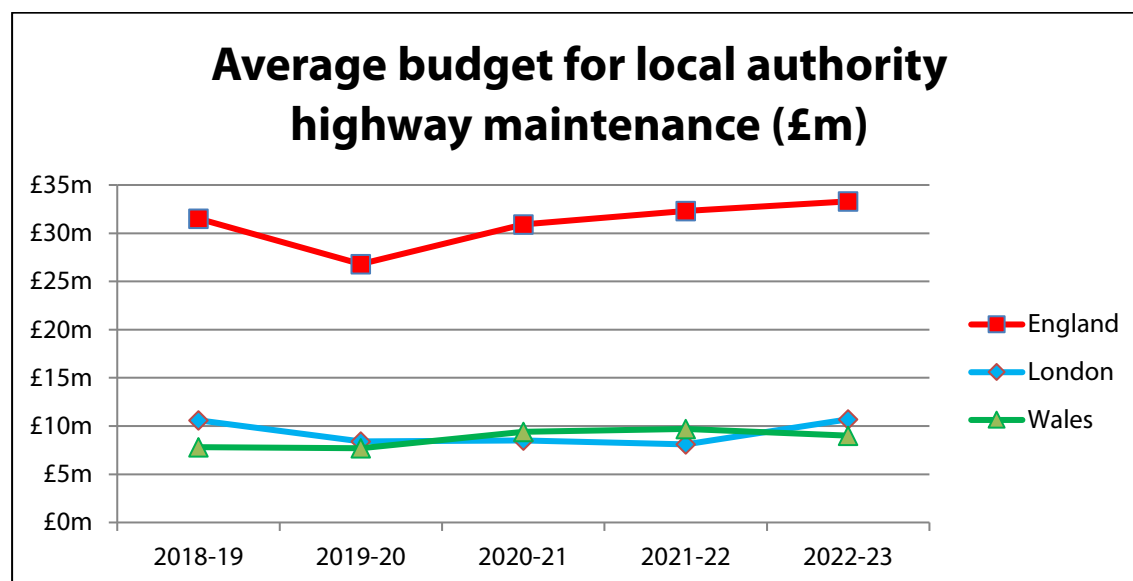
Authorities in England and Wales are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint including:

- 82% permit use of Warm Mix Asphalts (67% using Warm Mix Asphalts last year)
- 49% specify other recycled content (39% last year)
- 71% promoting more efficient working to reduce emissions (66% last year)

- 36% specify reclaimed asphalt (33% last year)
- 46% choosing materials with lowest initial carbon footprint (40% last year)
- 71% selecting surfacing materials with longer life (66% last year)

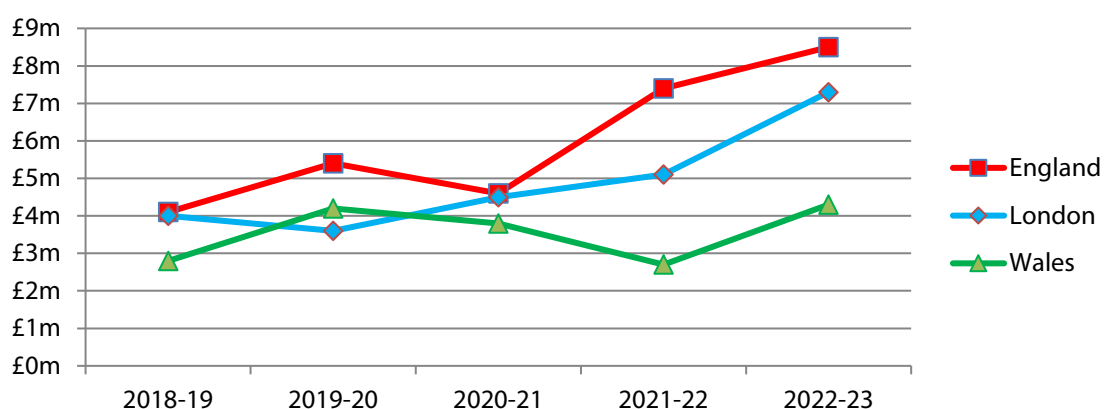
3 5-year comparison of ALARM survey results

Below is a comparison of the last 5 years ALARM surveys in order for local authorities to view the trends over time.



Average budget for local authority highway maintenance (£m)			
	England	London	Wales
2018-19	£31.5m	£10.6m	£7.8m
2019-20	£26.8m	£8.4m	£7.7m
2020-21	£30.9m	£8.5m	£9.4m
2021-22	£32.3m	£8.1m	£9.7m
2022-23	£33.3m	£10.7m	£9.0m

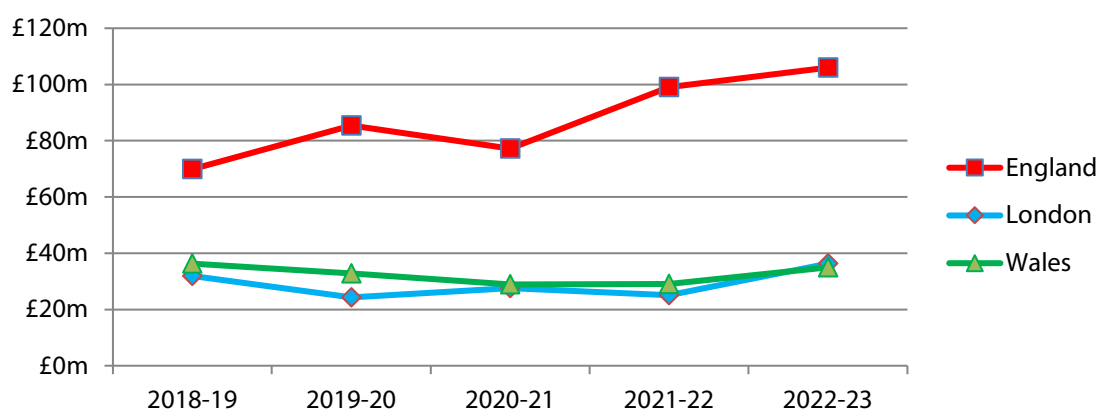
Average annual budget shortfall per authority (£m)



Average annual budget shortfall per authority (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2018-19	£4.1m	£4.0m	£2.8m
2019-20	£5.4m	£3.6m	£4.2m
2020-21	£4.6m	£4.5m	£3.8m
2021-22	£7.4m	£5.1m	£2.7m
2022-23	£8.5m	£7.3m	£4.3m

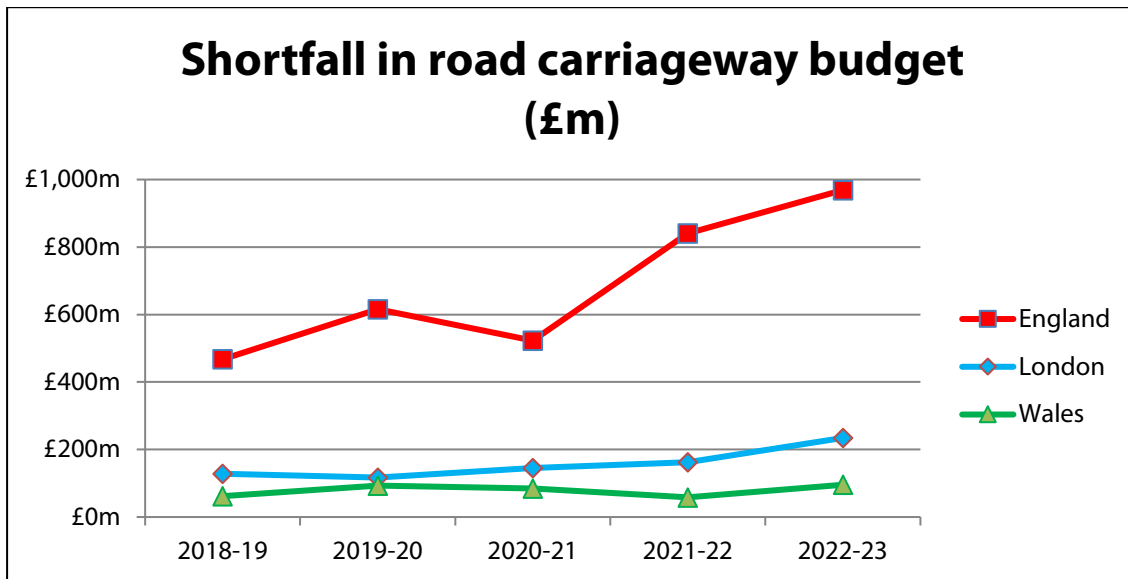
Estimated one-time catch-up cost per authority (£m)



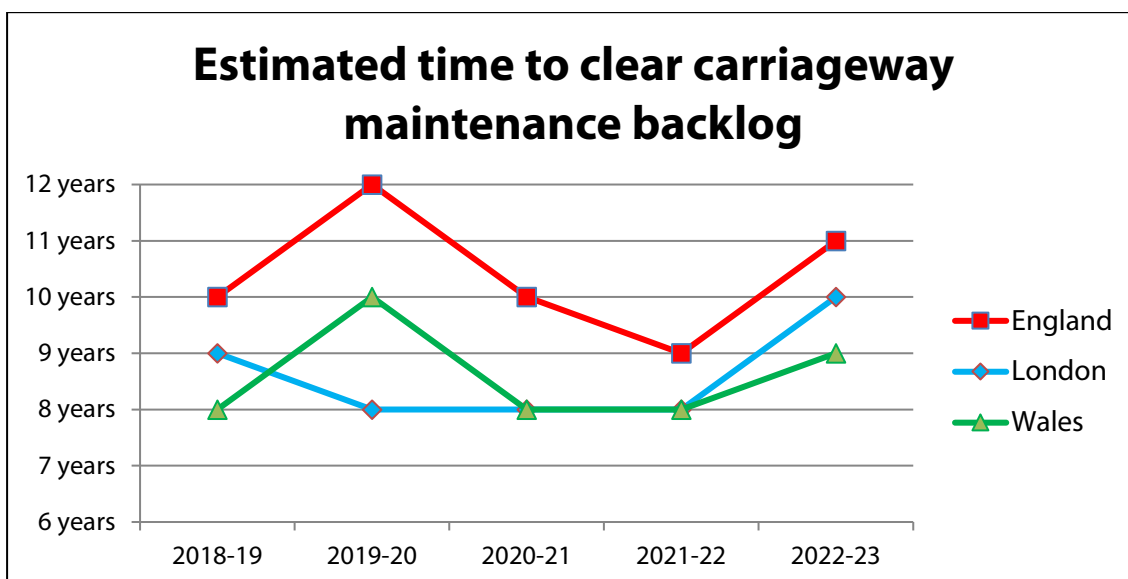
Estimated one-time catch-up cost per authority (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2018-19	£69.9m	£31.9m	£36.3m
2019-20	£85.4m	£24.3m	£32.8m
2020-21	£77.2m	£27.6m	£28.9m

2021-22	£99.1m	£25.1m	£29.1m
2022-23	£106.0m	£36.3m	£35.0m

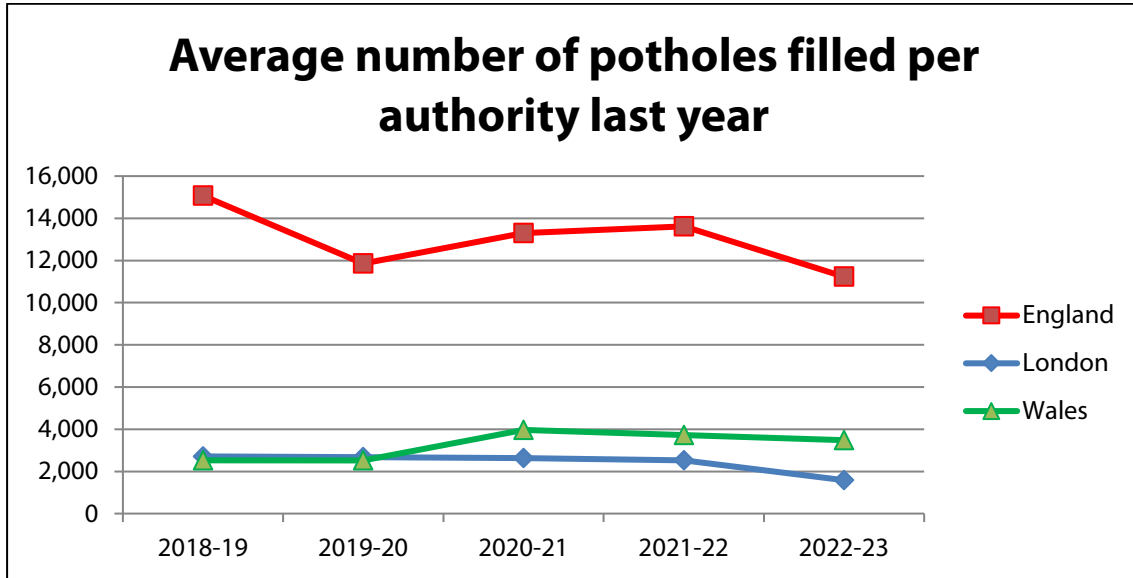


Shortfall in road carriageway budget (£m)			
	England	London	Wales
2018-19	£467.4m	£128.0m	£61.6m
2019-20	£616.0m	£117.0m	£93.6m
2020-21	£522.9m	£145.0m	£84.7m
2021-22	£840.4m	£162.6m	£58.4m
2022-23	£968.9m	£234.4m	£95.6m

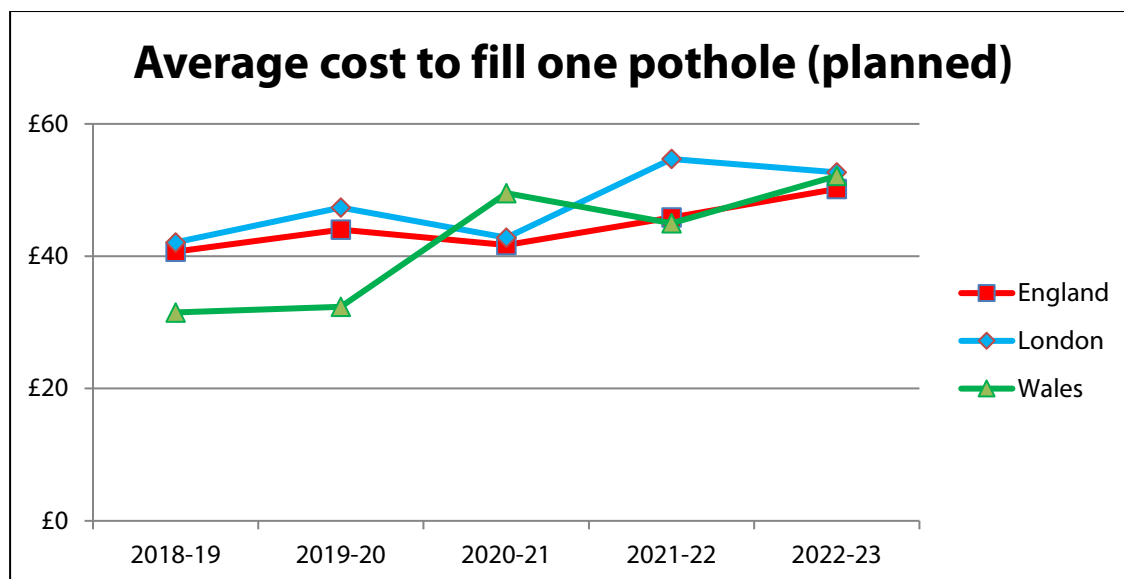


Estimated time to clear carriageway maintenance backlog

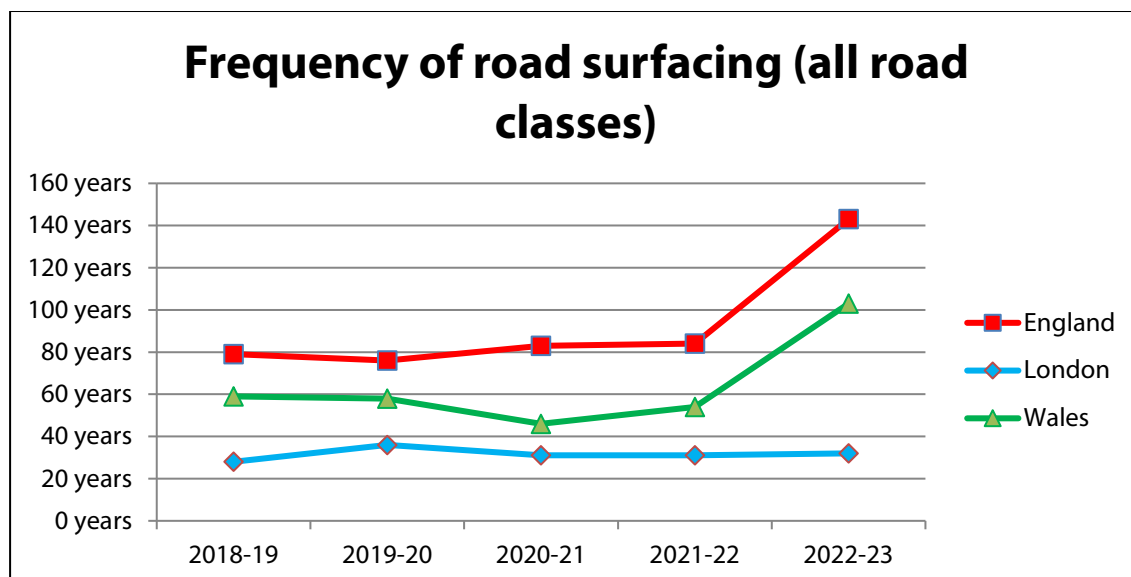
	England	London	Wales
2018-19	10 years	9 years	8 years
2019-20	12 years	8 years	10 years
2020-21	10 years	8 years	8 years
2021-22	9 years	8 years	8 years
2022-23	11 years	10 years	9 years



Average number of potholes filled per authority last year			
	England	London	Wales
2018-19	15,067	2,711	2,531
2019-20	11,864	2,678	2,519
2020-21	13,298	2,634	3,967
2021-22	13,624	2,517	3,721
2022-23	11,229	1,583	3,485

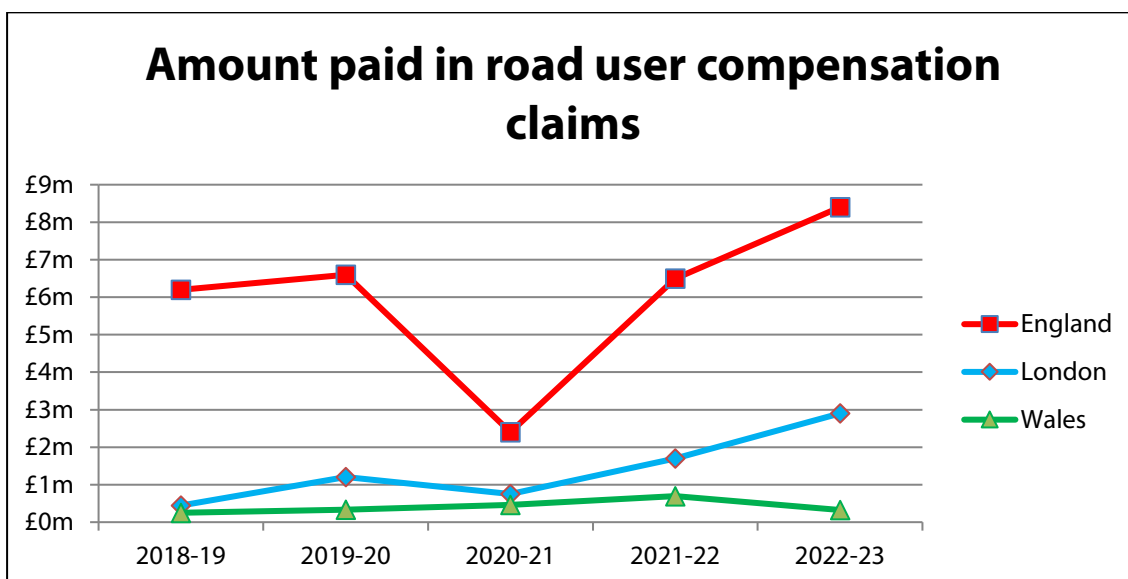


Average cost to fill one pothole (planned)			
	England	London	Wales
2018-19	£40.70	£42.10	£31.50
2019-20	£44.00	£47.33	£32.35
2020-21	£41.68	£42.82	£49.55
2021-22	£45.83	£54.69	£45.00
2022-23	£50.17	£52.69	£52.13



Frequency of road surfacing (all road classes)			
	England	London	Wales
2018-19	79 years	28 years	59 years
2019-20	76 years	36 years	58 years

2020-21	83 years	31 years	46 years
2021-22	84 years	31 years	54 years
2022-23	143 years	32 years	103 years



Amount paid in road user compensation claims			
	England	London	Wales
2018-19	£6.2m	£0.444m	£0.251m
2019-20	£6.6m	£1.2m	£0.33m
2020-21	£2.4m	£0.748m	£0.458m
2021-22	£6.5m	£1.7m	£0.695m
2022-23	£8.4m	£2.9m	£0.3209m

4 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes the release of the Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey 2023. The information enclosed in the ALARM survey is very useful for English and Welsh highways authorities in comparing their service to other authorities and for judging trends generally across roads and highways services.

APSE's [Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance Performance Networks benchmarking service](#) offers members the ability to benchmark themselves against similarly sized authorities across the UK using a wide range of [performance indicators](#). For more information on how to access this service, e-mail performance.networks@apse.org.uk or call the APSE head office at 0161 772 1810.

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