



APSE Performance Networks; Local Government Frontline Data Roundup 2024



Table of Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	4
1 Expenditure	5
2 Income	6
3 Productivity	8
4 Street cleansing continuing demands on service.....	9
5 Burials and cremations by month	10
6 The changing face of leisure	11
7 Missed bin collections.....	12
8 Catering primary school meals served	13
9 Road condition	14
10 Land Audit Management System (LAMS).....	16
11 Customer satisfaction, complaints and enquiries	18
12 Front line staff numbers	19
13 Recruitment and retention.....	20
14 Age profile of the workforce	21
15 Environmental sustainability.....	22
16 Conclusion	26

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Foreword

This publication is based on analysis of data from APSE performance networks. It is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Used by over 200 local authorities it leads the way in local government benchmarking. The size of its membership gives added benefits to members by being able to offer a wide variety of comparator groups.

What services does it cover?

1. Building cleaning
2. Building maintenance
3. Cemetery and crematorium services
4. Catering services
5. Climate change
6. Core highways
7. Environmental health
8. Market operations
9. Parks, open spaces and horticultural services
10. Refuse collection
11. Roads, highways and winter maintenance
12. Sports and leisure facility management
13. Street cleansing
14. Street lighting
15. Trading standards
16. Transport operations and vehicle maintenance

The service also includes the following Inspection Apps:

- LAMS (Land Audit Management System)
- PIMS (Play Inspection Management System)
- MIST (Memorial Inspection Safety Tool)
- CLAMS (Cleaning Audit Management System)

APSE performance networks is recognised as a trusted and robust source of performance data within local government. The model meets all industry standard criteria in terms of data consistency, reliability and comparability. Performance networks' data undergoes a rigorous error checking and three stage validation procedure to ensure that its data is robust. Uniquely it has over two decades of legacy data providing valuable trend data for local government frontline services covering cost, quality and productivity indicators as anchors across all data sets.

The following reports are produced as part of the service:

- Performance reports; report displaying graphically performance indicator results for all organisations within a family group
- Performance indicator standings tables; tabular report detailing positioning information of each PI within a family group and across the whole service area
- Performance at a glance report; dashboard of key performance indicators showing individual performance compared to current averages and previous performance
- Direction of travel report; showing performance over the past 5 years compared to the average for key performance indicators
- Summary report; detailing trend analysis across the whole service area and highest, lowest and average figures
- Best practice case studies from the best performing and most improved authorities on how they have achieved that level of performance
- Bespoke analysis - on request - reports by special comparator group, trend analysis for example
- Participation in the customer satisfaction surveys

In addition to the reports, the service also includes:

- Free support to guide local authorities through the process - including on-line data completion training sessions and one to one training, as well as data usage sessions.
- Real opportunities to share best practice - facilitated through the advisory group meetings and the Performance networks annual seminar
- Performance awards - held annually for most improved performer and best practice

For further information on the services that are available, please contact:

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Introduction

This publication includes the key findings for the last data collection year (2023-24 financial year) from APSE performance networks. The figures quoted are averages across all participating authorities.

Information and data provide intelligence on the impact of service changes, to establish a starting point and to identify future targets. Performance measurement is also a mechanism to learn how other local authorities are meeting the challenges and the impact that their service changes are making in terms of cost, quality, productivity and customer satisfaction levels.

This data and analysis will support our member councils to assess their performance comparative with others, within their specific service sector. Individual comparator reports have also been produced for councils participating in the benchmarking.

With many English councils now facing the prospect of reorganisation the ability to share frontline service data, providing a legacy baseline from which to continually improve services under a new authority, should represent a best practice approach to the integration of service delivery. APSE encourages all its performance networks members to complete their data submissions to provide this legacy data in advance of reorganisation. For more information on how we can support you to develop legacy data reports through APSE performance networks, email:

performance.networks@apse.org.uk

1 Expenditure

		Since 21-22
Building maintenance	Total annual expenditure	+22%
Street cleansing	Cost of street cleansing service per household	+19%
Refuse collection	Cost of refuse collection service per household	+18%
Parks	Maintenance investment per hectare of maintained land	+15%
Catering	Total cost per lunchtime meal - primary schools	+13%
Building cleaning	Cost per scheduled input hour	+11%
Street lighting	Cost per streetlight	-7%

The data shows increasing costs across all the services shown above, with the exception of street lighting, because of inflation affecting services. Inflationary costs have arisen from higher energy and fuel bills, impacting on assets such as depots and leisure centres, and running transport and fleet services, and increase in food costs in areas such as education catering, and supplies and equipment price rises across all services. For labour intensive services wage increases have played a significant role in service cost pressures due to pay settlements that redress a historic pay lag in the public sector. Whilst welcome in redressing the balance on pay rates it nevertheless creates pressure on labour costs in frontline services. For street lighting though the picture is different which is due to improvements to equipment and LED rollout, a subsequent reduction in energy usage, reduction in scouting due to CMS and a 11% reduction in faults over the period.

Benchmarking unit costs – carriageway planned maintenance scheme

23-24	21-22	Comparison between the years
11.2 million sq. metres treated for planned maintenance schemes	16.8 million sq. metres treated for planned maintenance schemes	33% reduction in sq. metres of carriageway planned maintenance schemes
Cost of £234 million	Cost of £263 million	11% reduction in budget
£20.84 per sq. metre	£15.66 per sq metre	

The table above shows planned maintenance for carriageways, for 21-22 financial year and the current year for a group of authorities who submitted data for both years. For a similar budget in both years there is a 33% reduction in maintenance schemes and an 11% reduction in budget.

2 Income

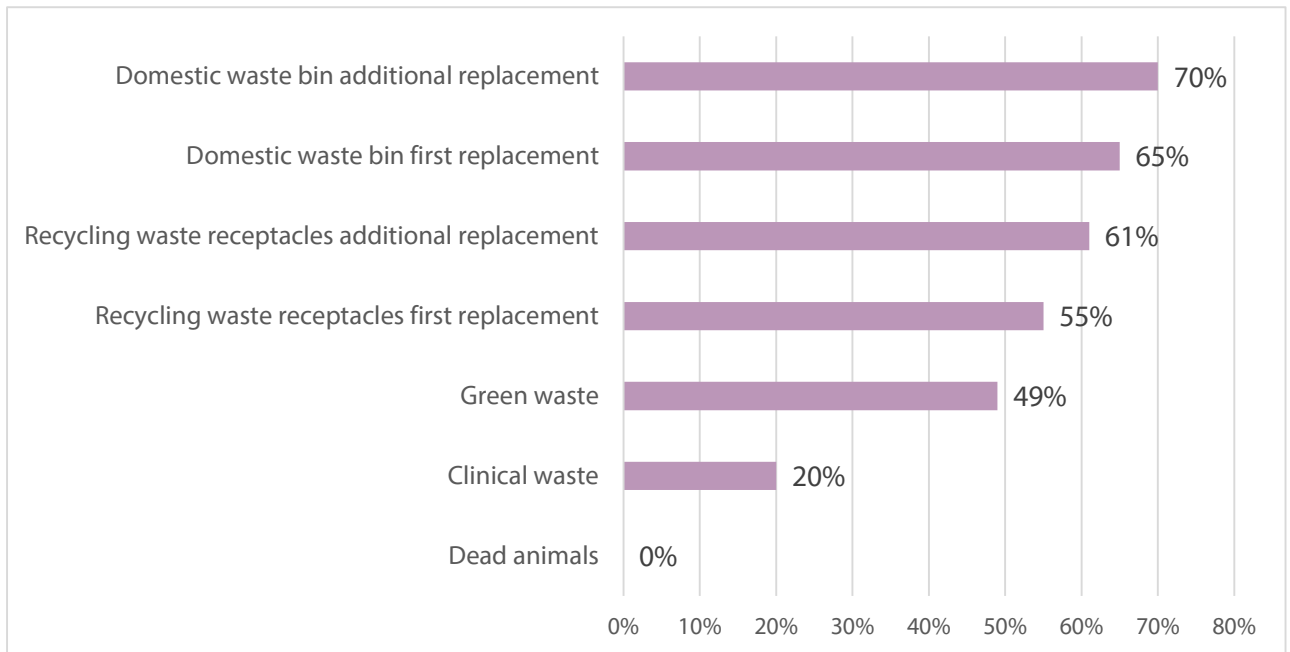
Building cleaning	% expenditure recovered through commercial income	2.65%
Parks	% operational expenditure covered by discountable income and external funding	11.68%
Street cleansing	% operational expenditure covered by discountable income	2.53%

Discountable income is income received by the council from external sources, which offsets the service costs, often by reducing reliance on core budgets, and / or flattening overhead costs. Typically, this is referred to as commercial income. The impact of this income stream also reduces costs to council taxpayers. Building cleaning, parks and street cleansing all generate income to offset expenditure, with the average percentage of expenditure which is covered by this income for parks being nearly 12%. However, in some areas there is less use of commercial income generation, and it is perhaps worthwhile these services exploring how further income could be generated. Examples would include building cleaning services being provided to other parts of the public sector or private sector facilities and street cleansing services being provided, for example to retail parks.

The actual amount of discountable income has also shown an increase since 2021/22 for the services below, with parks showing an average increase per council from £425,475 to £587,822, which equates to a 38% increase during this period. Total income for education catering has increased by 14% over this period too, although some of this will be due to free meal income.

Since 21-22		
Parks	Discountable / non-contract income	38%
Refuse collection	Discountable / non-contract income	3%
Education catering	Total income (cash / actual / free meal income)	14%

Charges for Services: % who charge for the following services within refuse collection.



Over 55% of councils now charge for replacement bins and nearly 50% charge for green waste. The above chart sets out the common areas where charges are applied.

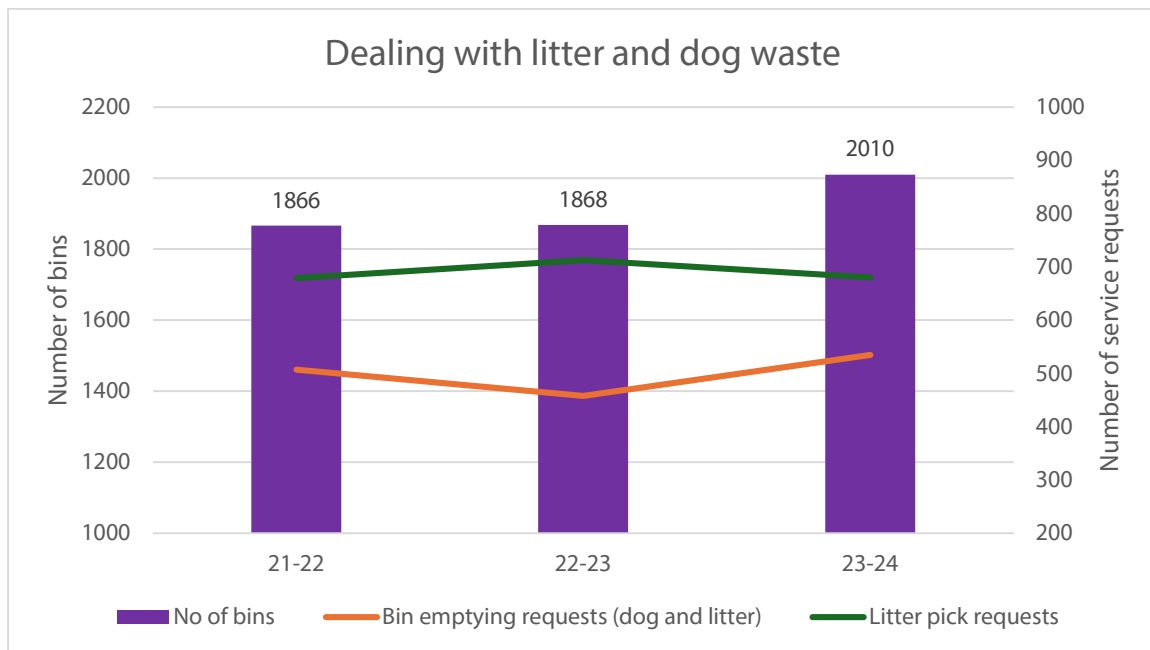
3 Productivity

There has been a focus on productivity in 2023-2024 particularly in England with councils being asked to submit 'Productivity plans' by the 19 July despite the General Election taking place on the 4 July. Although it has since been announced by the new government that Oflog will be closed, the theme of productivity and an ending of 'waste in public services' remains a key theme of government. APSE performance networks data actually demonstrates that productivity has increased across the services listed below over the past 3 years.

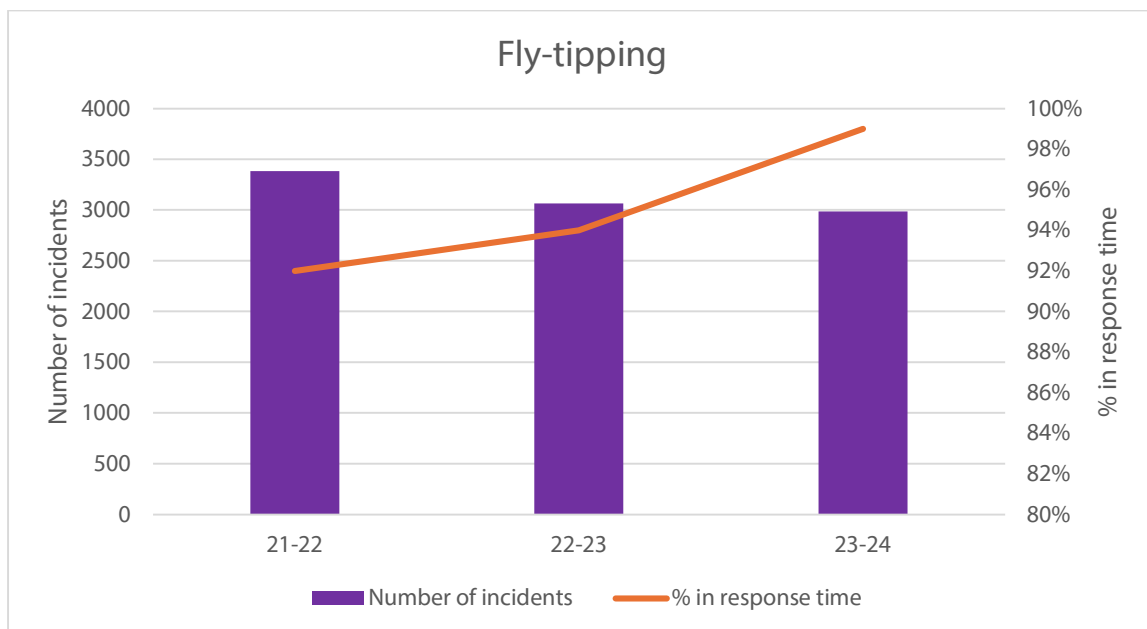
		21-22	22-23	23-24
Building cleaning	Total square metres cleaned per FTE employee	1417	1603	1673
Building maintenance	All jobs completed per full time operational employee	211	239	264
Catering	Primary and special school lunchtime meals served per staff hour	8.3	9.3	9.8
Roads/highways	Number of cat 1 defects (carriageways and footpaths)	23,220	27,581	29,853
	Number of the above dealt with in target time	21,827	25,357	26,055
Street lighting	Percentage of lamps restored to working condition within target time		82	84
Sports and leisure	Usage per staff hour	6.0	7.4	8.8

Any improvements in productivity need to be measured in the context of quality, which is where inspection data such as that available from the APSE apps can be useful. For more information on APSE's apps, please [click here](#).

4 Street cleansing continuing demands on service

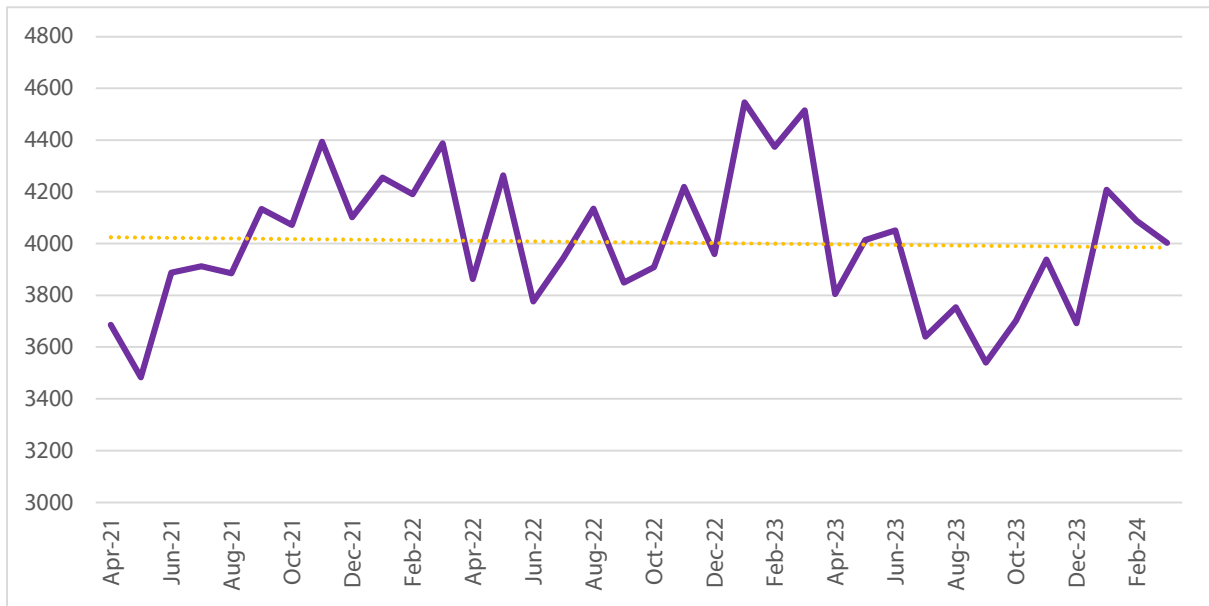


The chart above shows an increase in demands on the service in relation to bin emptying and litter pick requests. The provision of bins has increased, as have the number of requests from members of the public. Interestingly in relation to service demand, litter pick requests have marginally decreased.



Fly tipping has been reducing since the high of over 4,500 incidents on average per council in 2020-21 during the Covid period which we associated with the restricted access and booking systems at Civic Amenity Sites. In conjunction with this, the percentage responded to within the response time has been improving too.

5 Burials and cremations by month



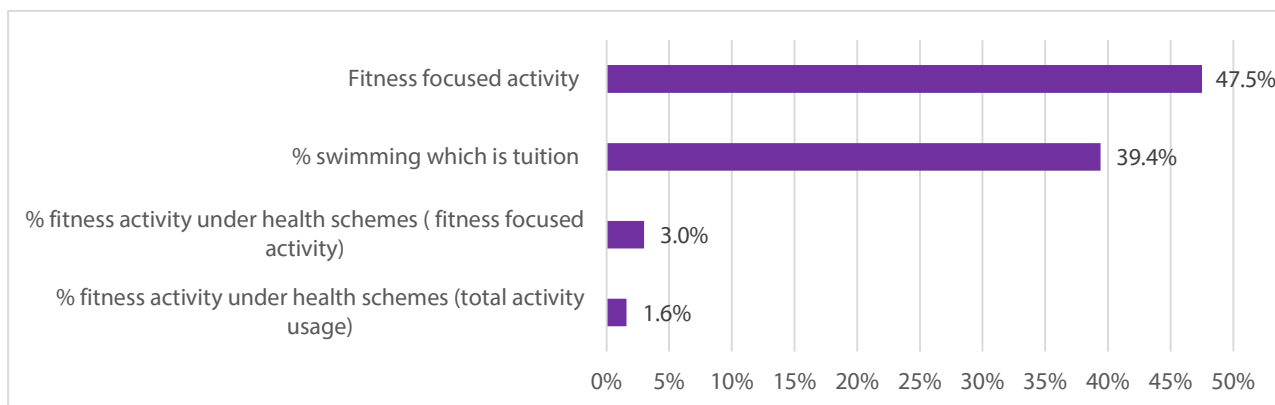
The 23/24 winter death rate is significantly lower than previous winters, but this is a figure that naturally varies from year to year with the unpredictability of public health issues and of course is geographically variable with factors such as the age and relative health and wealth of local populations. This evidences why sufficient resources need to always be available within the service.

6 The changing face of leisure

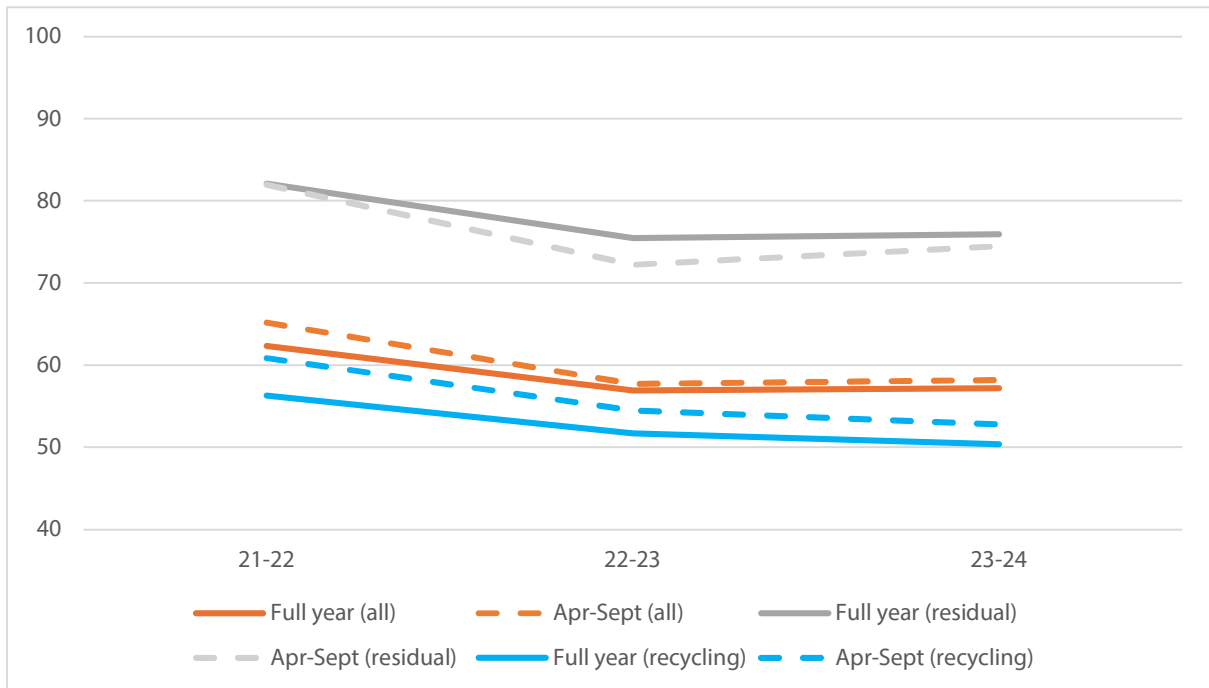
	21-22	22-23	23-24
Expenditure increase			7.80%
Energy cost	£131,471	£270,921	£271,344
Usage recovery	223,841	302,633	332,139
Income recovery	£772,568	£1,048,570	£1,231,020
Opening hours	4,700	4,738	4,711
Staffing hours	37,230	38,507	37,911

This chart shows the average figures per leisure centre for 23-24 and the previous 2 years. It demonstrates financial challenges with expenditure increasing by 7.8% since last year and a significant factor of this is energy costs which have increased by 106% over the past 3 years. However, we are seeing recovery in usage and income; usage has increased by nearly 50%. Opening hours and staffing hours have been consistent over this period.

APSE has started to focus more attention on collecting data in leisure on areas such as swimming tuition, fitness focused activity as a percentage of total activity usage and uptake of health referral and health inequality schemes. Some of the averages for these measures are shown below.

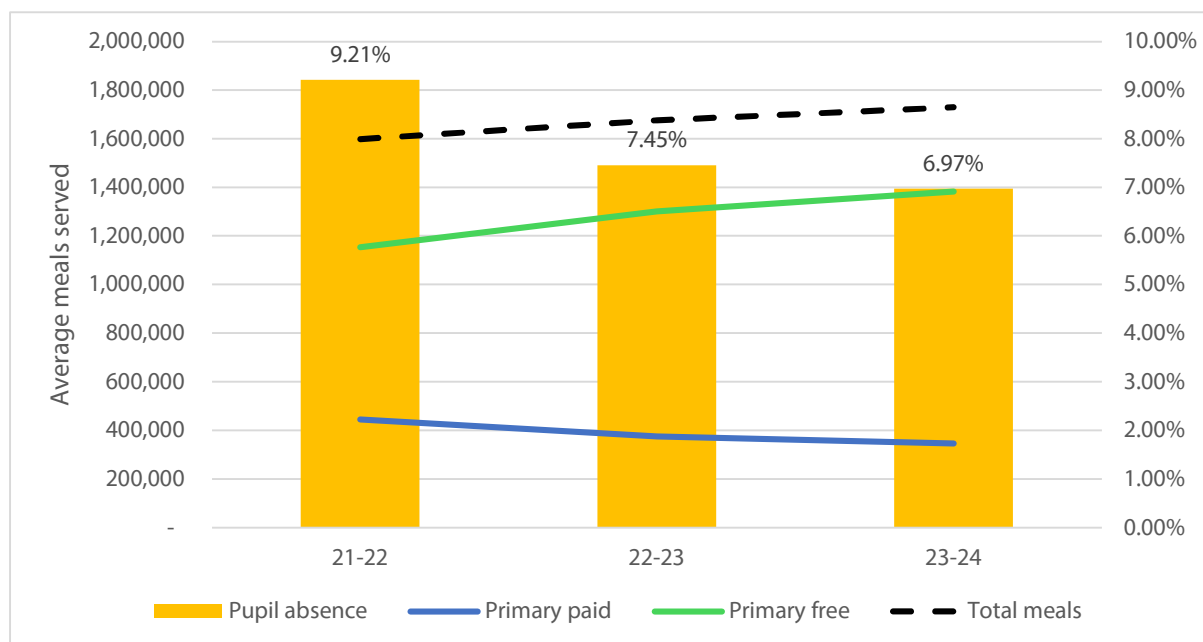


7 Missed bin collections



Missed bin collections are an important indicator of service quality and also provide a gauge towards improving customer satisfaction. Missed bin collection numbers have improved across the board and especially for the April to September period over the past couple of years. The April to September figures, the dashed lines, show the missed collections without the disruptions caused by the winter months. This is highly useful for officers in refuse collection services to share with cabinet members for the environment to demonstrate the seasonality of collection issues within the service.

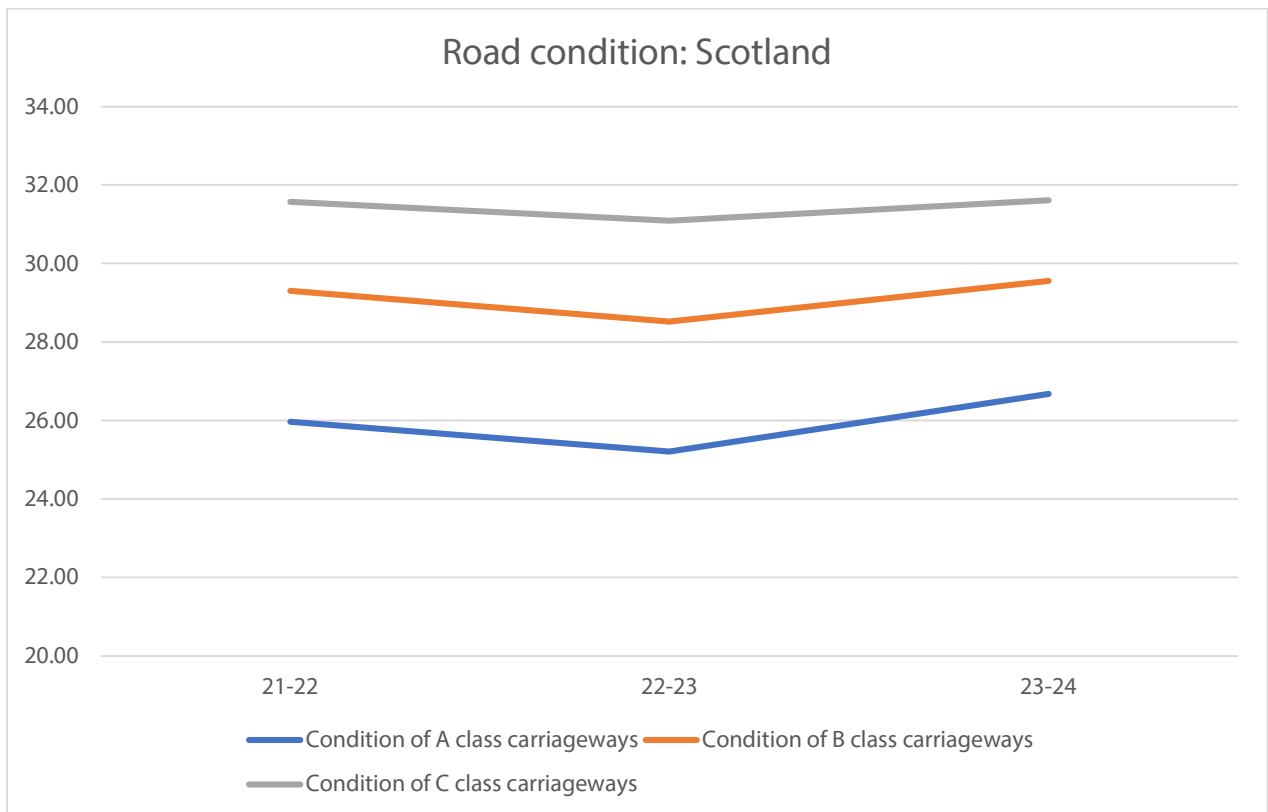
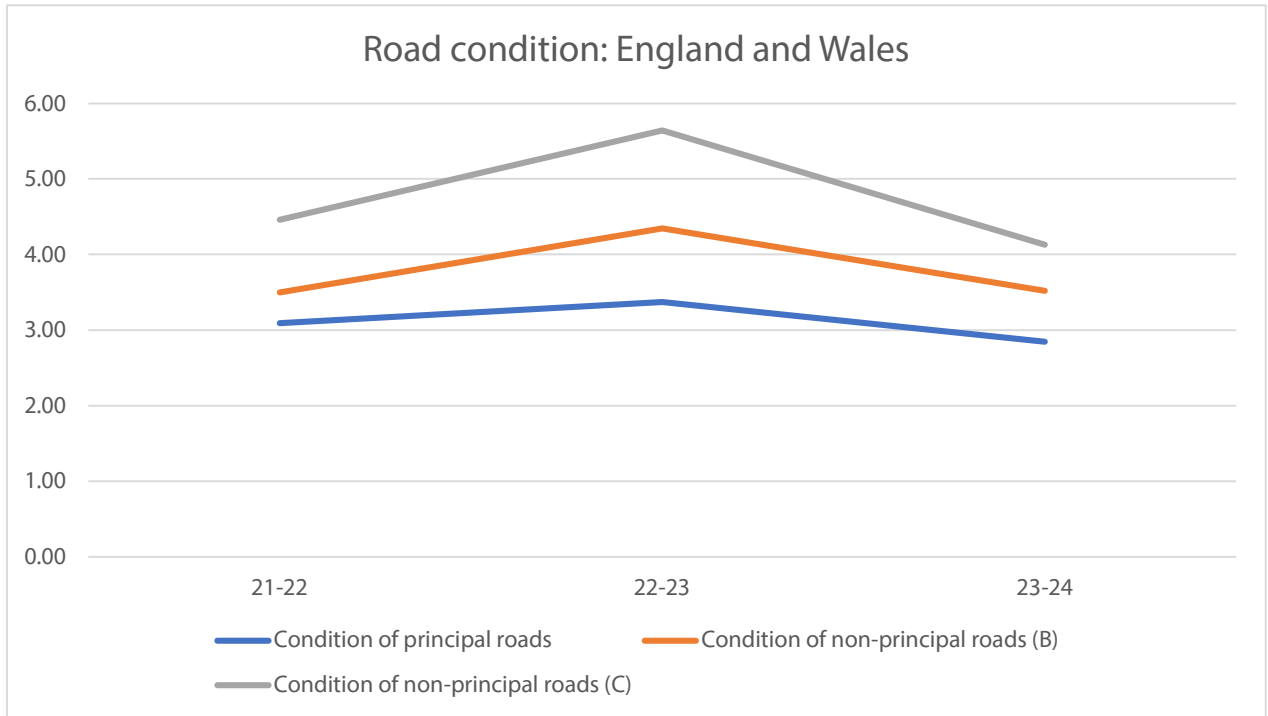
8 Catering primary school meals served



The above chart shows the trend in paid and free meal numbers served for primary schools. Total meal numbers are shown as the black dashed line at the top. The yellow bars are pupil absence levels which have been reducing since the pandemic.

We have seen a continued increase in total meals served which is due to the increase in free meals served. This reflects a reduction in pupil absence and the roll out of Universal Free School Meals, though government level support for free school meals varies widely across the UK and indeed within England, given the additional funding made available through the Mayor of London. Further analysis will be necessary on the free breakfast clubs proposed by the new government, and it will be interesting to see if this has an overall positive impact on take-up levels of school food.

9 Road conditions compared across the UK



The data shows an opposite trend for road condition for England/Wales and Scotland over the last couple of years which will be linked to investment. For both sets of data above, it is desirable to be low on these measures as they are identifying the % of road which should be considered for maintenance treatment. However, as the type of measurement varies between England/Wales and Scotland, they need to be reported as separate charts.

ALARM 2024 data shows that more than half the local road network is reported as having 15 years or less of structural life remaining, and that £16.3 billion is now needed to tackle the backlog of carriageway repairs in England and Wales – the highest figure in 29 years of reporting. The Autumn 2024 Budget announced nearly £1.6 billion in capital funding for local highways maintenance in England for the financial year 2025 to 2026.

The Scottish Backlog and Steady State Model 2023 showed that despite most authorities showing an improvement in their RCI, the 2023 backlog figure increased by 16.3% to £2.196 billion. This is primarily due to the increase in treatment costs since 2019.

10 Land Audit Management System (LAMS)



The [LAMS \(Land Audit Management System\)](#) is a quality inspection system to monitor grounds maintenance and/or street cleansing. APSE's performance networks members use LAMS to measure the quality of their own localities, and at the same time benchmark these against other local authorities. Members can choose between using the system to monitor grounds maintenance, street cleansing and/or cemeteries/crematorium land maintenance.

The above infographic shows the results from the LAMS inspections carried out by local authorities throughout the UK for street cleansing. Since last year, there have been improvements in the averages for the issues above in lilac, the issues in blue have stayed the same and the issues in grey have declined.

For street cleansing, there has been an improvement in fly-tipping, which is corroborated in section 4. Inspections have shown a higher presence of detritus and hard surface weeds which may be due to the ongoing financial constraints felt in street scene services and the reduced use of glyphosate for environmental reasons.



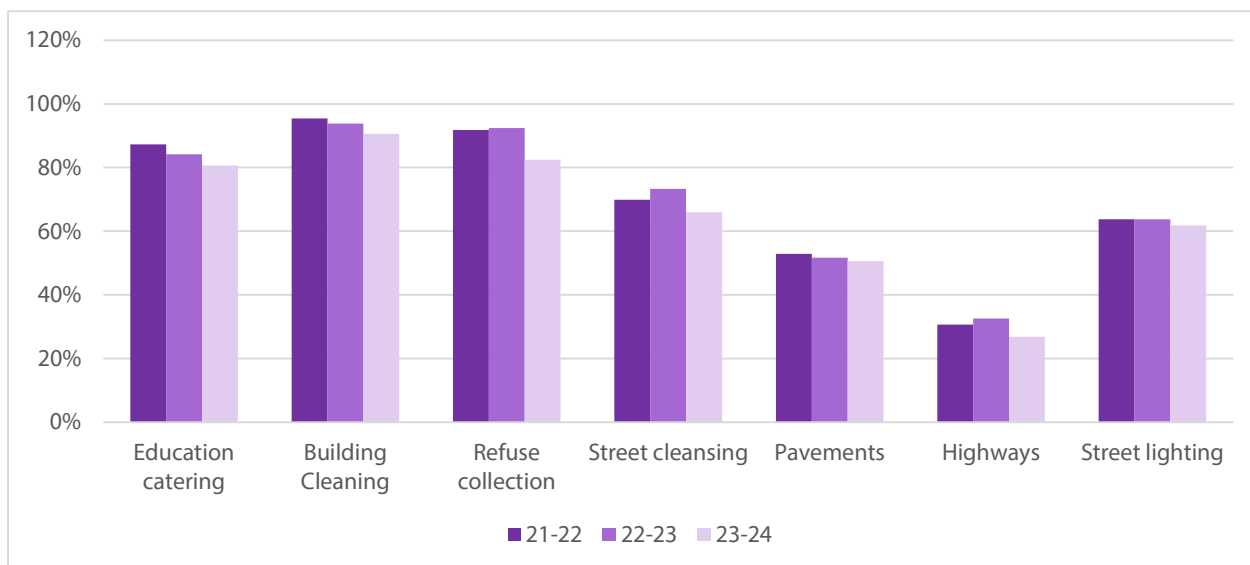
Grounds Maintenance LAMS



The above infographic shows the results from the LAMS inspections carried out by local authorities throughout the UK for grounds maintenance. Since last year, there have been improvements in the averages for the issues above in lilac, the issues in blue have stayed the same and the issues in grey have declined. There has been a reduction in the inspections showing bins overflowing, leading to an improvement in this area. The quality of grass cutting has declined which may be due to reduced cutting frequencies due to reduced budgets and the rewilding of areas due to biodiversity.

11 Customer satisfaction, complaints and enquiries

Customer satisfaction



The above chart shows that average satisfaction overall with all the above service areas has shown a marginal decline this year. Some of this will be explicable by changes in participant data though overall the public remain highly satisfied by Council services, as evidenced by APSE public opinion poll conducted through respected pollsters Survation. Nevertheless, the small but creeping decline in satisfaction levels may also indicate that reductions in budgets are now being seen and felt by the public.

Customer complaints and enquiries

Dealing with complaints scores

Building cleaning 65% to 55%
 Refuse collection 26.5% to 26.3%



Complaints dealt with in target time

Street cleansing 94% to 93%



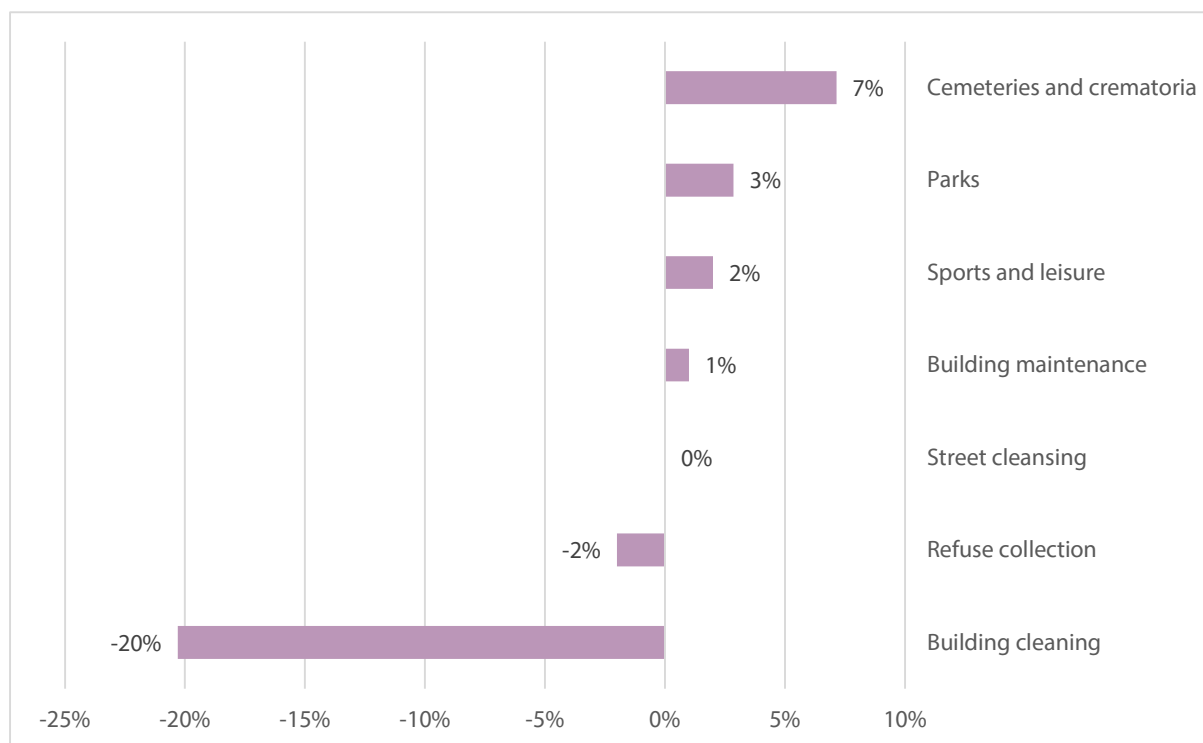
Enquiries dealt with in target time

Roads/highways 82% to 77%



Dealing with complaints and enquiries have also deteriorated over the past 3 years. This could be linked with higher demands on the service with limited resources and also reflect councils increasing use of AI technologies in areas like pothole reporting, leading to more reporting and higher expectations of action. For example, the number of enquiries for roads and highways increased by 48%.

12 Front line staff numbers



The above chart shows changes in the number of front-line staff in the past 2 years. Some of the services which showed previous increases in the number of staff due to the pandemic have since shown reductions. The 7% increase in staff for cemeteries and crematoria only represents an average increase of 1 member of staff; the relatively low number of staff in this service area affects the average percentage increases.

Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff continues to have an impact on these numbers.

13 Recruitment and retention

	% vacancies	% filled	% stayed beyond probation, induction and training	% stayed at least 12 weeks	% leavers
Parks	12%	*96%	97%		6%
Refuse drivers	11%	71%			
Refuse loaders	12%	63%			
Street cleansing	16%	63%	98%		12%
Cemetery and crematorium	5%	63%	100%		7%
Leisure recreation assistants	31%	83%	86%		
Building cleaning	5%			85%	13%
Building maintenance	7%	55%	55%		

*from those advertised

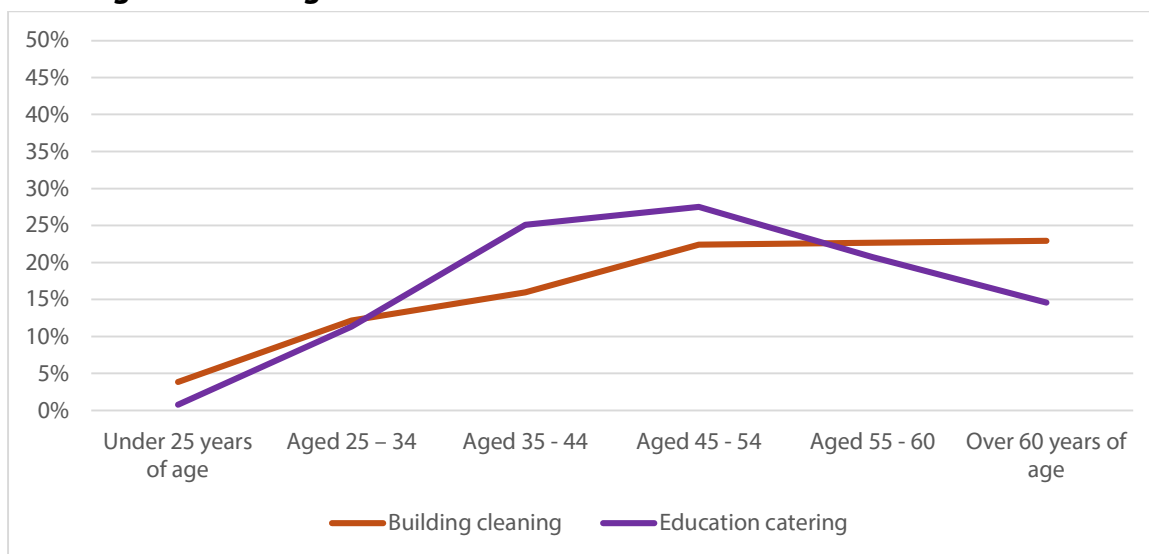
The table above shows recruitment and retention problems across the services. The highest levels of vacancies are with leisure, recreation assistants, and street cleansing services.

It also shows the difficulties being experienced in filling posts. In building maintenance, only 55% of new staff were retained beyond probation, induction and training.

Building cleaning services has a relatively high number of leavers at 13%, compared to the other services above.

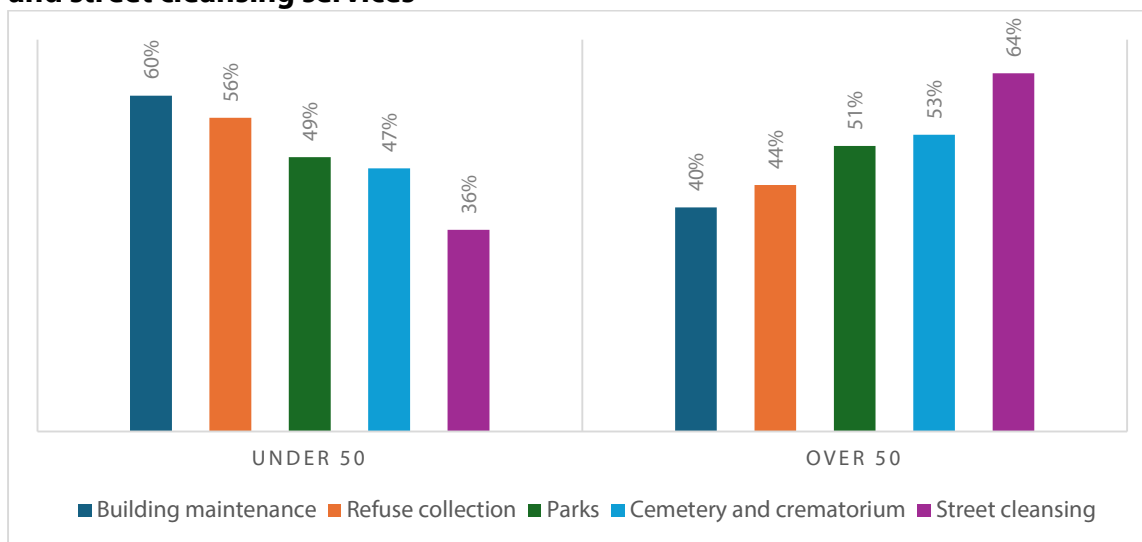
14 Age profile of the workforce

Catering and cleaning services



APSE performance networks collect a range of data on the age profile of the workforce. This shows a higher number of staff for cleaning and catering between 45 and 54 than the other categories and a relatively high number above 60 for building cleaning. APSE soft facilities management networks in both building cleaning and education catering are constantly working with APSE member councils on these specific sector issues.

Building maintenance, refuse collection, parks, cemetery and crematorium services and street cleansing services



This chart shows the age profile of workforce and the balance between under 50's compared to over 50s across these 5 services. It clearly shows the heavier reliance on a younger workforce in building maintenance and refuse collection and potentially staff migrating internally to parks, cemetery and crematorium services and street cleansing with age. For parks, cemetery and crematorium services and street cleansing, over 50% of the workforce are over 50 years old and a large proportion of these staff will be near retirement age, which is a further challenge to the service.

15 Environmental sustainability

The following is data amalgamated across a number of service areas and shows who has been certified as a Carbon Literate organisation. It also shows carbon literacy training and climate awareness training. More management and back-office staff have undergone training than frontline staff.

Across all services

5% of service teams are a certified 'Carbon Literate' organisation

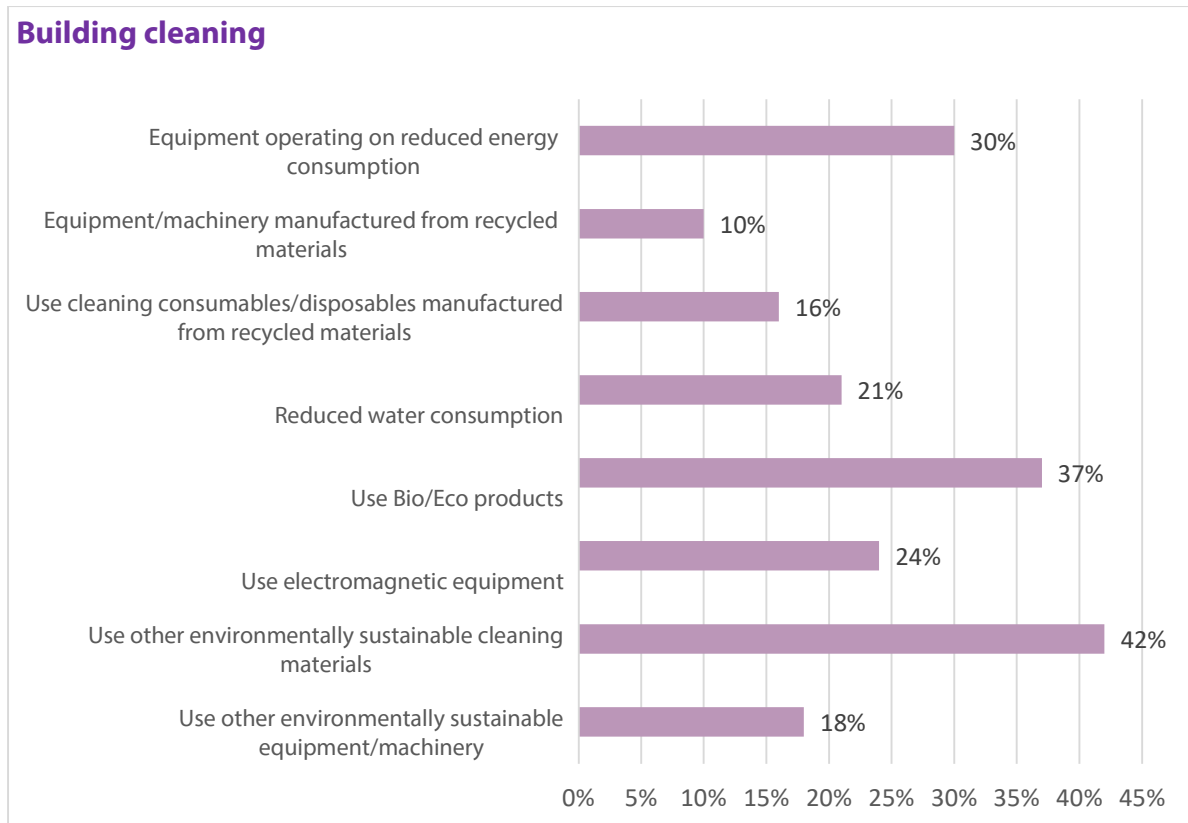
Management / Administration / Office / Professional / Support

9.2% have undergone formal 'Carbon Literacy' training and a further 7.2% have completed climate awareness training

Frontline/operational employees

2.1% have undertaken formal 'Carbon Literacy' training and a further 4% have completed climate awareness training

APSE has been developing environmental sustainability measures in all the service areas. It shows good progress being made, however there are potential areas to improve on in the future.





Trees

- 75% have an identified budget for tree maintenance
- 94% of a quarter of a million new trees planted were new schemes
- 18% is the average current canopy
- 22% is the average target canopy



Parks

- 43% of councils have new or ongoing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) projects
- 67% intend to go fully peat free
- 36% have a 'Pollinator' strategy



Street cleansing

- 14% sweepers (vehicles) are neither petrol or diesel
- 42% of motorised pedestrian sweepers are electric or battery



Refuse collection

- 9% of refuse fleet is on alternative fuels
- 20% have at least 1 electric vehicle



Cemetery and crematorium services

- 32% use renewable energy
- 81% re-use energy generated by the cremation process
- 82% manage grounds in a manner which promotes biodiversity
- 14% have 'locally sourced / ecofriendly' memorials available
- 46% offer a natural / green / woodland burial
- 43% have dedicated green / woodland sites



Street lighting

10% increase in the number of streetlamps that are LED since 2021-22

89% are now LED

Average annual electricity consumption per streetlight reduced by 19% since 2021-22

13% increase in streetlamps which had a registered dimming regime since 2021-22

Now 62% on CMS or dimming regime



Roads and highways

34% use thermal mapping data

Average number of flooding incidents resulting from highway surface water issues is 232

Control of weeds

The average who....	Parks	Street cleansing	Roads/ highways
Have a weed control policy	58%	63%	47%
Use glyphosate	88%	81%	100%
Reduced the amount of glyphosate used from 5 years ago	73%	56%	
What has this on average reduced by?	55%	54%	

For the 3 service areas above, the control of weeds is showing a similar picture although less parks and street cleansing services are using glyphosate than highways departments now. This may be due to the viability of different option on highway surfaces. For parks and street cleansing, it is showing a reduction in the amount of glyphosate used from 5 years ago with an average reduction of over a half.



Building maintenance

53% have target for moving to Electric Vehicles or other non-petrol/diesel vehicles
9% of vehicles are currently Electric Vehicles or other non-petrol/diesel vehicles
Two thirds have a target to reach 100% use of electric vehicles



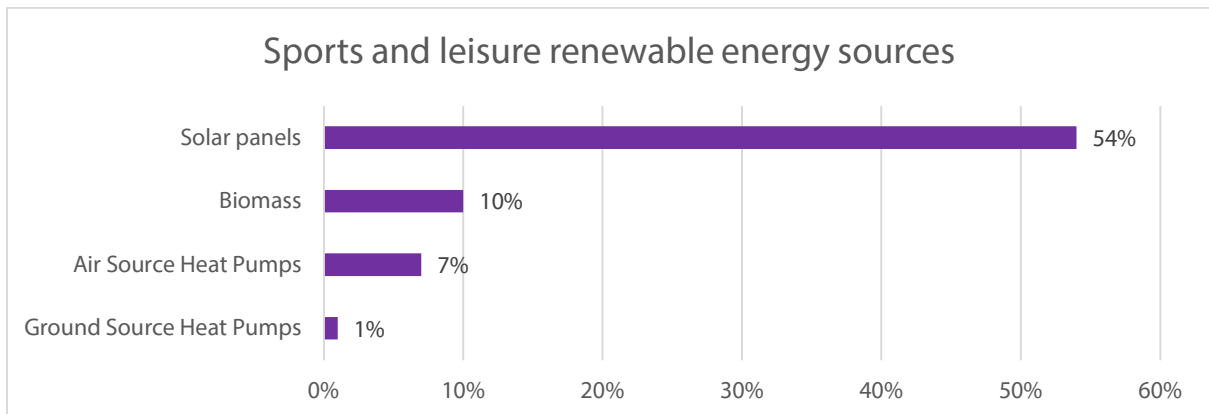
Education catering

30% of provisions purchased/sourced from local suppliers
45% of schools have set targets for reductions in energy consumption
55% have a policy for recycling food waste in Primary Schools
45% have a policy for recycling food waste in Secondary Schools



Sports and leisure

61% use renewable energy sources
75% cover swimming pools at night
31% use 'Heat recycling pump' technology

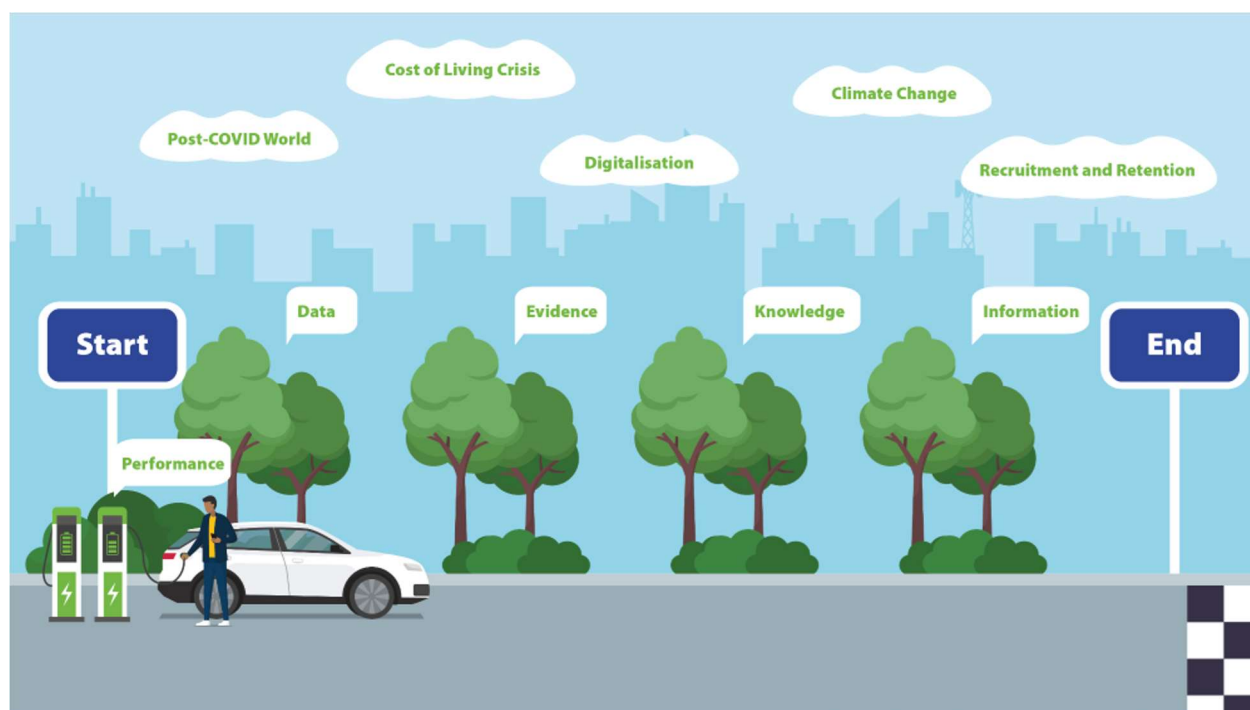


APSE performance networks is introducing a scored environmental sustainability Performance Indicator in most service areas over the next couple of years. This will enable member councils to further track progress and highlight areas of good practice through the reports that they receive from performance networks. APSE performance networks has now successfully piloted and rolled out a corporate Climate Change benchmarking module, which was successfully developed by a group of local council members.

16 Conclusion

Data for 2023/24 has shown both improvements in some aspects of performance and a deterioration in others. The effects of the continuing budget reductions with increasing demand for services, together with cost pressures from energy, overall inflation and labour and supply cost increases, continues to present an increasing challenge for local authorities seeking to provide a high level of service delivery. The ability to recruit and retain staff has been problematic across a range of different service areas.

Another major challenge for local authorities is local plans to address the global threats of climate change and energy price increases. However, investment in service changes tends to lag behind corporate ambitions.



To get from start to finish and deliver services effectively, councils need to know where they are, where they are going and how to get there – they need evidence and decisions need to be grounded in good data not opinions. Data is crucial in our ever-changing world for first class information on how to deliver first class public services. The need for access to effective data will be invaluable, most especially in the recently announced devolution white paper which could see a once in a generation change to the very structure of local government in England.

As W. Edwards Deming stated:

“Without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.”

Information and data provides intelligence on how effective any service change is, to establish a starting point and to identify future targets. Performance measurement is also a mechanism to learn how other local authorities are meeting the challenges and the impact that their service delivery model and any operational changes is making to outcomes in terms of cost, quality, productivity and customer satisfaction levels.

APSE performance networks can assist local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on carbon reduction/ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local council frontline services and for peers in other local councils
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both councillors and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

APSE would like to thank all the authorities that participated in the working groups and the data collection exercise for 2023-24.

APSE has a range of services that are designed to support member authorities.

[APSE Online Training](#) – APSE Training is designed to help local authorities invest in their greatest asset – their staff. APSE Training can assist staff with developing new skills to help maximise opportunities.

[APSE Performance Networks](#) – The Performance Network teams have developed a variety of ways to support councils with data collection. APSE strongly recommends ensuring the collection of data is ongoing, so changes in service performance are explicable during budget setting processes or when revising business plans.

[APSE Solutions](#) – Providing in-house consultancy and interim management services, available to both APSE members and non-member authorities and organisations.

[APSE Energy](#) – Working on greening frontline council services, including renewable energy and energy efficiency issues.

[APSE membership resources](#) remain committed to supporting our member local councils with the ongoing briefings service, network queries, access to Principal Advisor advice and online meetings, network meetings and sector events. There are opportunities for councils to share best practice and learning through virtual networks and thematic sessions. Details of these sessions are communicated to APSE members as the sessions are arranged.

For further information on the services that are available, please contact:

Debbie Johns , Head of APSE Performance Networks

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