How are local government services performing?

Table of Contents

Foreword

This publication is based on the findings 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. Core highways
6. Environmental health
7. Market operations
8. Parks, open spaces and horticultural services
9. Refuse collection
10. Roads, highways and winter maintenance
11. Sports and leisure facility management
12. Street cleansing
13. Street lighting
14. Trading standards
15. 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 met all criteria in an assessment of consistency, reliability and comparability of data required by the Audit Commission. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport reported "APSE methodology meets all the Audit Commission criteria" in relation to using the data for the national leisure CPA indicators. The model has

also been described as "well established and trusted to deliver information" by an independent validation by the Institute of local government studies (Inlogov) at the University of Birmingham. Performance networks' data undergoes a rigorous error checking and three stage validation procedure to ensure that its data is robust.

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:

Debbie Johns
Head of APSE Performance Networks
E: djohns@apse.org.uk

Introduction

This publication includes the key findings for the last data collection year (2022-23 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 is 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. For more information on APSE performance networks, email: performance.networks@apse.org.uk

1 Expenditure

Building cleaning and catering costs

		Since 19-20	Since 21-22
Building cleaning	Cost per scheduled input hour	+19%	+6%
Catering	Total cost per lunchtime meal - primary schools	+12%	+6%

The data shows increasing costs as a result of inflation affecting services. There has been a 6% increase in costs for building cleaning and catering just in the past year.

Building maintenance costs

	Operational employee costs	Expenditure on sub-contractors and specialist contractors	Expenditure on vehicles	Total annual expenditure
22-23	£5,285,251	£5,458,016	£756,579	£16,759,342
21-22	£4,692,196	£4,617,861	£720,618	£14,232,681
19-20	£4,408,901	£3,841,423	£657,331	£13,226,224

For building maintenance, costs have risen consistently since 19-20. Expenditure on subcontractors has now overtaken expenditure on operational employees.

Benchmarking unit costs – carriageway planned maintenance scheme

22-23	21-22	Comparison between the years
14.3 million square metres treated for planned maintenance schemes	18 million square metres treated for planned maintenance schemes	21% reduction in square metres of carriageway planned maintenance schemes
Cost of £284 million	Cost of £288 million	1% reduction in costs (budget)
£19.85 per square metre	£16.00 per square metre	

The table above shows planned maintenance for carriageways, for last year and this year for

a group of authorities who submitted data for both years. For a similar budget in both years there is a 21% reduction in maintenance schemes.

This will be because construction inflation increased by approximately 13% and capital budgets didn't increase last year.
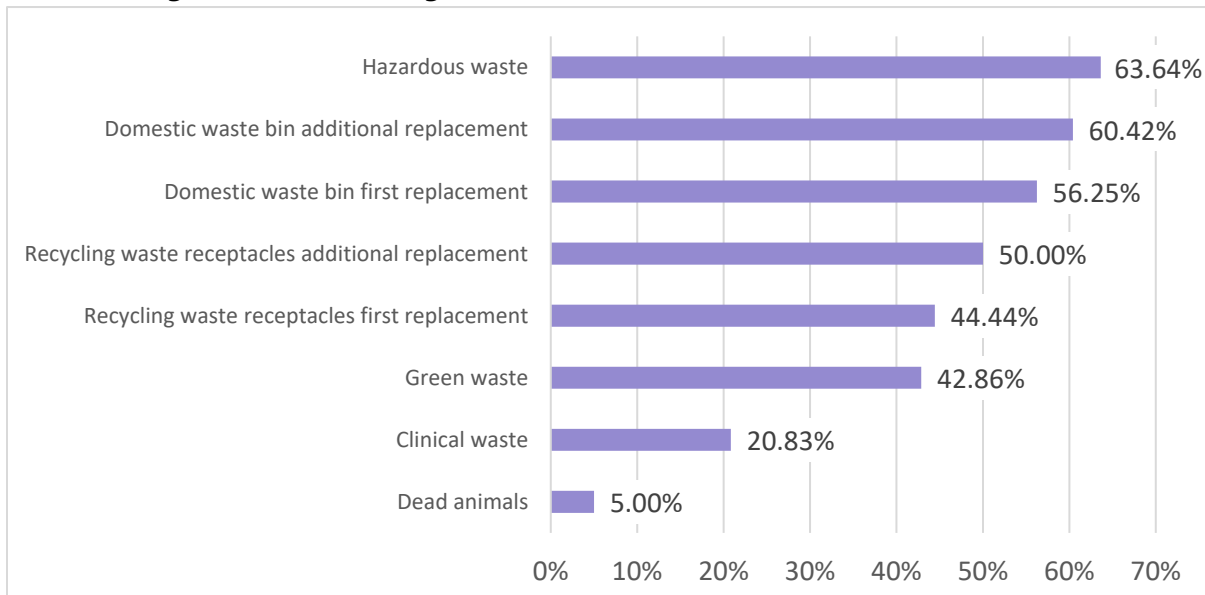
2 Income

Since 21-22, discountable income for:

- Parks increased by 7%

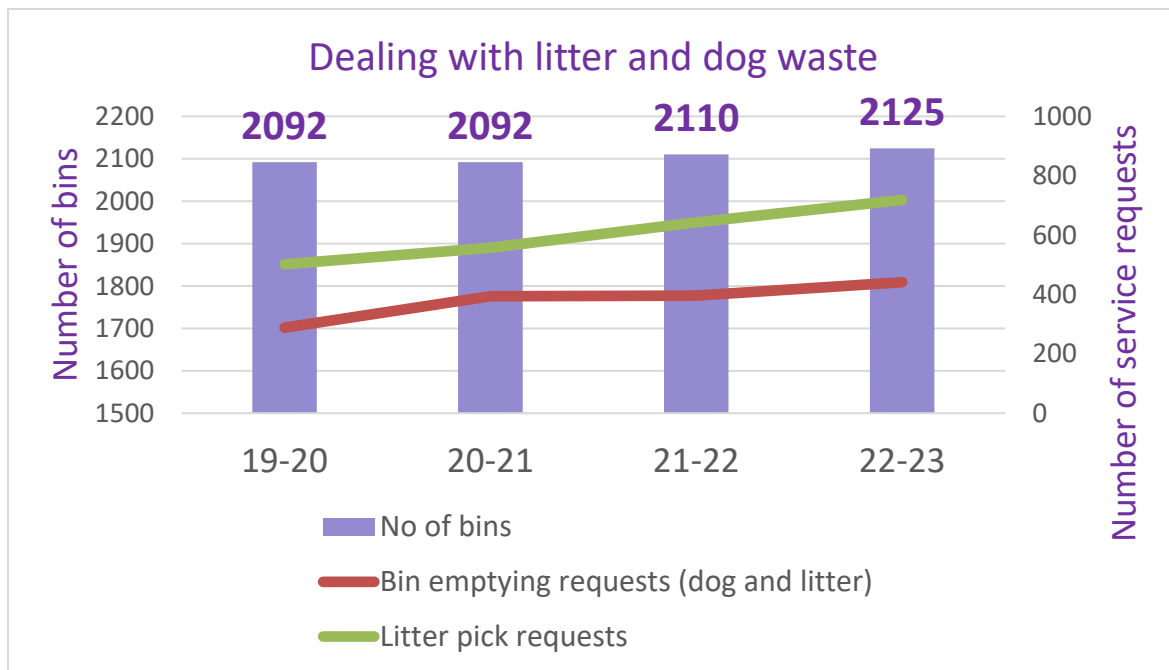- Refuse collection increased by 2%

Discountable income is income received by the council from external sources, which offsets the costs to the council tax payer. This has shown an increase for parks and refuse collection in the past year, as councils seek to generate income to offset reducing budgets.

% who charge for the following services (refuse collection)

| Service	%
Hazardous waste	63.64%
Domestic waste bin additional replacement	60.42%
Domestic waste bin first replacement	56.25%
Recycling waste receptacles additional replacement	50.00%
Recycling waste receptacles first replacement	44.44%
Green waste	42.86%
Clinical waste	20.83%
Dead animals	5.00%

Over 40% of councils now charge for replacement bins and green waste. Charges for collections may be affected by the Simpler Recycling plans for England which the government announced in October 2023, although it is proposed that Local authorities will continue to be able to charge for garden waste collections.

3   Street cleansing continuing demands on service

Dealing with litter and dog waste

Number of bins

Year	2092	2092	2110	2125

Number of service requests

- No of bins
- Bin emptying requests (dog and litter)
- Litter pick requests

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.

Fly-tipping incidents

Years: 19-20, 20-21, 21-22, 22-23
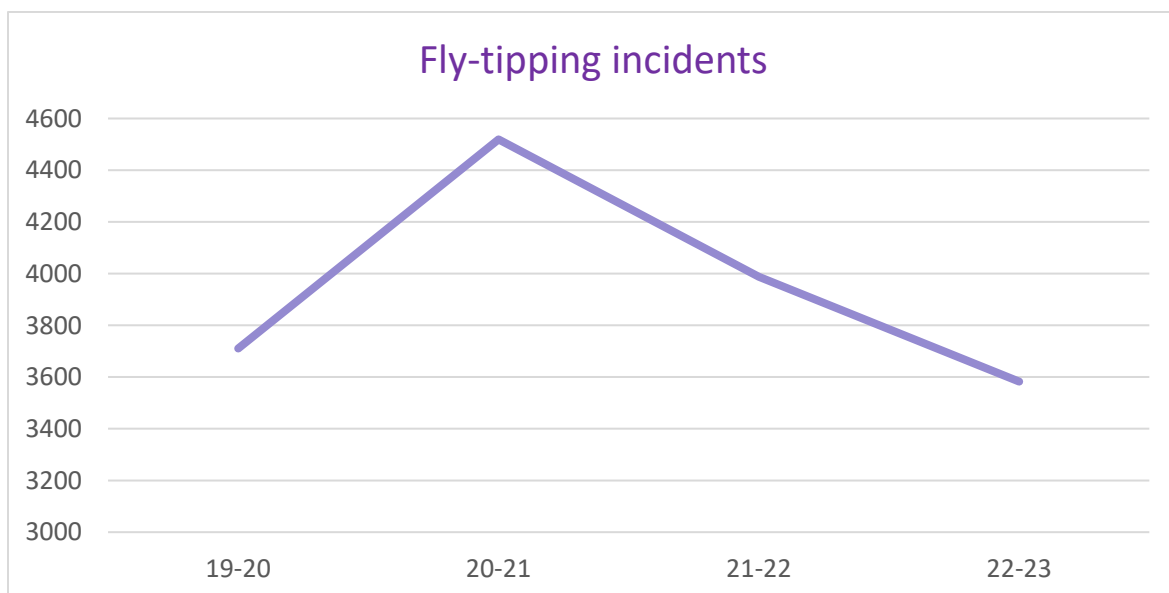
Flytipping has been reducing since the high during the Covid period which was associated with the closure of civic amenity sites. The increase of the upper limit for on-the-spot fines and ringfencing the proceeds for clean-up and enforcement operations will have an effect on

these trends in future years.

4 Burials and cremations by month
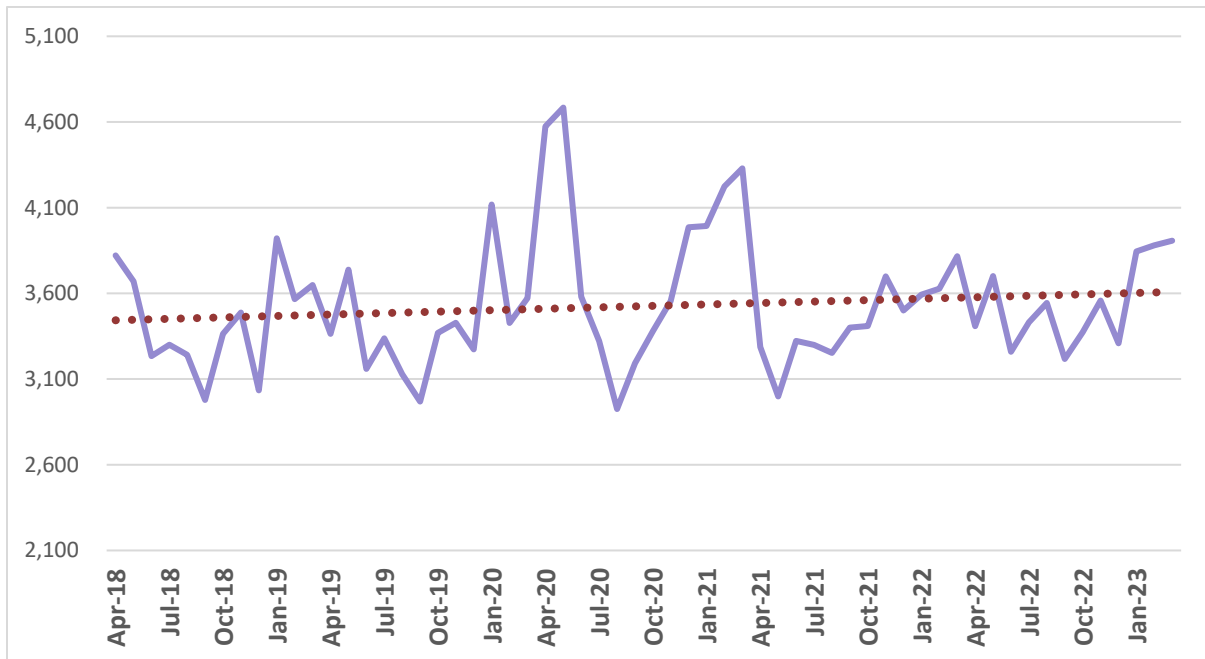
Despite peaks in burials and cremations during Covid, which can be seen particularly in April/May 2020 and Feb/March 2021, current levels now show a similar trend to pre-covid levels although demand on the service continues.

5 The changing face of leisure

|	19-20	21-22	22-23
Expenditure increase			21.75%
Energy cost rises	£127,202	£142,186	£291,843
Usage recovery	349,390	240,425	313,053
Income recovery	£994,973	£712,145	£982,484
Rationalised opening hours	4,652	4,570	4,456
Staffing hours	37,287	28,975	33,528
Change in energy consumption			-4.75%

This demonstrates the financial challenges in leisure and a significant factor is energy cost has increased by 129% since 2019-20. However, the good news is we are seeing recovery in usage and income close to pre-pandemic levels.

One way that councils are combating the expenditure issues has been to rationalise opening hours and staffing hours. The reduced opening hours along with other energy efficiency measures have contributed to reducing energy consumption by 4.75%.

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

|	
% swimming which is tuition	45.21%
Fitness focused activity	38.28%
% fitness activity under health referral and health inequality schemes (fitness focussed activity)	1.63%
% fitness activity under health referral and health inequality schemes (total activity)	0.44%
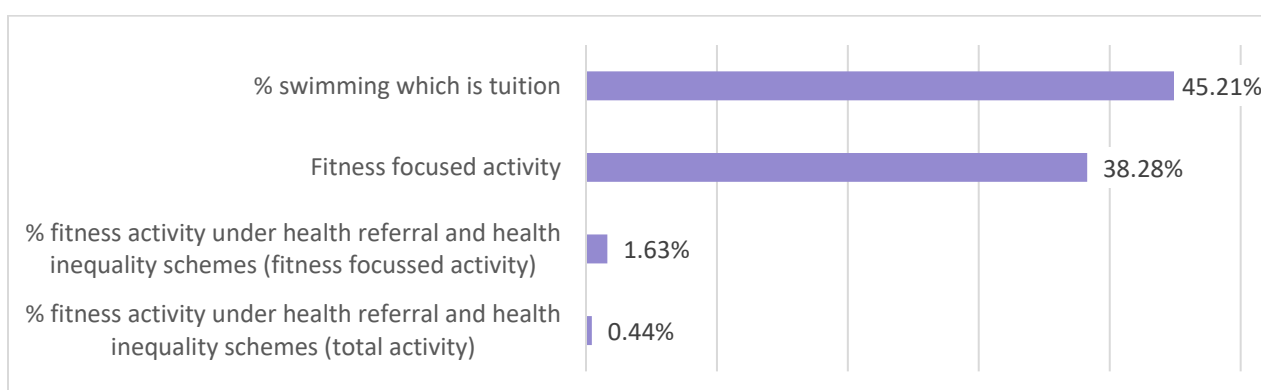
6 Missed bin collections
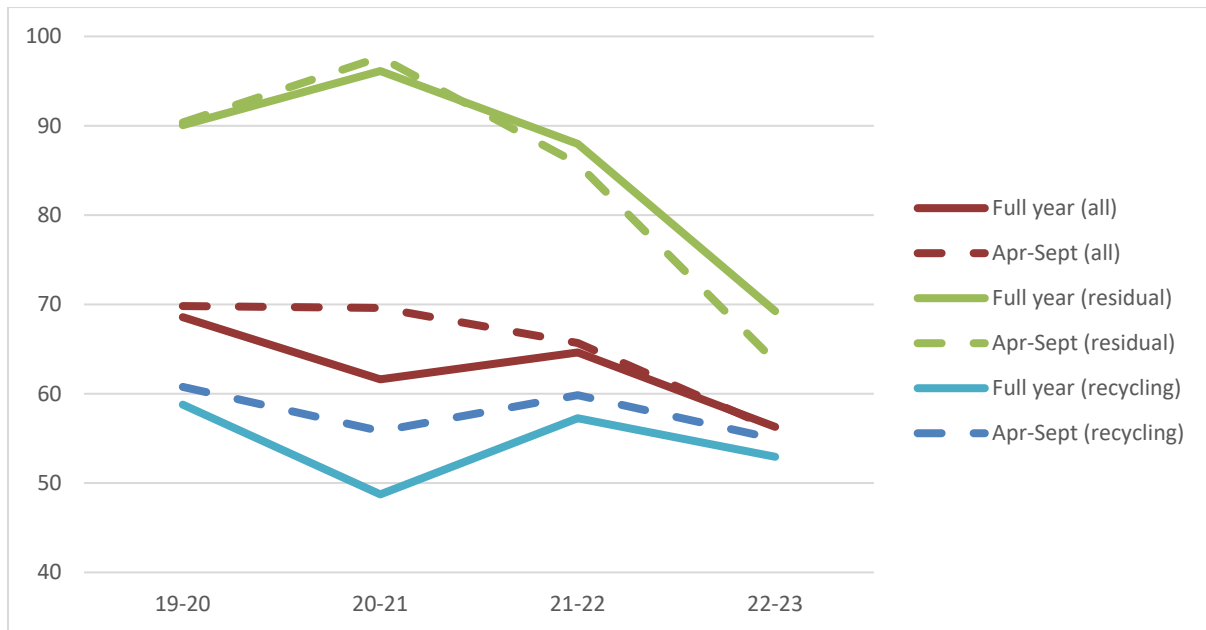
Missed bin collection numbers have improved across the board and especially for residual collections over the past couple of years. The April to September figures show the missed collections without the disruptions caused by the winter months.

7 Catering primary school meals served

Primary school meals served
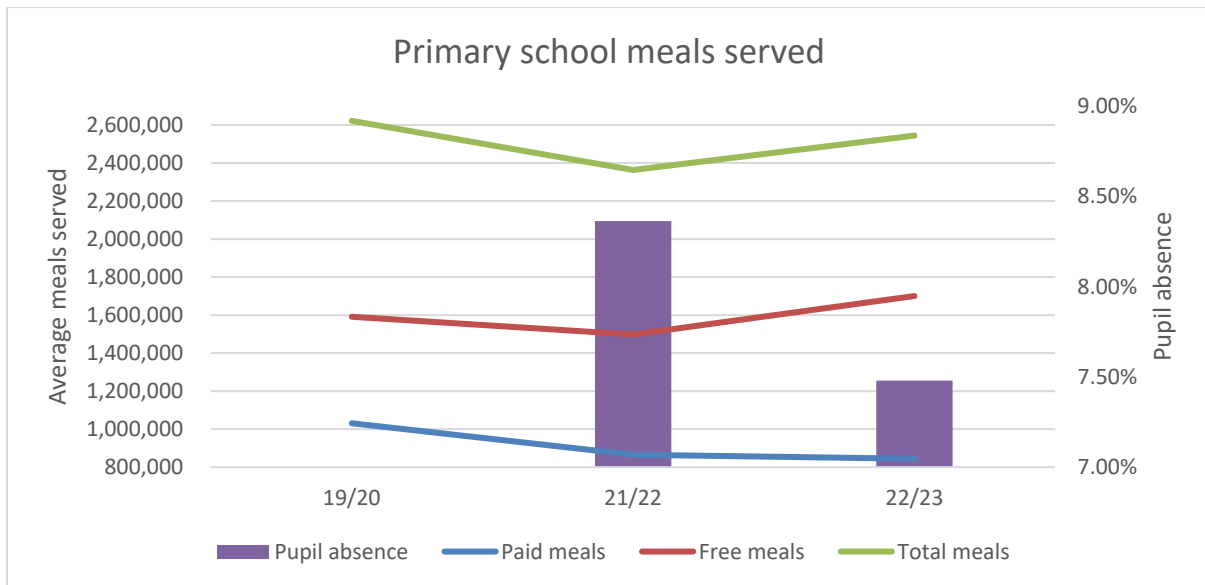
The above chart shows pre-pandemic and post-pandemic paid and free meal numbers served for primary schools. Total numbers is shown as the green line at the top and the covid year 20-21 has been removed.

In 21-22 there was a fall in free and paid meals which was due to covid related closures and high levels of pupil absence (shown in the purple bars).

Since then, we have seen an increase in 22-23 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.

Free meals served are now well above pre-pandemic levels, but total meals served aren't and this will be due to high levels of absence still being well above pre-pandemic levels.

8 Roads, highways and street lighting

Carriageways	19-20	22-23
% of emergency (cat 1) defects made safe within response times	89.63%	89.63%
% of safety inspections completed on time	94.34%	91.41%
% of planned KM of safety inspections completed	98.56%	98.78%

Footways	19-20	22-23
% of emergency (cat 1) defects made safe within response times	91.21%	90.46%
% of safety inspections completed on time	86.63%	94.93%
% of planned KM of safety inspections completed	98.45%	99.13%

| Overall	19-20	22-23
% of customer enquiries/requests for service closed off within Council's own identified response times	80.31%	84.25%

Street lighting	19-20	22-23
Number of calls/contacts from the public to report street lighting faults	3388	1346

Last year, the data showed large-scale improvements in roads, highways and street lighting compared to pre-pandemic levels. This improvement has continued for a number of measures highlighted in green above.

The reduction in the number of reported street lighting faults from the public may be due to new technology and long-lasting LEDs.

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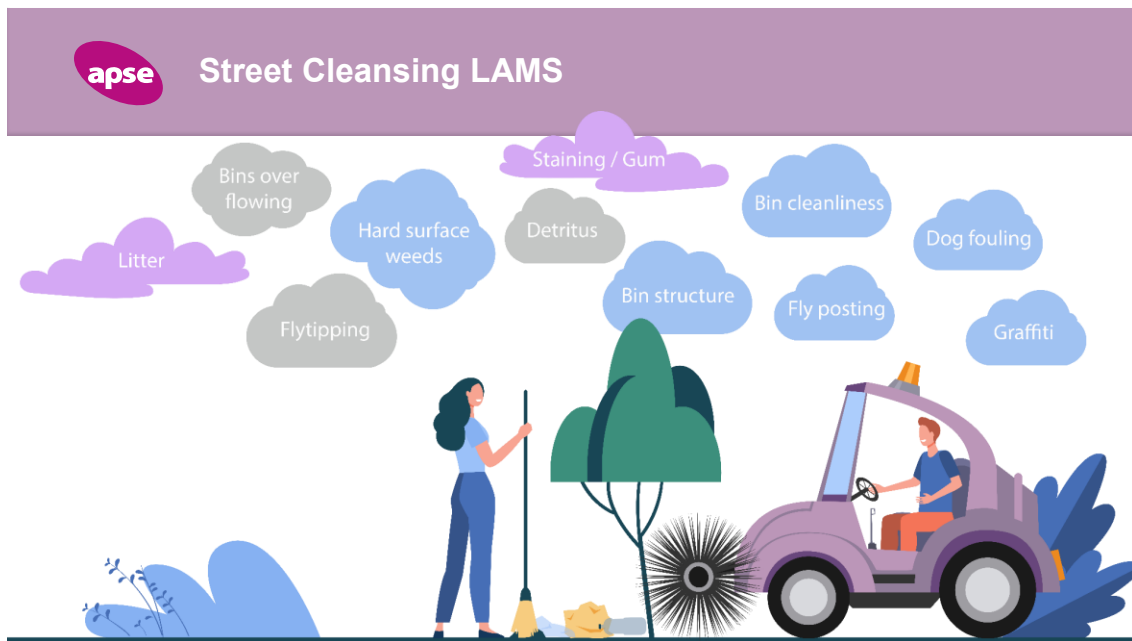
The [LAMS (Land Audit Management System)](#) is a quality inspection system to monitor grounds maintenance and/or street cleansing. APSE's performance networks members use LAMS to measure the quality of their own localities, and at the same time benchmark these against other local authorities. You can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

Grounds Maintenance LAMS

Bin structure · Bin cleanliness · Flytipping · Hard surface weeds · Dog fouling · Shrub bed maintenance · Flower bed maintenance · Bins overflowing · Litter · Grass cutting · Fly posting · Grounds maintenance

The above infographic shows the results from the LAMS inspections carried out by local authorities throughout the UK for grounds maintenance.   Litter levels have improved for both street cleansing and grounds maintenance LAMS inspections and bins overflowing have deteriorated for both.

Worryingly, grounds maintenance, shrub bed maintenance, grass cutting and hard surface weeds have declined which may be due to financial constraints and the reduced use of glyphosate.

10 Customer satisfaction
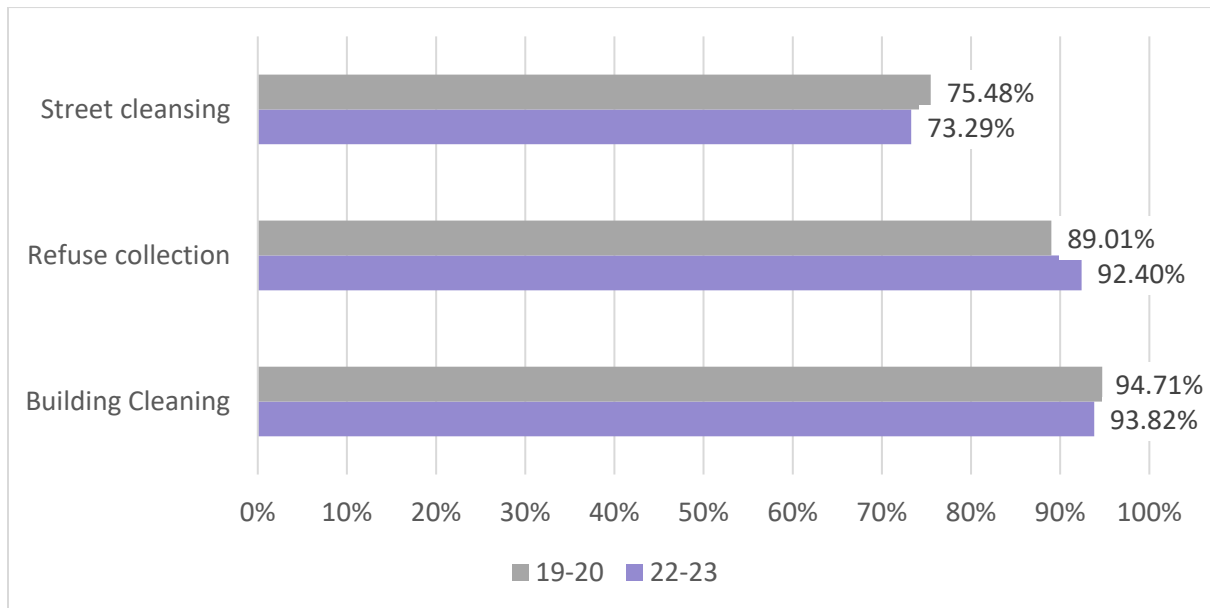
The above chart shows that satisfaction overall with refuse collection continues to improve but street cleansing and building cleaning have shown slight reductions this year.

11 Front line staff numbers

Front line staff numbers since 21-22
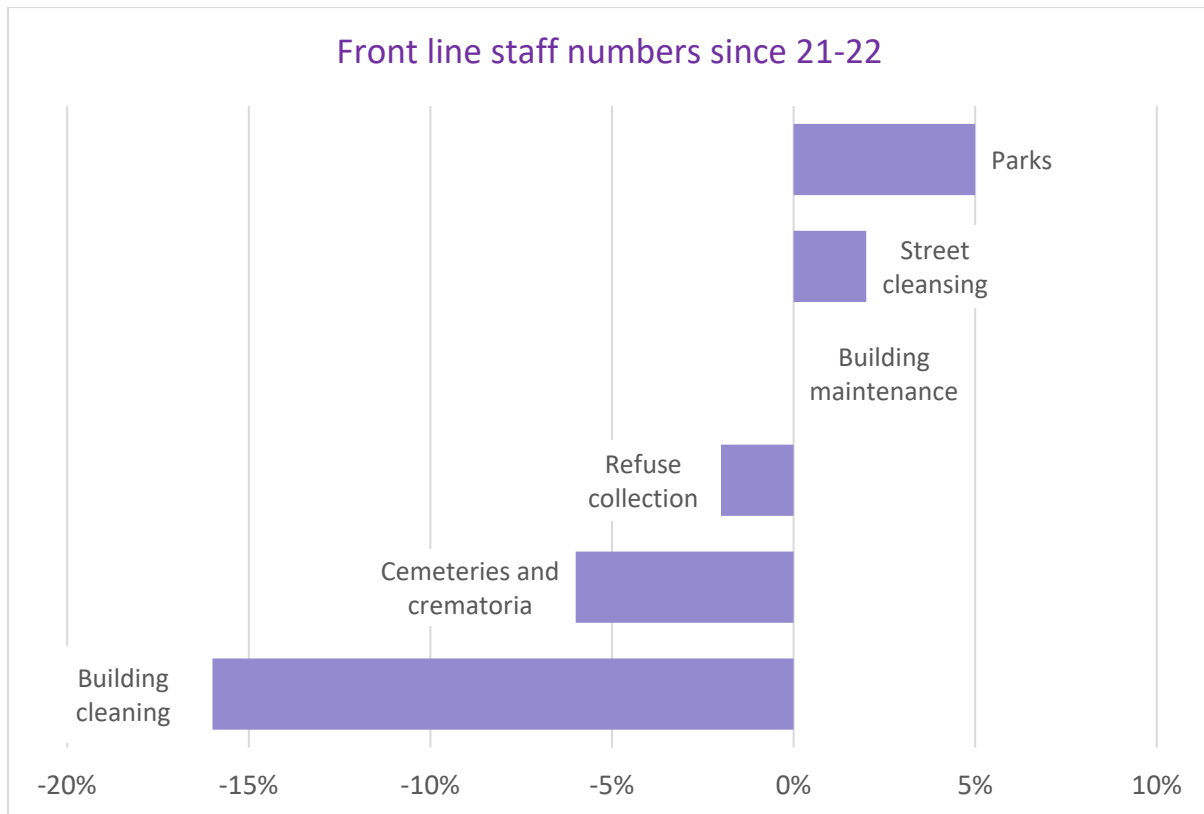
Some of the services which showed previous increases in the number of staff due to the pandemic have since shown reductions. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff will have an impact on these numbers.

There has been an increase in staff numbers of streetscene services which is obviously welcomed and APSE have been doing a lot of work on the value of parks to have the service increasingly recognised.

12 Recruitment and retention

	% vacancies	% filled	% stayed beyond probation, induction and training	% stayed at least 12 weeks
Parks	9%	*78%		
Refuse drivers	11%	75%		
Refuse loaders	14%	80%		
Street cleansing	12%	77%	99%	
Cemetery and crematorium	4%	81%	94%	
Leisure recreation assistants	34%	91%	92%	
Building cleaning	9%	56%		76%
Building maintenance	18%	67%		

*from those advertised

We can see recruitment and retention problems across the front line local government services. The highest levels of vacancies for 2022-23 are with leisure recreation assistants and building maintenance services. We can also evidence the difficulties retaining staff with building cleaning especially, with only 76% of new staff staying at least 12 weeks.
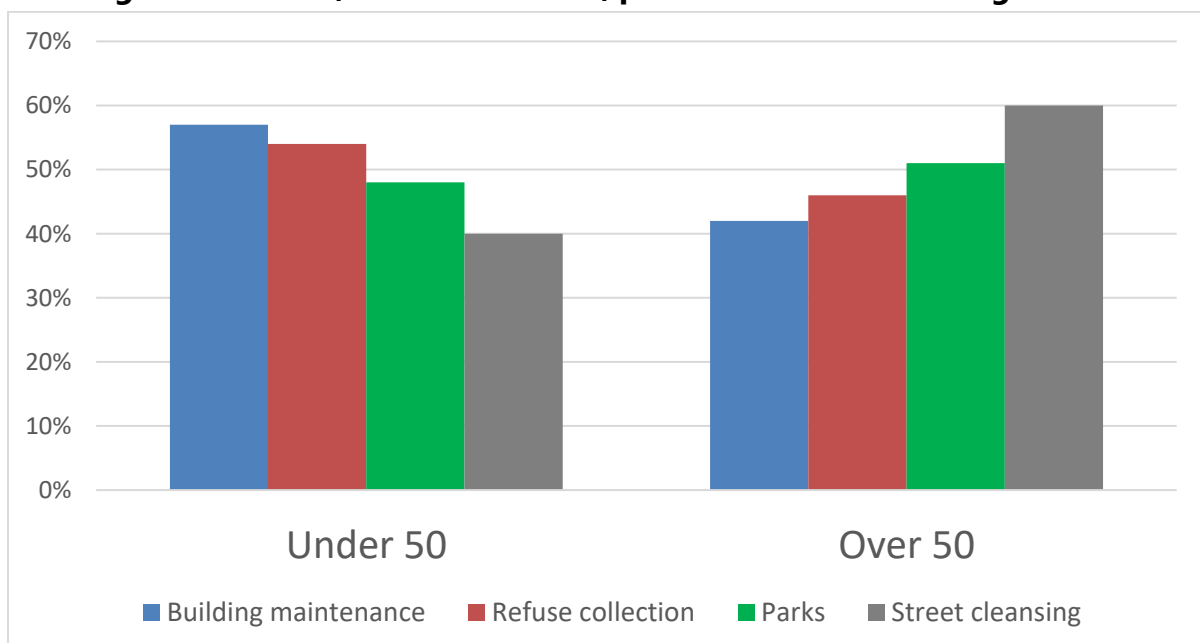
13 Age profile of the workforce

Catering and cleaning services
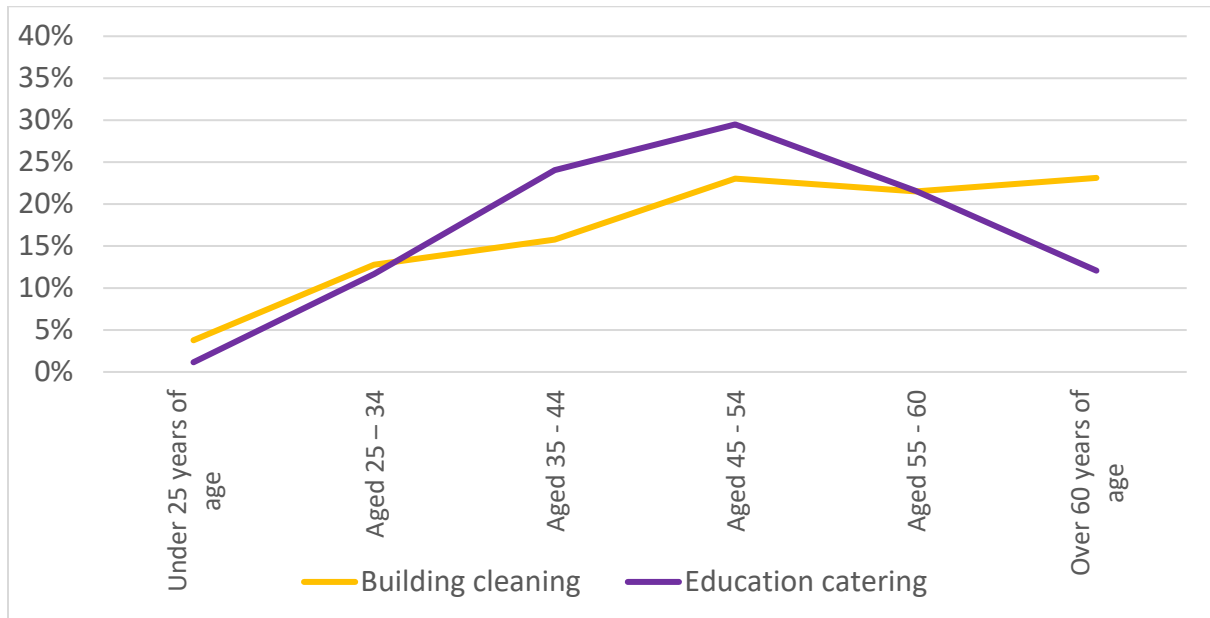
This year APSE performance networks has collected a range of data on the age profile of the workforce. This shows a higher number of staff for cleaning and catering between 45 and 54 than the other categories and a relatively high number above 60 for building cleaning.

Building maintenance, refuse collection, parks 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 4 services. It clearly shows the heavier reliance on a younger workforce in building maintenance and refuse collection and potentially staff migrating internally to parks and street cleaning with age.

For parks 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.

14 Progress against carbon reduction targets
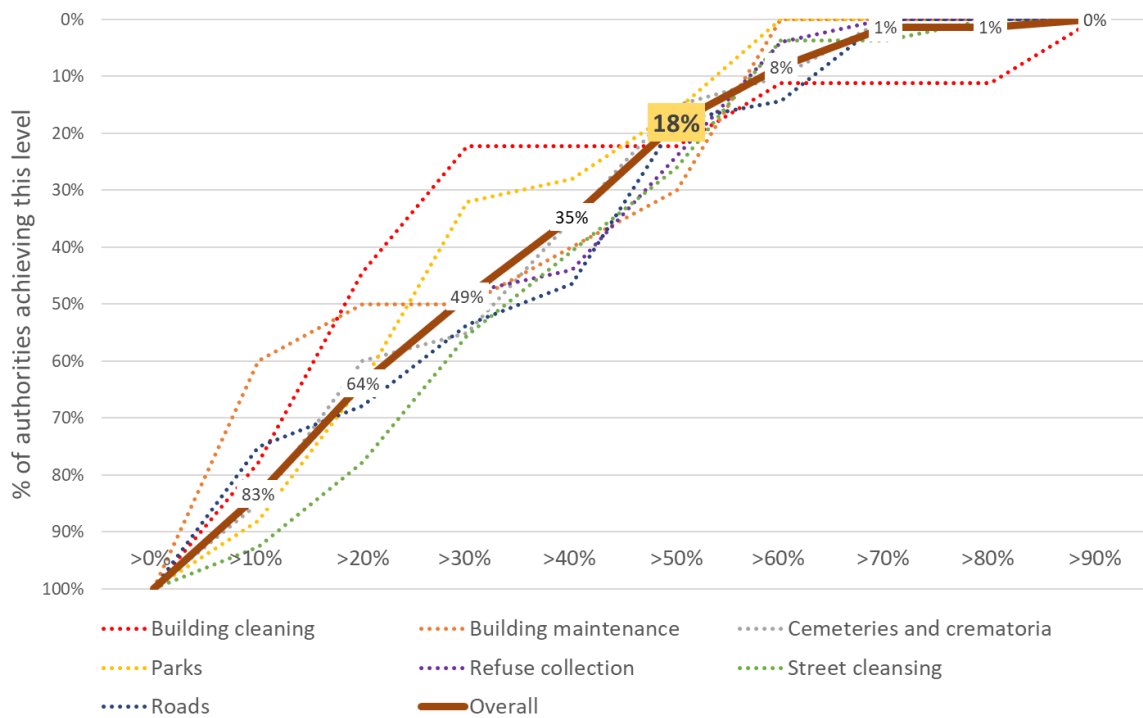
This chart gathers the opinions of participating local authorities on how far they consider that their authority has progressed against their targets from each of the service areas (as dashed lines). The solid brown line shows an overall accumulation.

18% of respondents considered the authority to have achieved over half of its carbon reduction targets.

15 Progress against ecological targets
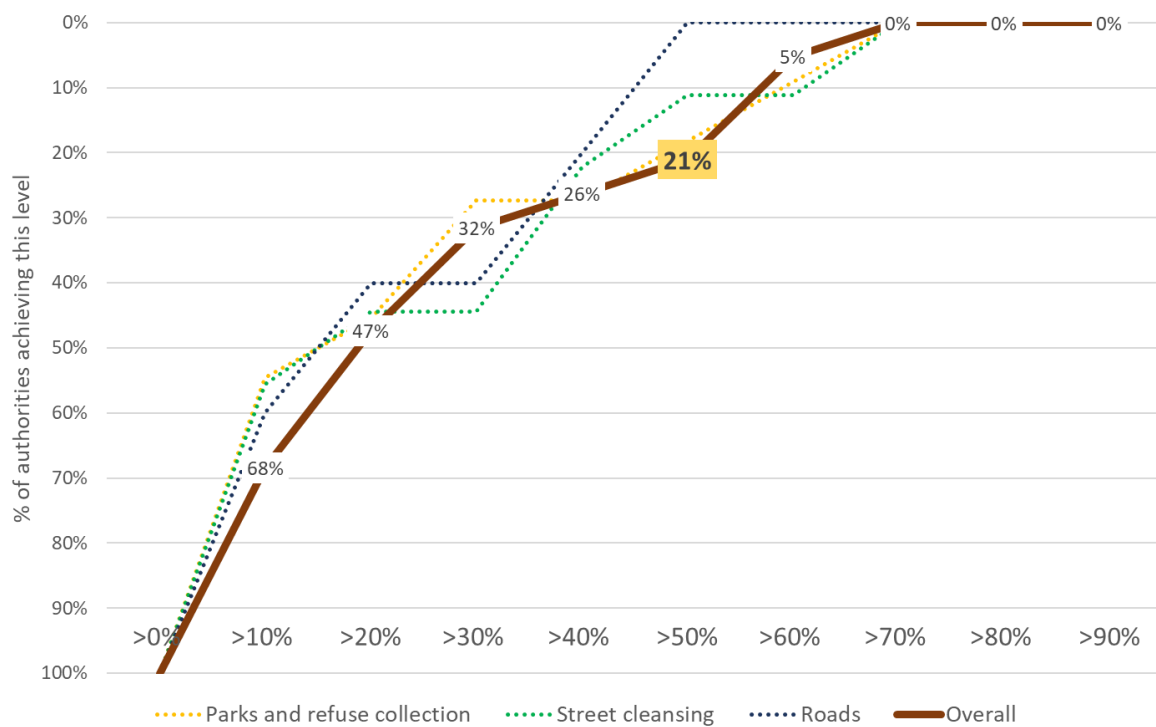
Likewise, 21% of respondents considered the authority to have achieved over half of its ecological targets.

16 Environmental sustainability

Building cleaning

13% Utilising equipment with reduced energy consumption

Building maintenance

53% Have target for moving to Electric Vehicles or other non-petrol/diesel
8% Vehicles are currently Electric Vehicles or other non-petrol/diesel

Catering services

28% Provisions purchased / sourced from local suppliers
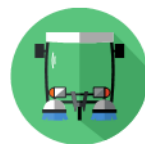
Parks, open spaces and horticultural services

71% Reduced the amount of glyphosate used from 5 years ago
80% Composting material used which is non-peat based

Cemetery and crematorium services

38% Use any form of renewable energy sources
100% Recycle metal body parts left after cremation
69% Re-use energy from cremation process

Street cleansing

12% Have 12 tonne sweepers which are neither petrol or diesel

10% Total fleet make up those vehicles

Street lighting

Since 19-20:
- Percentage of street lamps which had a registered dimming regime – Increased by 15%
- Percentage of street lamps that are LED – Increased by 18%, now at an average of 87%

Since last year:
- Total annual consumption for all light sources – Reduced by 9%

Sports and leisure

69% Cover any/all swimming pools with pool covers at night
37% Use 'heat recycling pump' technology to recycle heat/energy from pool halls

Refuse collection

3% Refuse fleet on alternative fuels
20% Have at least 1 electric vehicle

Roads, highways and winter maintenance

£17,236 Average cost of road drainage scheme
22% Use thermal mapping data

The above shows some of the environmental sustainability measures currently collected by APSE performance networks in the service areas. It shows good progress being made as well as potential areas to improve on in the future.

We are introducing a scored environmental sustainability PI in most service areas over the next couple of years for us to further track progress and highlight areas of good practice.

APSE are also currently piloting a corporate Climate Change benchmarking module which will be rolled out in 2024.

17 Conclusion

This last year's data (2022/23) 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 and the cost-of-living crisis will still continue to present an increasing challenge for local authorities to be able to continue 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 that the global threats of climate change and energy shortages continue to grow.
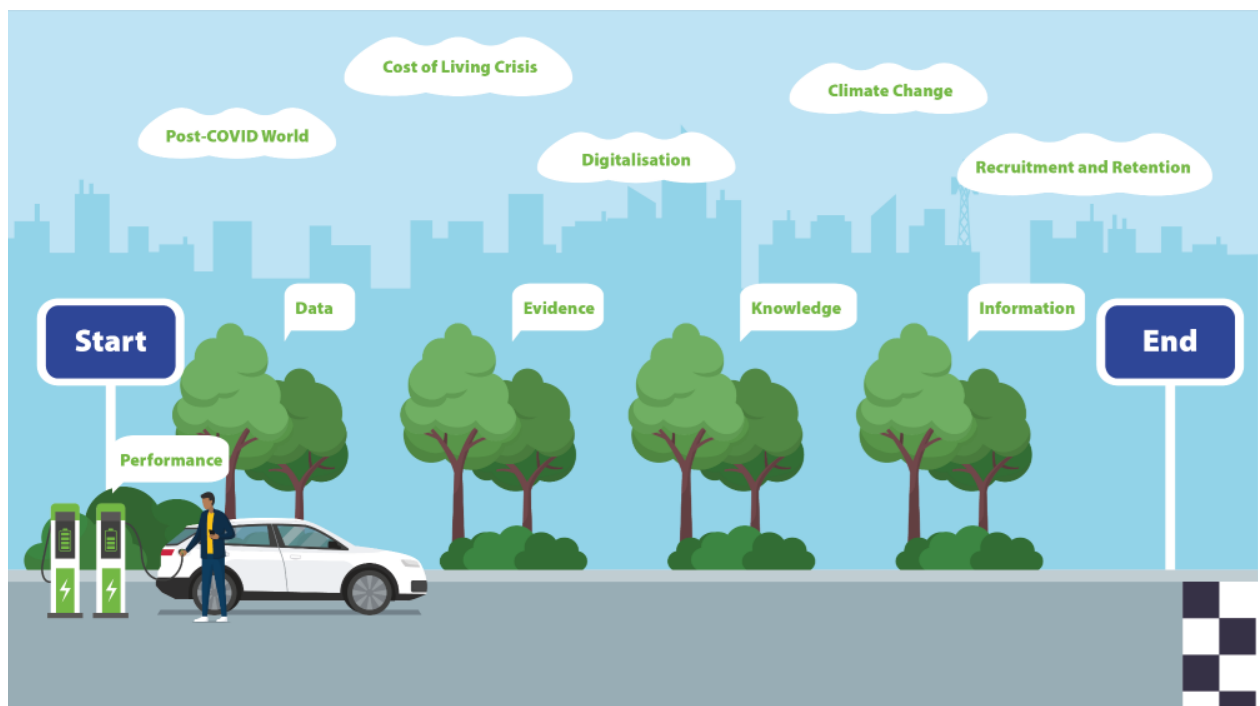
To get from start to finish and deliver services effectively, councils need to know where they are, where they are going and how to get there – they need evidence and decisions need to be grounded in good data not opinions. Data is crucial in our ever-changing world for first class information on how to deliver first class public services.

As W. Edwards Deming stated:
"Without data, you're just another person with an opinion."

Despite measuring and improving performance being critical to managing services effectively and for accountability purposes, the need for data has never been greater in order to know your own service and to be able to identify achievable cost savings and innovative approaches to service delivery. Otherwise, how do you know you are delivering what you want to deliver?

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 changes is making in terms of cost, quality, productivity and customer satisfaction levels.

APSE performance networks can assist local authorities 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 authorities and for others.
- 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 elected members 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 2022-23.

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 councils' services, including energy management 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, advisory groups and events. There are opportunities for councils to share

best practice and learning through virtual advisory groups 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
E: djohns@apse.org.uk