

CALL FOR ENTRIES

apse

service awards 2026



APSE is pleased to announce our Annual Service Awards 2026!

These prestigious awards are for all local authorities and their public sector partners across the United Kingdom recognising your frontline service teams as well as your special initiatives.

The categories for the 2026 APSE Service Awards are:

Special Initiatives

- Best Workforce initiative
- Best Building and Housing initiative (including homelessness or house building etc)
- Best Efficiency and Transformation initiative
- Best Health and Well-being initiative (including Social Care)
- Best Public / Private Partnership Working initiative
- Best Collaborative Working initiative (with other public sector or third sector)
- Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship initiative (including social value and income generation)
- Best Community and Neighbourhood initiative (this could include special projects such as warm hubs, support for vulnerable families and friends of parks groups etc)
- Best Innovation or Demand Management initiative
- Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation initiative

Frontline Service Teams of the Year

- Soft Facilities Management (including catering, building cleaning and janitorial services)
- Technical services (including fleet, transport vehicle maintenance, roads, highways, winter maintenance and street lighting)
- Recycling, Waste and Circular Economy
- Streetscene (including fly tipping, waste crime and litter reduction)
- Parks and Green Spaces
- Cemetery and Crematorium service
- Sports, Leisure and Cultural service

And the big one:

The APSE Overall Council of the Year 2026

This spectacular award is selected from local authorities who have entered submissions in 4 or more different categories.

How to Enter

Unlike many local government awards, the APSE service awards are UK wide so they are open to APSE member and non-member councils from across the UK. It is also FREE to enter.

Step one

Decide which categories you would like to enter into. Remember you can even send in more than one submission in a category and enter multiple categories but... please remember even if the topic/ project is the same, each submission file needs to be unique, tailored to the category in question and ticked appropriately.

Step two

Tell us! Please register your interest. You can do that online at www.apse.org.uk or you can use the form enclosed in this booklet and email it to serviceawards@apse.org.uk. Please tell us by 27 March 2026.

Step Three

Once you are registered we will send you the awards template. You can then start work on your submission/s. Use our hints and tips to enhance your chances of success. Once you are done send your completed submissions to us by 17 April 2026 to serviceawards@apse.org.uk. Confirmation will be sent out by email after all submissions have been processed no later than 29 May 2026.

Step Four

Put the kettle on and relax. The hard bit is done. It is now over to our judging panel of local government experts. We aim to let successful applicants know if they have been shortlisted as finalists by 31 July 2026.

Step Five

Our shortlisted finalists will be invited to the Service Awards Charity Dinner. This provides a spectacular end to the APSE Annual Seminar, which will take place in the North of England in September 2026.

Any questions?

Please use our Q&A sheet and if that doesn't answer your question feel free to contact our APSE Service Awards team on 01698 459 051 or email serviceawards@apse.org.uk.

Frequently asked questions

Can I enter more than one category or enter the same submission for different categories?

We positively encourage you to look at submitting an entry for each of the categories or as many as you would like; that way you stand a better chance of being shortlisted for the APSE Overall Council of The Year.

If you feel the topic/ initiative covers more than one category then feel free to enter more than one. Please note however, we are unable to accept the same submission file for different categories. Even if it is the same topic or project; each submission needs to be unique, tailored to that particular category and ticked appropriately. So please do not submit the exact same submission file for different categories.

If you're doing something good for the planet, don't forget to tell us

To support APSE's work with our member local councils on climate change and ecological initiatives, an updated scoring guide will ask judges to consider your submissions contribution to climate change, decarbonisation or ecological outcomes. So if you are doing something good for the planet in your service please don't forget to tell us!

What will the application form look like? How long should it be?

Your application form for your entries will be in an electronic format that you will receive by email. It is an easy to follow template and includes the following sections for you to complete:

- 80 word summary of the submission.
- A one page Executive Summary.
- Background to the initiative/service development (aims and objectives).
- Evidence of improvements achieved and challenges overcome.
- How the initiative links to the wider council objectives.
- Your targets for the future and the framework within which they operate.

The maximum words allowed is 2000 (this excludes the 332 words contained within this actual template document).

Can I include pictures or staff/ team biographies?

Yes! But please make sure your overall submission file size does not exceed 2MB. As pictures tend to make your file quite large, please make sure your file is reduced in size so we can receive your entry. PDF are often useful to reduce your file size using Adobe features and remember even if you add in lots of information you are still limited to 2000 words - so make every word count!

Can I attached separate files?

Unfortunately, any appendices and additional information for the submission must be contained within the one 2MB PDF document.

What will the judges be looking for?

Remember you are writing your entry for a judge who has no idea what your service team does or what your initiative is about so remember to tell us some essentials. We would suggest:

- A description of the initiative (highlighting innovation, imagination and ambition).
- Why it was set up? Can you evidence a good clear strategy for the project?
- How does it work?
- Evidence of good management and clear communication to stakeholders.
- Good leadership; how did you overcome challenges and creatively tackle problems?
- Can you evidence what you have achieved or set out to do?
- Shows value (value to customers, value for money or value to service).
- Benefits to customers/citizens.
- Highlight any contributions your entry makes to climate change, decarbonisation or ecological outcomes

And remember for Best Frontline Service Team submissions also include:

- How you deliver the best service possible.
- How you deliver in the spirit of continuous improvement.
- How you work as a team with other services and partners.

Any other tips?

Remember the basics! Make sure your submission

- Is clear, easy to read and well laid out.
- Focuses on content (pictures etc. can be useful but content is paramount).
- We don't accept separate appendices.
- Includes an Executive Summary.
- Tells us about any other accreditations or awards such as IIP, or ISO or benchmarking excellence.

What if we are successful in becoming a finalist?

If you are successful you will be notified by email for each category in which you are successful. We will aim to do this by 31 July 2026. The award winners will be announced from our finalists at the rise of the APSE Annual Seminar 2026 which will take place in the North of England in September 2026.



Registration of interest

First name: _____

Surname: _____

Position: _____

Authority: _____

Contact address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address (essential): _____

I am interested in the following categories. Please send me the entry forms!

Special Initiatives

- ☐ 1. Best Workforce initiative
- ☐ 2. Best Building and Housing initiative (including homelessness or housing building etc)
- ☐ 3. Best Efficiency and Transformation initiative
- ☐ 4. Best Health and Well-being initiative (inc. Social Care)
- ☐ 5. Best Public / Private Partnership Working initiative
- ☐ 6. Best Collaborative Working initiative (with other public sector or third sector)
- ☐ 7. Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship initiative (including social value and income generation)
- ☐ 8. Best Community and Neighbourhood initiative (this could include special projects such as warm hubs, support for vulnerable families and friends of parks groups etc)

- ☐ 9. Best Innovation or Demand Management initiative
- ☐ 10. Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation initiative

Service Teams of the Year

- ☐ 11a. Soft Facilities Management (including Catering, Facilities Management and Building Cleaning)
- ☐ 11b. Technical services (including Transport and Fleet Maintenance as well as Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting)
- ☐ 11c. Recycling, Waste and Circular Economy
- ☐ 11d. Streetscene (including Fly Tipping, Waste Crime and Litter Reduction)
- ☐ 11e. Parks and Green Spaces
- ☐ 11f. Cemetery & Crematorium service
- ☐ 11g. Sports, Leisure & Cultural service

**All notifications of entry should be returned no later than
27 March 2026 to serviceawards@apse.org.uk**