

**Use of resources assessment**

**Value for Money Profile report**

**All chapters**

**2007/08**

**Luton Borough Council**

(Revised April 2008)

Report generated on 22 Jul 2008 at 13:20:31

## Introduction

Councils spend more than £100 billion pounds per year. They are responsible for ensuring that they have put in place the proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use. The Audit Commission is tasked with providing assurance that this is being achieved. To do this the Audit Commission needs to examine councils' performance and financial management arrangements.

The Audit Commission currently provides this assurance through a combination of its audit work and the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA). The CPA makes use of an annual judgement made by auditors on how efficiently councils are using their resources, known as the use of resources assessment.

There is a wealth of data available from which auditors are expected to draw their conclusions. This standard report has been produced to assist councils to review their own performance as well as to support auditors by acting as an initial filter to help identify the key issues facing a particular council.

This data contained in this report are relevant to the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for use of resources assessments. Specifically KLOE 5.1 How well does the council currently achieve good value for money? Within KLOE 5.1, the data in this report is particularly relevant to two areas:

- i) How well do the council's overall and service costs compare with others?
- ii) To what extent are costs commensurate with service delivery, performance and outcomes achieved?

This data should be used as the starting point for addressing these questions in any updates of a council's value for money assessment. Guidance and further details are contained in 'use of resources guidance for councils' which can be found on the Audit Commission's web-site at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgovernment/useofresources](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgovernment/useofresources).

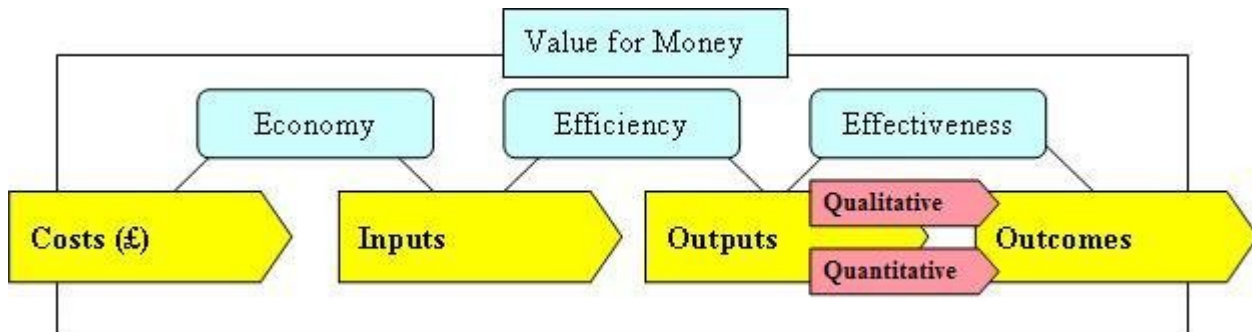
This report also contains annexes setting out some high level context information on council tax levels and overall spending and performance.

For further details or queries about the VFM profiles contact the CPA enquiry line on 0845 052 2616 or register a query by using the web form available from [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/contactus-form.asp](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/contactus-form.asp).

## Overview

### Value for money defined

Value for money has long been defined as the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The diagram below encapsulates the Commission's understanding of value for money (for further explanation see 'Use of resources guidance for councils').



### About the Profile Tool

The Value for Money Profile tool is designed to support judgements about councils' effective use of resources as part of the use of resources assessment.

Most of the information contained in the VFM profile refers to Costs (£), that is to say the money that councils plan to spend on their services each year. To make it easier to put a council's spending in context, information about spending is expressed relative to the council's population. In those cases where spending is directed to particular groups in the population, we have expressed planned spending relative to a more specific population, for example planned spending on social services for children and families is presented relative to the population aged under 18.

We express planned spending relative to population to make it easier to make comparisons between councils with different scales of operation. These data are not unit costs. A unit cost is calculated by expressing spending relative to the number of units of service directly associated with that spending. The information about spending used in this report is at a higher level than unit costs. As a result each item of planned spending will be directed to delivering more than one type of units of service.

The CIPFA Statistical Information Service operated by IPF provides CIPFA subscribers with access to more detailed information about councils' spending. The service can be accessed at [www.cipfastats.net](http://www.cipfastats.net) (external link).

**For more information about the information used in this report, refer to Annex One.**

## The Standard Report

This report has been produced through the use of a selection of the information held on the value for money profile tool and it summarises the data held for one council.

The charts that follow are designed to help you identify the distinctive features of planned spending for an individual council. In practice this means gauging whether planned spending across a range of activities is higher or lower than most other councils in the selected comparison group. Higher spending refers to spending in the upper quartile and lower spending refers to spending in the lower quartile.

Any distinctive features of planned spending are not by themselves either right or wrong. Instead they raise questions which may be followed up by the council or by auditors. While working through the charts you should consider the following points:

- is the difference in the council's spending associated with differences in the level of service it provides?
- is the council's spending consistent with that of other councils providing services in a similar way or quality?
- has the council's spending changed compared to others in the last three years? and,
- is the scale of the service large enough to justify making distinctions between councils?

You'll find general comments about interpreting the information alongside the charts. Most charts show the spending in one council compared to a group of other councils. A list of comparisons used in this report is provided at the end of the report.

The information about spending is taken from the revenue estimates submitted by councils, the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (referred to as RA forms and section 52 forms respectively). That means that references in the report to 'spending' are based on councils' plans for their spending, rather than what they actually spend or spent. Spending plan information is provided for the 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 financial years, where available. The spending plan figures have not been revised to take account of revisions of budgets in year or for inflation between years.

The profiles also contain contextual and performance information, for example population and performance information. In most cases these data do not refer to the same time period as the information about spending against which they are shown. For example population estimates are prepared in arrears whereas spending plans are formulated in advance.

The population information used in this report is taken from the mid year estimates of population published by Office for National Statistics (ONS). Population information is applied to information about spending plans as follows:

Spending plan	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Population estimate	2003	2004	2005	2006

The ONS is undertaking a long term programme of work to improve the population statistics it produces. This work highlighted several improvements to methodology that ONS applied immediately when publishing population estimates for 2006. In addition, ONS used these identified improvements to produce revised estimates for the years 2002 to 2005. We have used the revised estimates in the tool. More detailed information on the calculation of population estimates is available from [www.statistics.gov.uk/popest](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/popest) (external link).

If the information required to generate a chart is not available for this council, a chart will be displayed and it will not include data for this council. Information may be unavailable because the council does not provide the service or because it has not supplied one or more of the data items required for the chart.

Comparisons based on Nearest Neighbours groups refer to the revised CIPFA neighbour groups published by IPF in April 2007. These are not the same as the family groups used by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). You can find out more about the CIPFA Nearest Neighbour methodology at the following address: [www.cipfastats.net](http://www.cipfastats.net) (external link). You will find a list of comparator authorities used in this report at the end of this report.

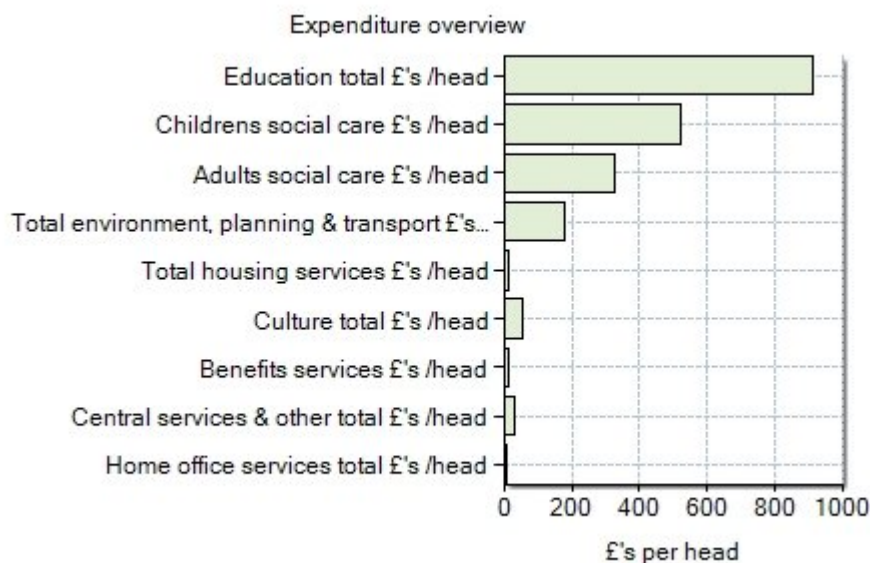
This VFM profile should be used to help understand relative spending patterns and prompt questions and areas for further investigation or explanation. It does not provide direct answers to the key lines of enquiry questions.

## Glossary of terms

BPSA	Business Plan Statistical Appendix to Housing Investment Programme submission
BVPI	Best value performance indicator
CIPFA / IPF	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / Institute of Public Finance limited
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CPA	Comprehensive performance assessment
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DFT	Department for Transport
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
FSS	Formula spending share
FRS17	Financial reporting standard 17
ISB	Individual schools budget
KLOE	Key lines of enquiry
LEA	Local education authority
OFSTED	the Office for Standards in Education, Children's services and Skills
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAF	Social Services performance assessment framework
RA	Revenue account budget returns
Section 52	Budget statement prepared under section 52 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998
SEN	Special educational needs
VFM	Value for money

## Overview

### Expenditure overview

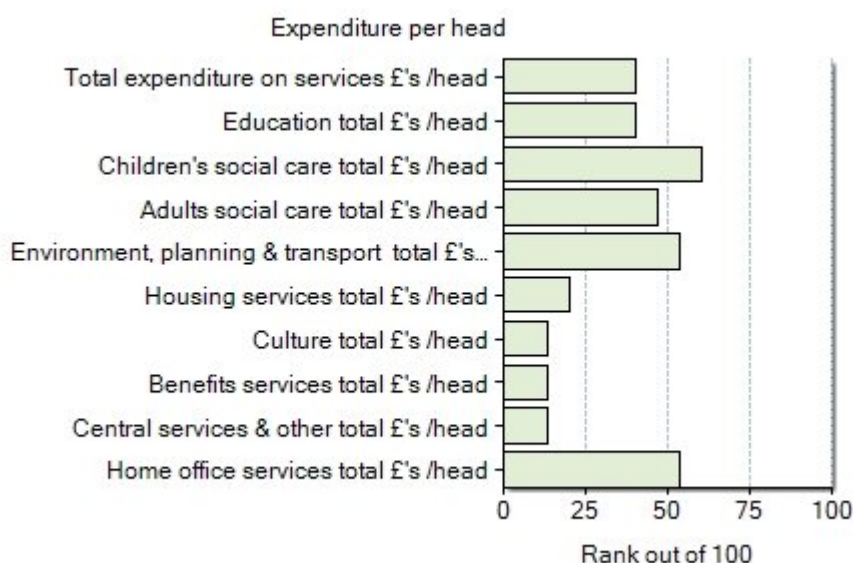


This chart shows how total expenditure on services is divided between the main service areas.

Each bar shows the council's spending relative to its population.

For more information about spending on specific service areas refer to the Charts and Reports page of the VFM profiles.

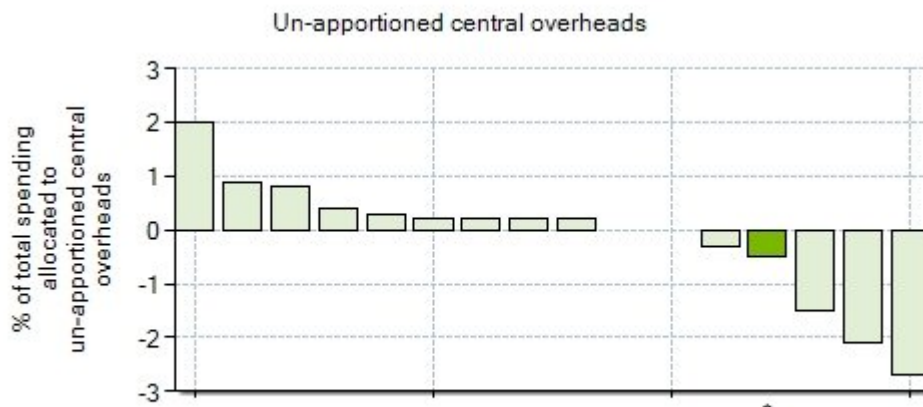
**For more information about the information used in this report, refer to Annex One.**



This chart shows how the council's spending for a service area ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if this council spends more on Education than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on Education than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

## Overheads, contingencies and other central services

### Percentage of overheads



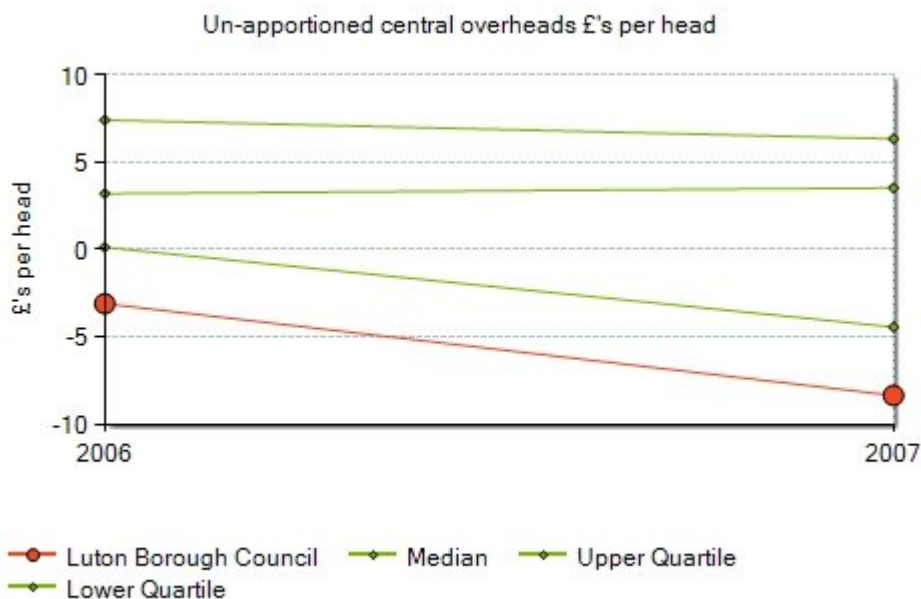
This chart shows the percentage of total spending allocated to un-apportioned central overheads by this council compared to other councils in the comparator group. Un-apportioned central overheads are made up of retirement benefits and the costs of unused shares of IT facilities and other centrally held assets. Not all councils allocate a similar percentage of their total spending on services to un-apportioned overheads. This can explain why service costs may appear to be at odds with those of the other councils.

In some councils central allocations are low and nearly all costs are allocated to services. Spending on those services will appear higher when compared to councils that apportion less of their costs on assets like IT and accommodation.

Councils should be seeking to apportion as much of their overhead costs as possible. The Best Value Accounting Code of practice states that "the majority of central support services such as finance, internal audit, personnel, IT, legal services, procurement, etc. should be charged, allocated or apportioned to the service divisions defined in the Service Expenditure Analysis" (paragraph 7.2, Best Value Accounting Code of Practice 2006).

## Overheads, contingencies and other central services

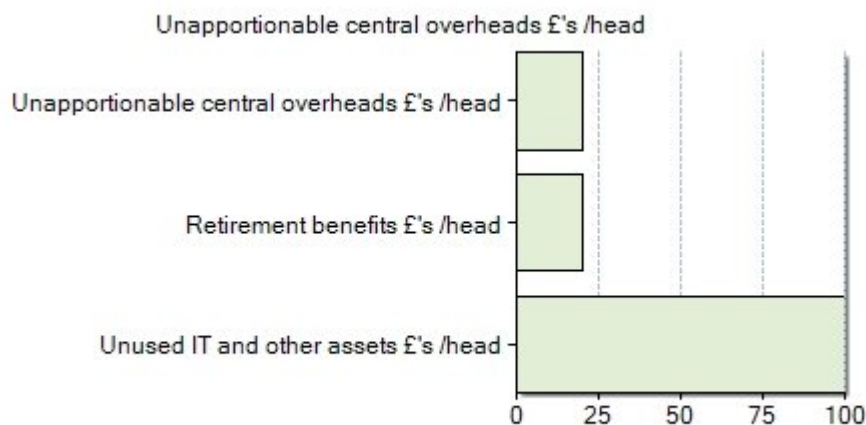
### Un-apportioned central overheads over time



This chart shows the amount of un-apportioned central overheads (£s per head) over the last four years. If a council has a result in either the highest or lowest quartile, you need to keep this in mind when comparing spending on specific services to other councils.

How consistent is the result for 2007/08 with those for earlier years? And what impact has this had on the VFM profiles for particular services? Where results change quartile from one year to the next, this may be because the council made one-off provision for specific expenses.

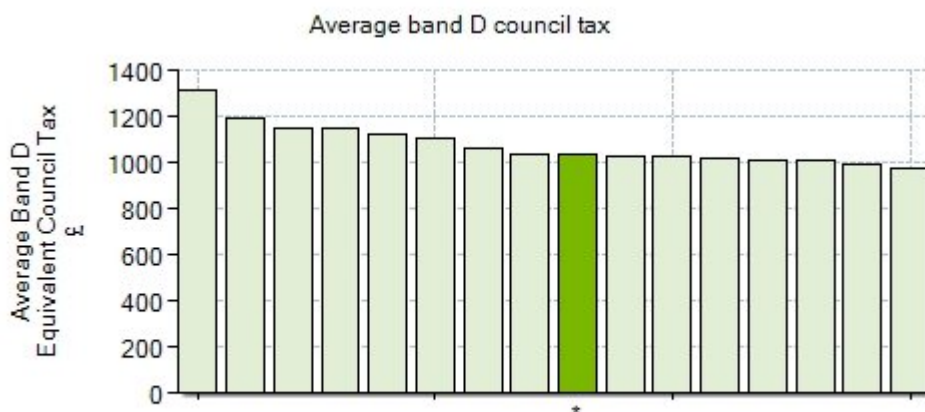
### Un-apportioned central overheads



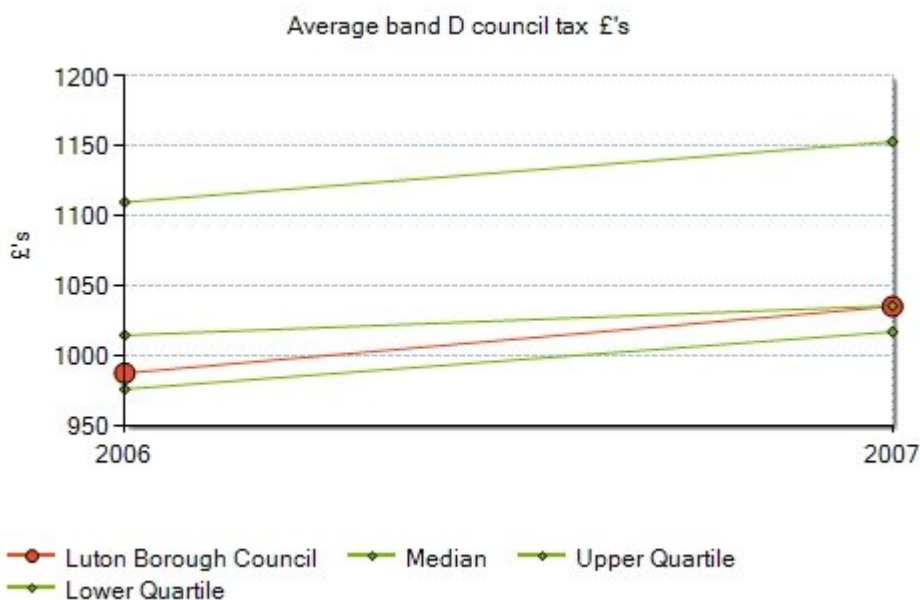
The chart shows how the value of un-apportioned central overheads, relative to the council's population, compared to other councils.

## Council tax

The chart compares the council's average band D council tax to tax levels for other councils in the comparator group.

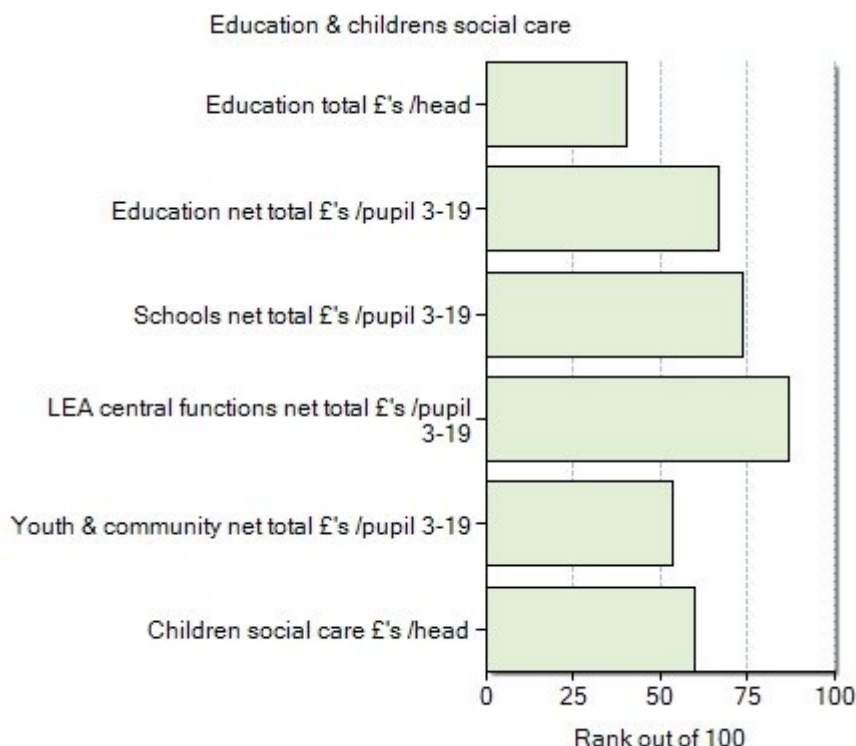


## Band D council tax over time



The chart shows the change over time in the average band D council tax for the council. The result for the council is shown alongside the quartiles for council tax levels for other councils in the comparator group.

## Children's Services



Each bar of the chart shows how the council's spending on children services (education and social care for children and families) ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council plans to spend more on education central functions than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it plans to spend less on education central functions than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

Ofsted have made a joint assessment of the council's performance in providing services for children, including education. The assessment is made following a review of overall performance and key indicators. In 2007 the Council's performance in providing children's services (including education) was assessed as grade 3 (performing well - consistently above minimum requirements) out of a possible 4.

This chart is based on two sets of information about education spending plans. The first line is taken from the RA return and shows planned spending in relation to population. The other lines are taken from the section 52 return provided by councils to DCSF. They show planned spending in relation to numbers of pupils. Planned spending information for social care for children and families is taken from the RA return.

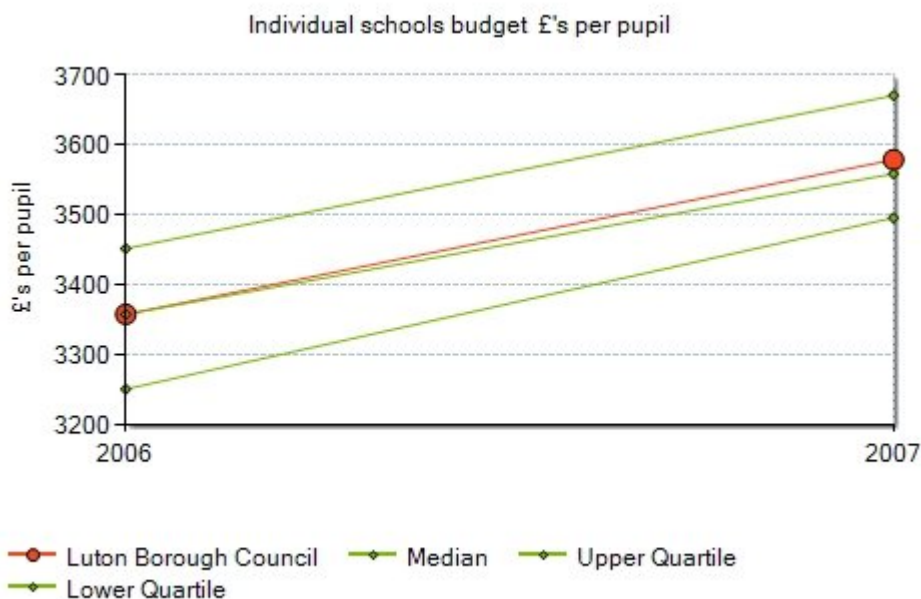
**For more information about the information used in this report, refer to Annex One.**

### Education

Education is the largest single area of councils spending, accounting for more than 50 per cent of total planned spending on services in most single tier and county councils. Spending on schools accounts for approximately 90 per cent of all spending on education.

## Section 52 Analysis

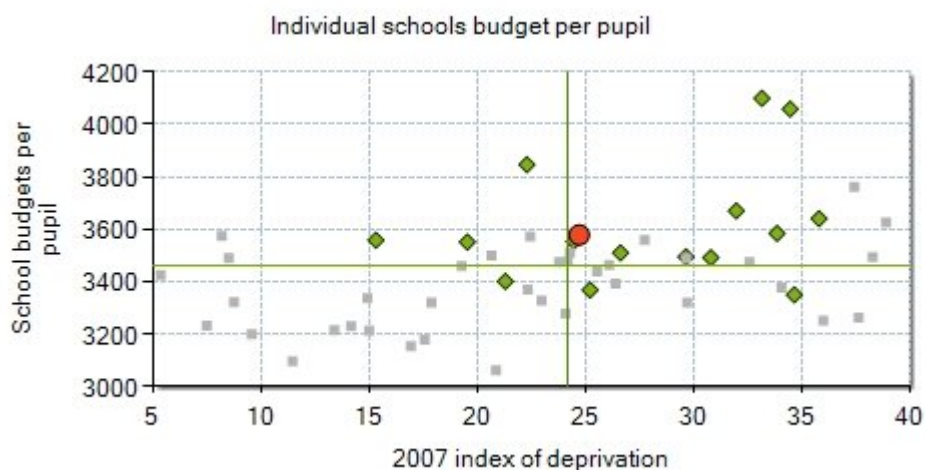
### Individual schools budget



This chart compares the amount devolved to schools (Individual Schools Budget) per pupil in 2007/08 with the amount devolved in previous years. Individual schools budget (ISB) is the proportion of education spending passed on to schools. This is a school's core funding and is the main part of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Funding is delegated to individual schools in the council's area through the council's school funding formula. Any amount not spent in the year automatically forms part of the individual school's revenue balances.

### Individual schools budget and deprivation

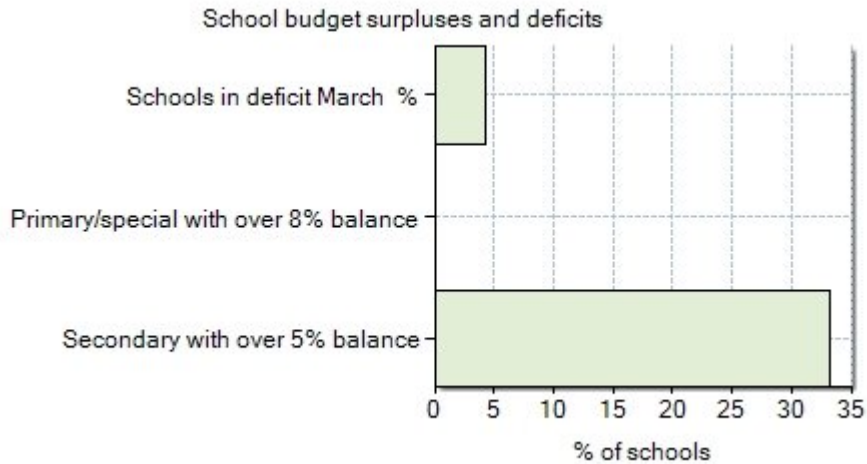


This chart shows the relationship between budget per pupil and deprivation. The Dedicated Schools Grant (Schools Formula Spending Share) is weighted heavily towards councils that have high levels of deprivation.

Is the council's spending consistent with councils with a similar level of deprivation? Does the council spend less than councils with higher levels of deprivation? How is this money delegated to schools to counter the impact of child poverty and deprivation?

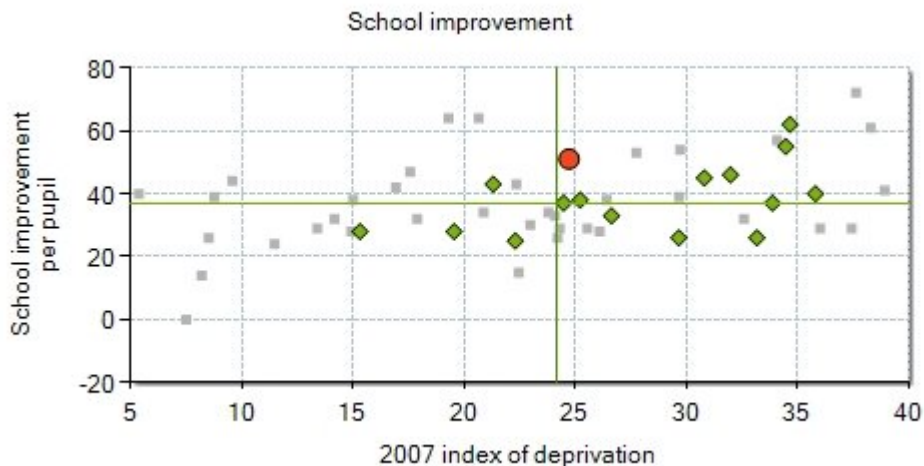
## Section 52 Analysis

### School budget surpluses and deficits



The chart shows the percentage of schools with budget deficits and the percentage of schools with balances in excess of the recommended level. Councils should have a policy agreed with schools on how to support schools with deficits. Where the data suggests significant balances or surpluses what action is being taken to address this? The Audit Commission has developed a comparative tool, which provides further information on school balances by authority, which can be found at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/schoolbalances](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/schoolbalances).

### School improvement

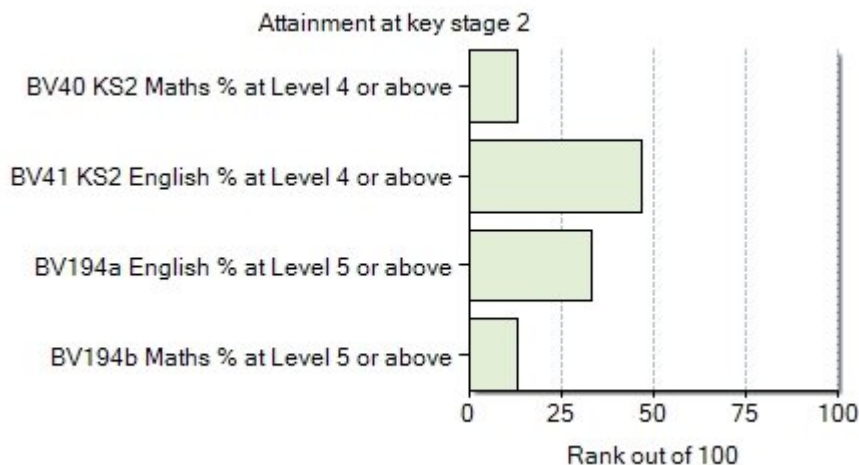


This is expenditure incurred by the council to support the improvement of standards in schools. Levels of deprivation are negatively correlated with educational attainment and are positively correlated with spending on school improvement.

Is the council's spending consistent with councils with a similar level of deprivation? Does the council spend less than councils with higher levels of deprivation? Is funding being targeted at the right schools to reduce the impact of poverty and deprivation?

## Section 52 Analysis

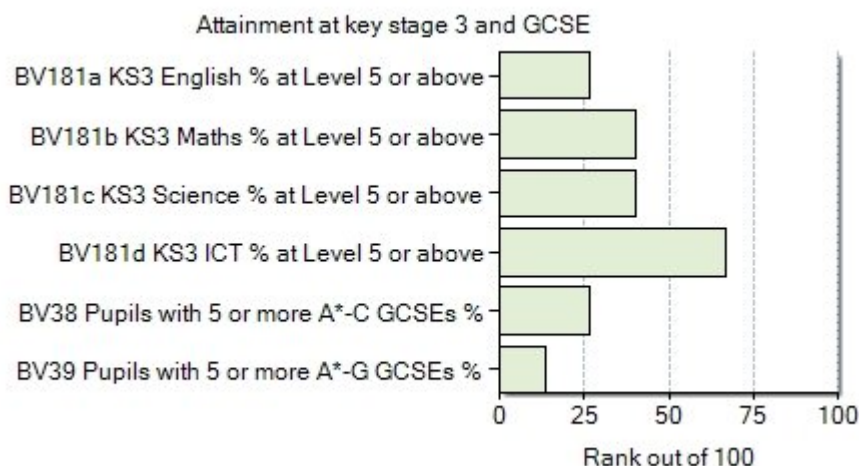
### Attainment at key stage 2



The chart compares pupil attainment in tests at key stage 2 with the results achieved by pupils in other councils.

To what extent are results consistent across tests? How do levels of attainment relate to investment in school improvement? Although it is important to recognise the likely time lag between investment and the eventual improvement in key stage 2 results.

### Attainment at key stage 3 and GCSE

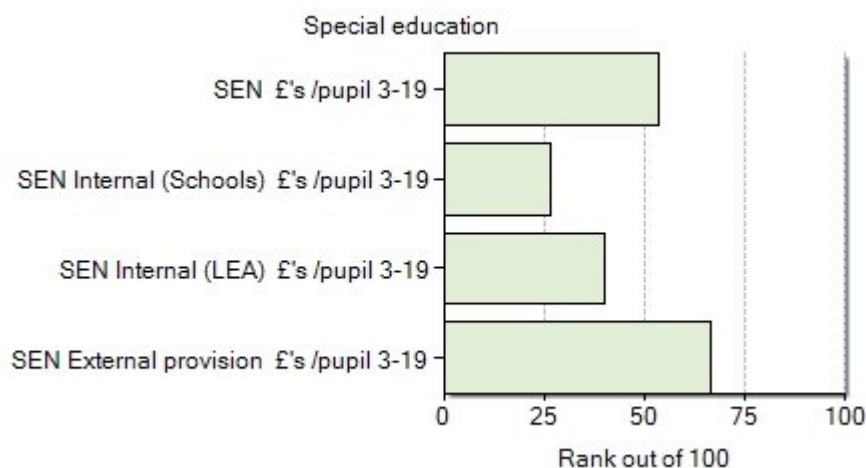


The chart compares pupil attainment in tests at key stage 3 and at GCSE with the results achieved by pupils in other councils.

To what extent are results consistent across tests? How do levels of attainment relate to investment in school improvement? Although it is important to recognise the likely time lag between investment and the eventual improvement in GCSE results.

## Section 52 Analysis

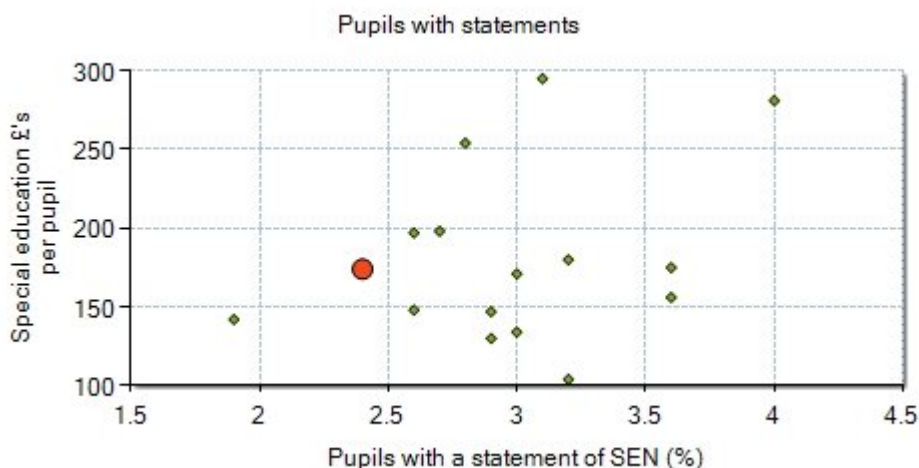
### Special education



Spending on special education varies widely between councils both in terms of the amount spent per pupil and the way those resources are divided between internal and external provision.

Internal provision for both the LEA and schools includes provision for statements, specialist support services, inclusion and statement administration, child protection functions and monitoring of SEN provision. Note: It does not include costs delegated to schools within the ISB.

### Pupils with statements

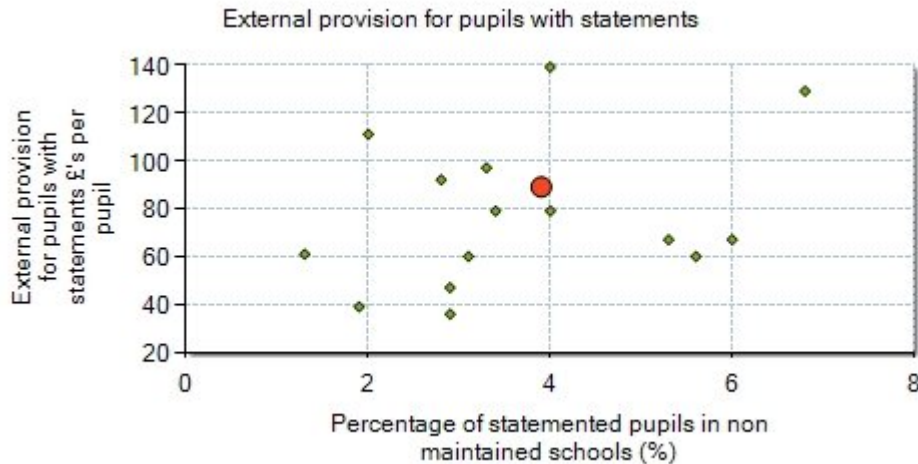


Spending on special educational needs is positively correlated with the percentage of pupils with statements. Although there are substantial variations in spending between councils with similar percentages of pupils with statements.

Councils with the highest and lowest levels of spending should be able to point to the aspects of their service, or accounting arrangements, on which their comparative spending rests.

## Section 52 Analysis

### External provision for pupils with statements



External provision includes inter-authority recoupment and fees for pupils at independent special schools.

The level of spending on external provision will vary between councils because of a number of factors including the needs of pupils, the specialist resources available within the LEA and arrangements for sharing costs with health and other departments within the council.

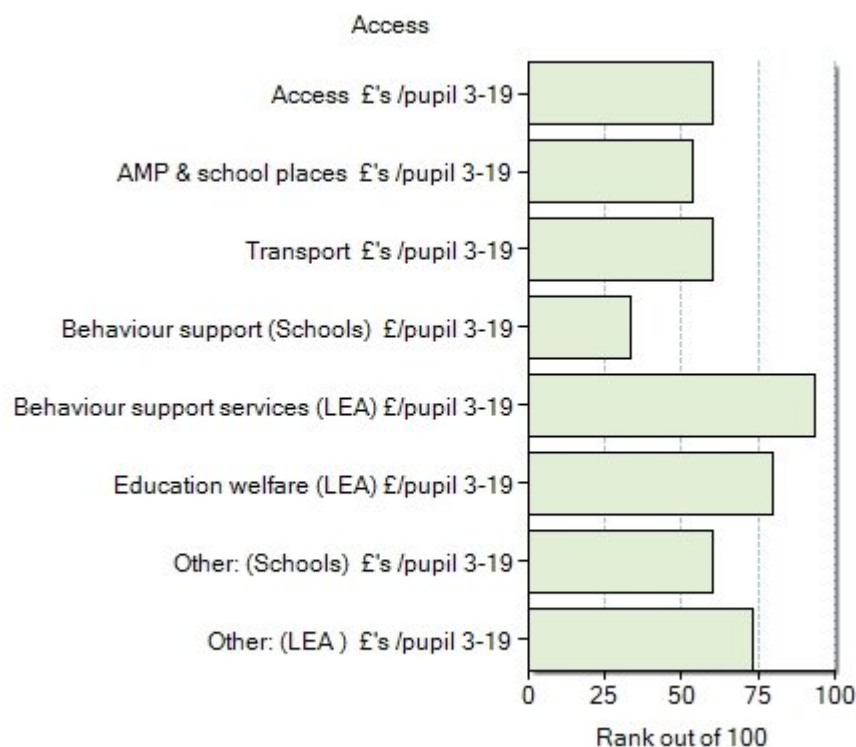
An Audit Commission study of out of authority placements for special educational needs published in February 2007 found that expenditure on these placements is high and has increased steeply in recent years, however the rate of increase has decreased since 2003/04. Councils and their partners are not in a position to know whether they are achieving value for money for their out of authority placements for SEN because they have not brought together the information needed to assess this.

Where expenditure seems high consider:

- whether the council is aware of the full unit costs of in house and out of authority support packages;
- its arrangements for assessing and recording the cost effectiveness of provision for individual pupils with complex needs; and
- what action is being taken to manage the costs of out of authority placements.

## Section 52 Analysis

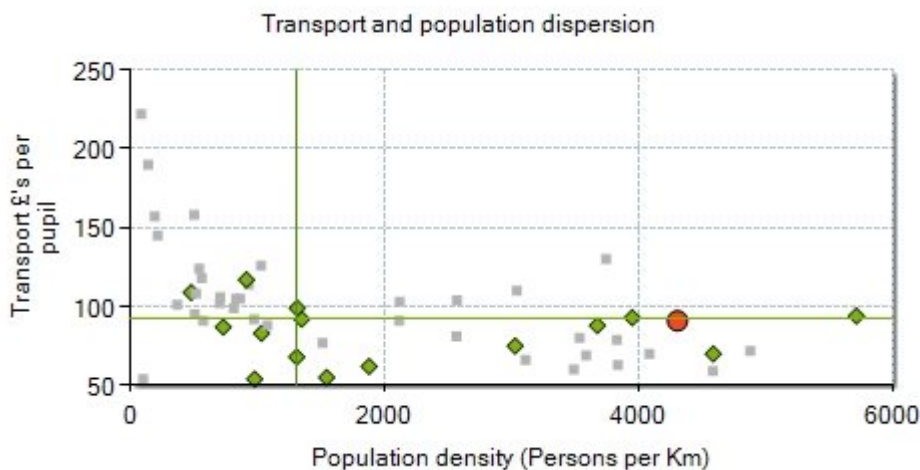
### Access



This includes expenditure to provide an education infrastructure, including school places, buildings and facilities so that, for example, children can take up a school place and attend school.

In most councils spending on transport represents the largest single section of the access budget.

### Transport and population dispersion

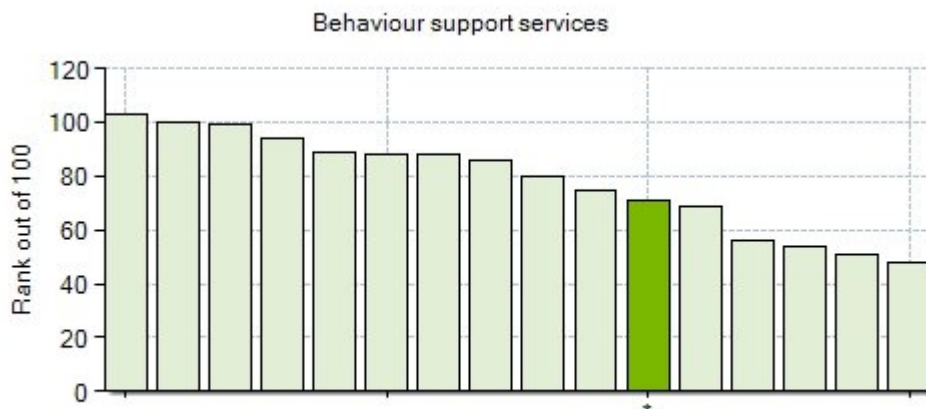


Spending on transport is positively correlated with the extent to which the council serves a dispersed population. However levels of spending also vary substantially in exclusively urban areas.

Is the council's spending consistent with councils serving a similarly dispersed population?

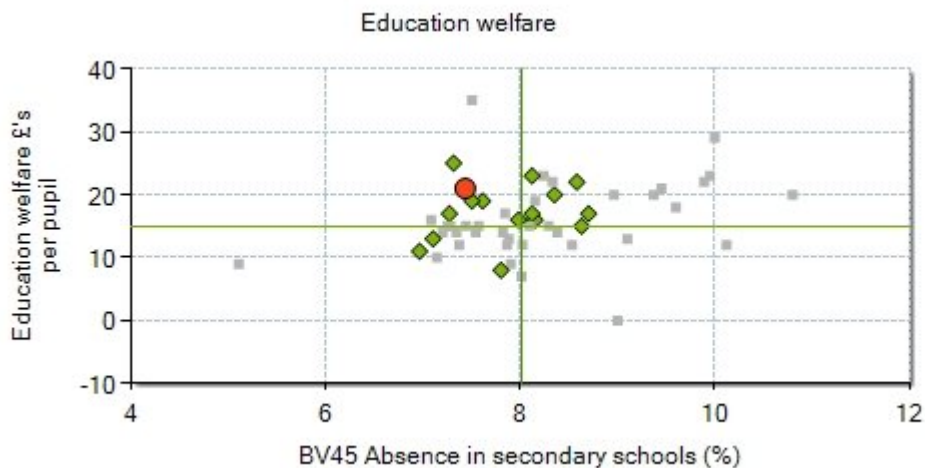
## Section 52 Analysis

### Behaviour support services



This chart shows how spending on behaviour support services compares with other councils in the comparator group. This spending includes provision of pupil referral units, behaviour support services and plans, education out of school and for excluded pupils.

### Education welfare

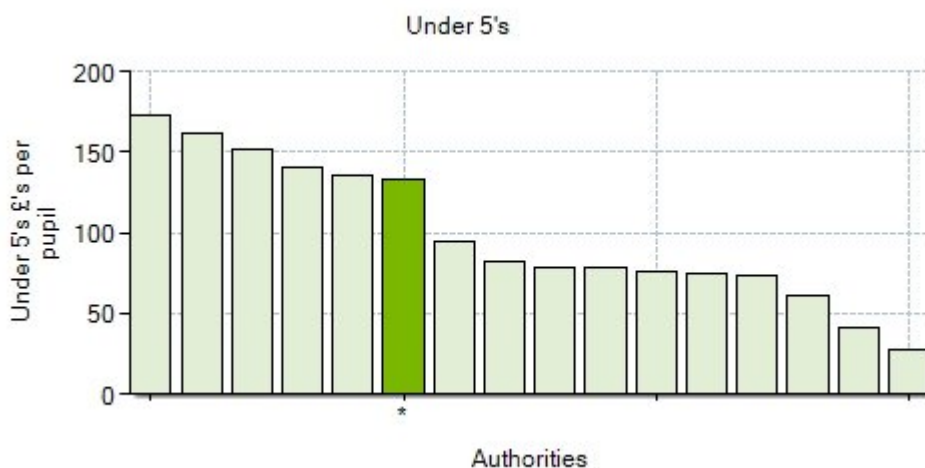


Expenditure on the council's school attendance function is often positively correlated with levels of absence from schools. Is the council's spending consistent with councils with a similar level of absence from school? What has the impact been on absence levels over time? Can the council demonstrate how expenditure has been used to reduce levels of absenteeism?

Where part of the service is delegated to secondary schools, this will make levels of spending appear lower.

## Section 52 Analysis

### Education for the under fives



This spending covers nursery education funding for private and voluntary providers, including funding provided by the LEA. Provision in community, foundation, voluntary and maintained special schools, and provision in maintained nursery schools falls within the Individual Schools Budget and is additional to this expenditure.

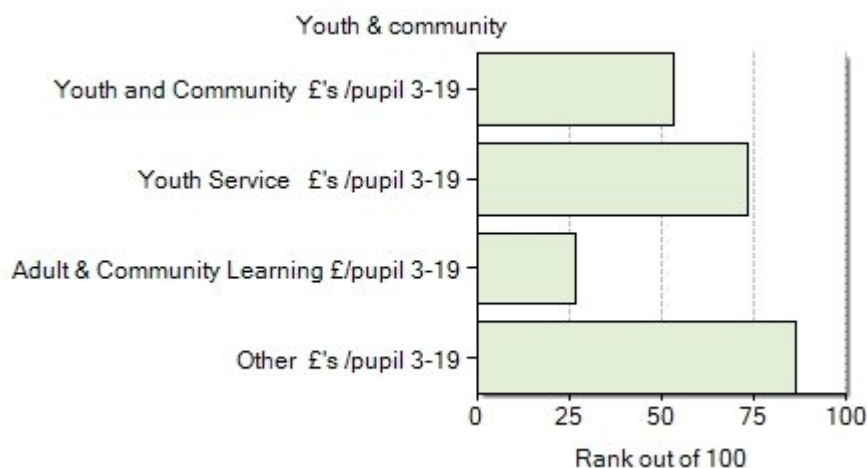
### Number of free education places taken up by three and four year olds



This chart shows the number of free education places taken up by three and four year olds as at May 2007. It includes places taken up in maintained schools and nursery schools and is therefore calculated on a different basis from the expenditure figures above.

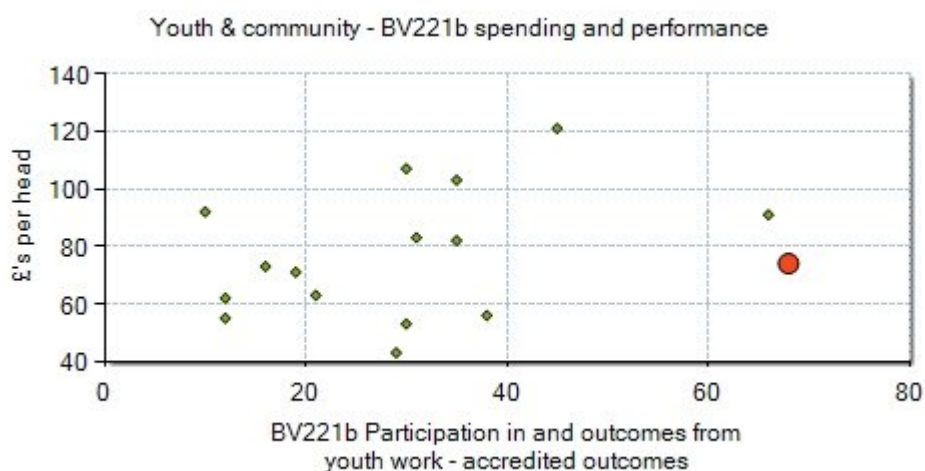
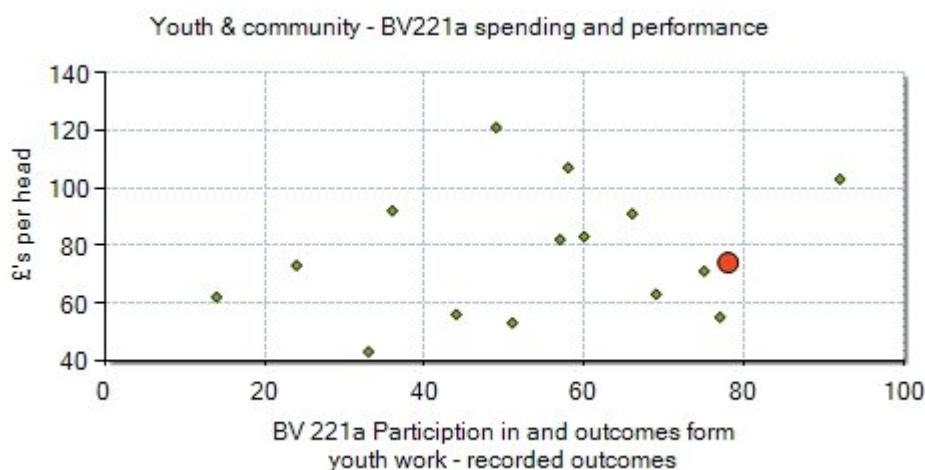
## Section 52 Analysis

### Youth and community



This spending relates to activities other than the provision of compulsory and post-16 education in schools. It is worth understanding how the relative financial allocations fit with the council's stated priorities, for example for activities for young people or enhancing the capacity of communities through life long learning. Councils now have a duty to ensure that young people have access to a wide range of positive activities.

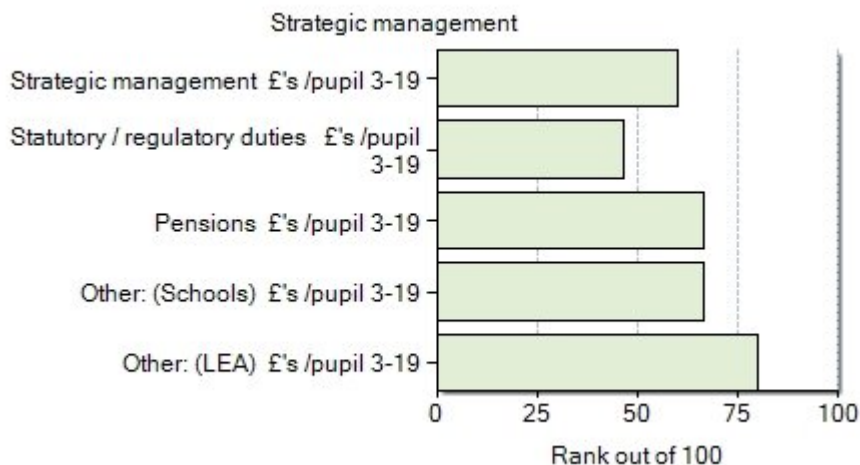
### Youth work outcomes



These charts depict spending on youth services and performance on BVPIs 221a and 221b which measure recorded and accredited outcomes gained by young people as a result of their participation in youth work.

## Section 52 Analysis

### Strategic management



This includes spending on the overall management of the council's LEA responsibilities.

Spending on pensions will cover a combination of premature retirement costs/redundancy costs, early retirement costs and residual pension liability.

Spending on other services includes insurance costs, school museum and library services, school admissions, licenses, school forum costs, maternity/union staff costs.

### Statutory and regulatory duties

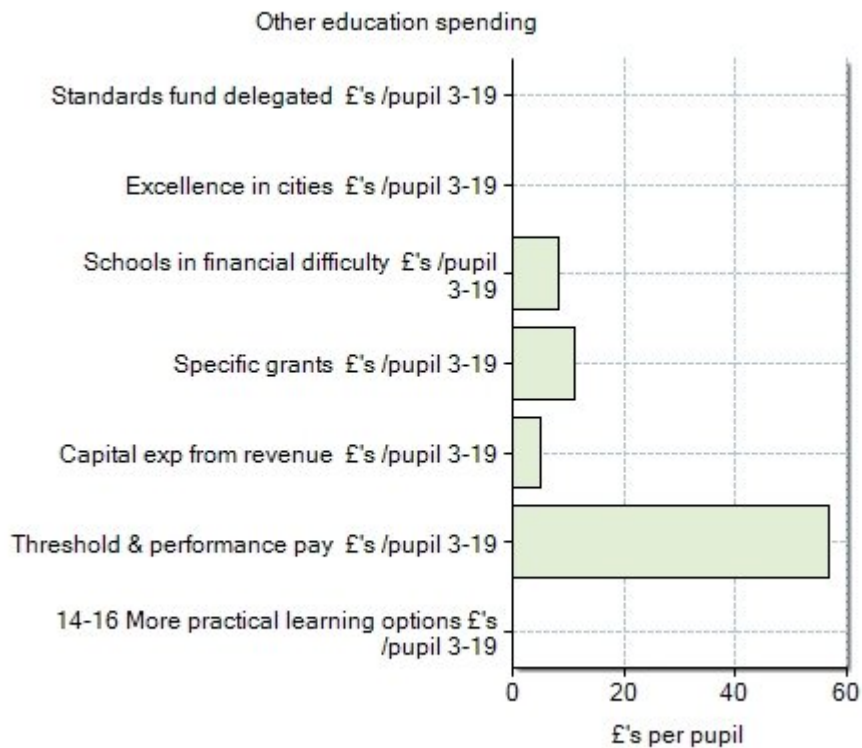


Statutory and regulatory duties include the central education processes and structures in place to cover strategy, finance personnel, ICT and legal duties.

Limits were set by the DFES in the past to benchmark this element of the education budget. (£65 per pupil (£75 London)). This budget line will be sensitive to how the council allocates its corporate costs and services.

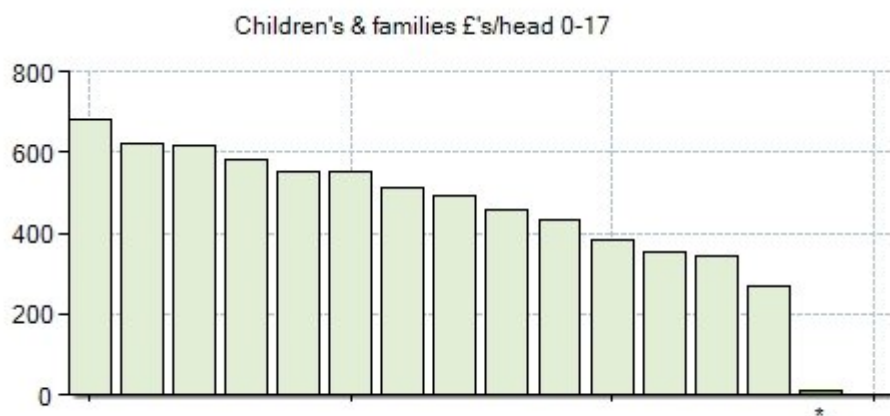
## Section 52 Analysis

### Other aspects of education spending



Spending on standards fund, excellence in cities and specific grants are each linked to initiatives to promote innovation and support national priorities. In some cases the council will contribute matching funding as a grant condition.

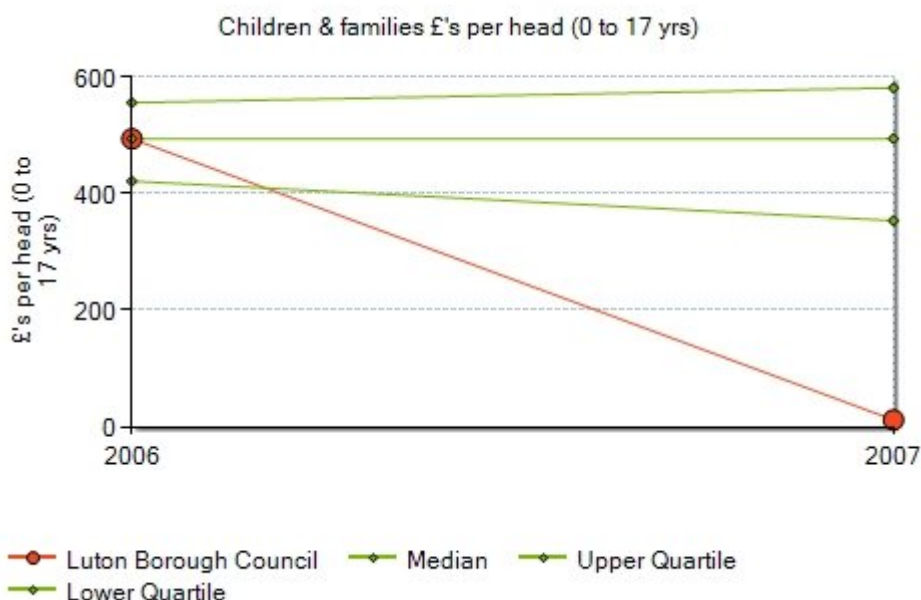
## Children's Services - Social Care for Children and Families



Each bar of the chart shows the council's spending on social care for children and families compared to other councils in the comparator group.

**For more information about the data used in this report refer to Annex One.**

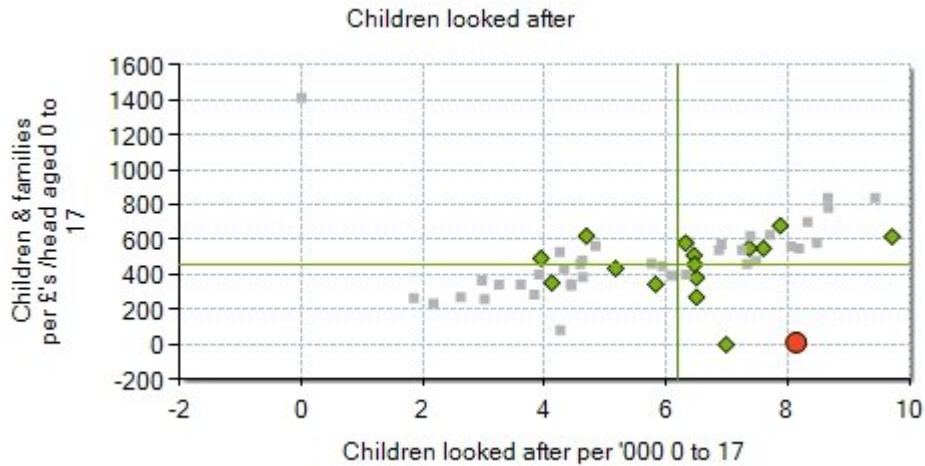
### Spending on children and families



This chart shows how spending on social care for children and families has changed over time. Spending on social care for children and families accounts for just over 7 per cent of total planned spending on services in single tier and county councils and is shaped largely by the council's commitments to children who are looked after. While these children represent a small part of the population, they may require services for 10 years or more. Spending by the council, relative to other councils, should be broadly consistent from one year to the next. Significant changes in spending relative to other councils should be explored further.

## Social care for children and families

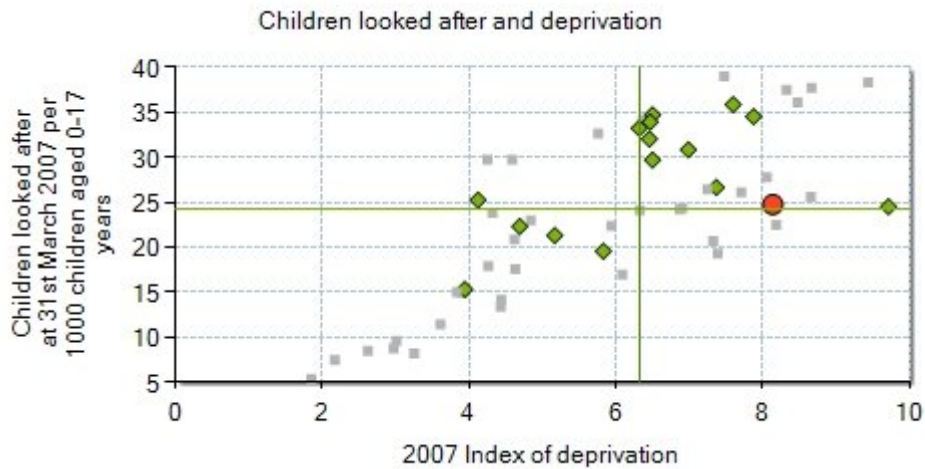
### Children looked after



This chart compares expenditure on social care for children and families (0-17 year olds) with the number of children looked after by the council.

Variations in the number of children looked after account for nearly 40 per cent of the variations in spending by different councils. A government priority is to reduce the numbers of looked after children, particularly those in residential or other expensive placements. This is both good practice and cost effective. Increasing numbers of looked after children place considerable financial and management pressures on the Council.

### Children looked after and deprivation

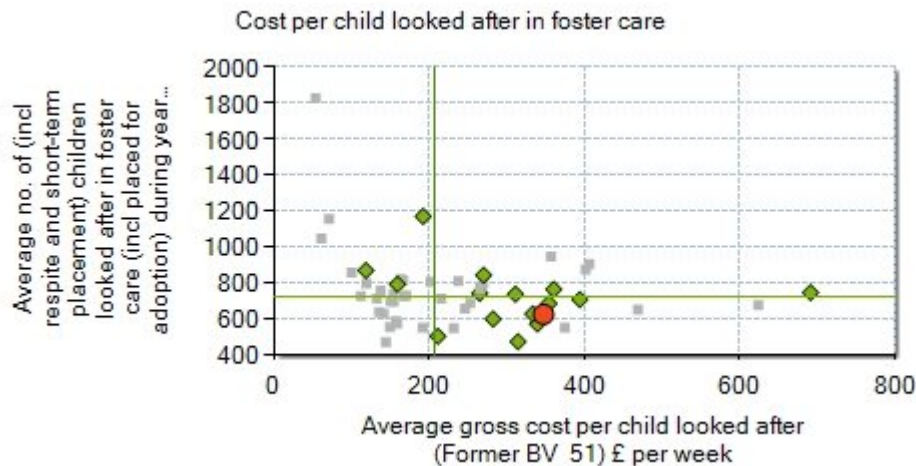


This chart compares the number of children looked after with levels of deprivation as measured by the 2004 index of deprivation. Levels of deprivation are positively correlated with numbers of children looked after and hence levels of spending on children and families.

Is the council's number of children looked after consistent with councils with a similar level of deprivation?  
Does the council look after fewer children than councils with higher levels of deprivation?

## Social care for children and families

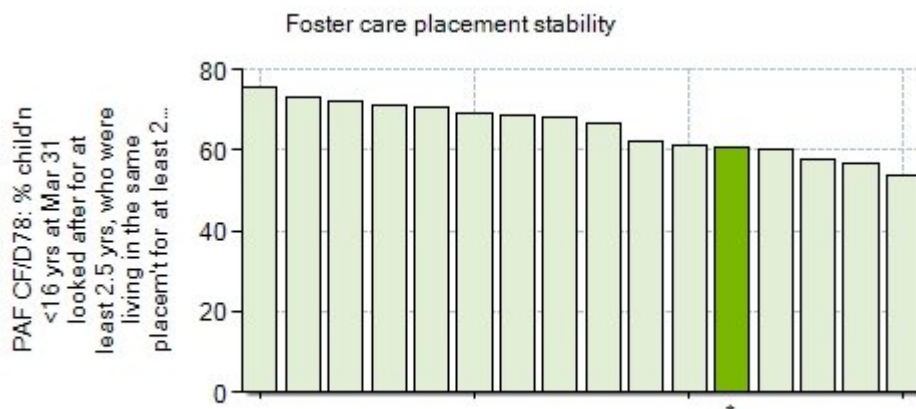
### Cost per child looked after



The chart compares gross unit costs of accommodation per looked after child relative to the number of those children accommodated in foster care in 2006/07.

In broad terms, councils using similar levels of foster care should have consistent costs. Note that unit costs will vary for councils in London and the south east compared to the rest of the country.

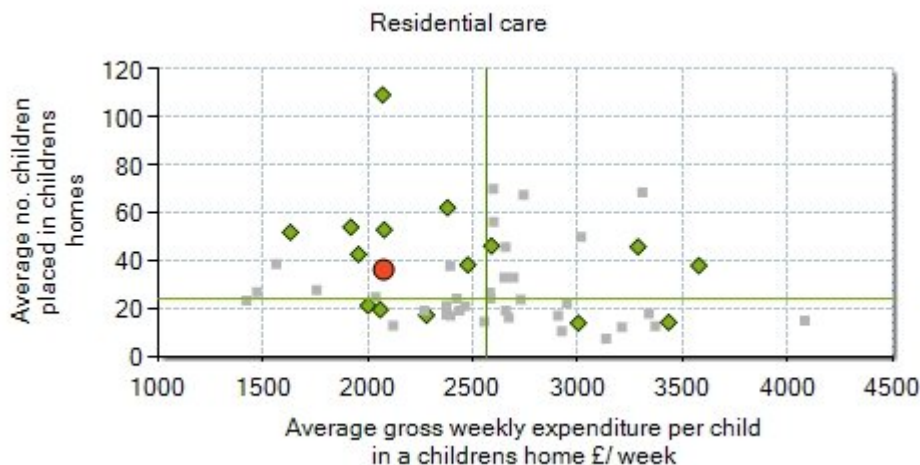
### Foster care placement stability



This chart compares a council's performance on the foster care stability indicator (PAF D78) against that of other councils in the comparator group. Placement stability is regarded as a key factor in improving outcomes for looked after children.

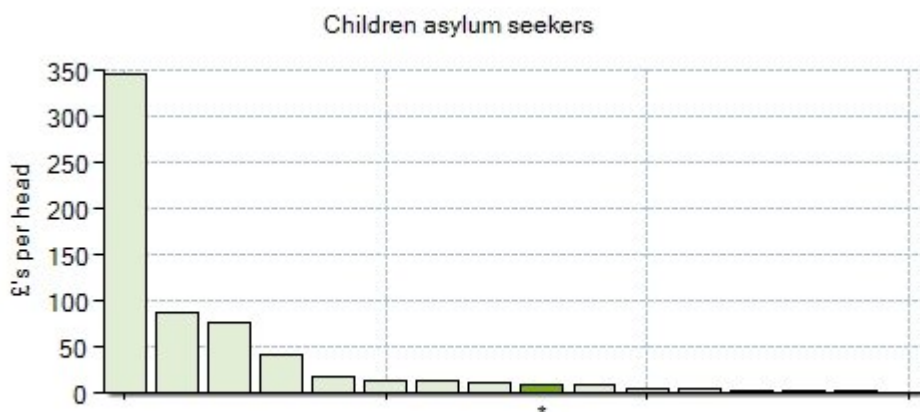
## Social care for children and families

### Numbers in residential care



This chart shows spending on children looked after and the number of children in residential care placements. Since residential care placements are usually more expensive, councils should be seeking to minimise the use of this type of care in favour of family-based placements. Consequently, councils should make sure that residential care placements are used mainly for children with the most complex needs and that outcomes justify the additional expenditure.

### Asylum seekers

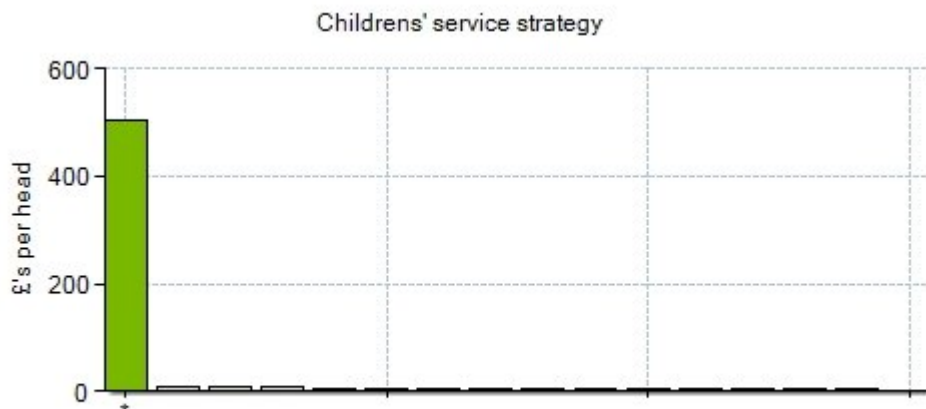


This chart reflects expenditure related to asylum seekers - unaccompanied children.

N.B. It reflects spend per head of population and not spend per asylum seeker supported.

## Social care for children and families

### Social services strategy



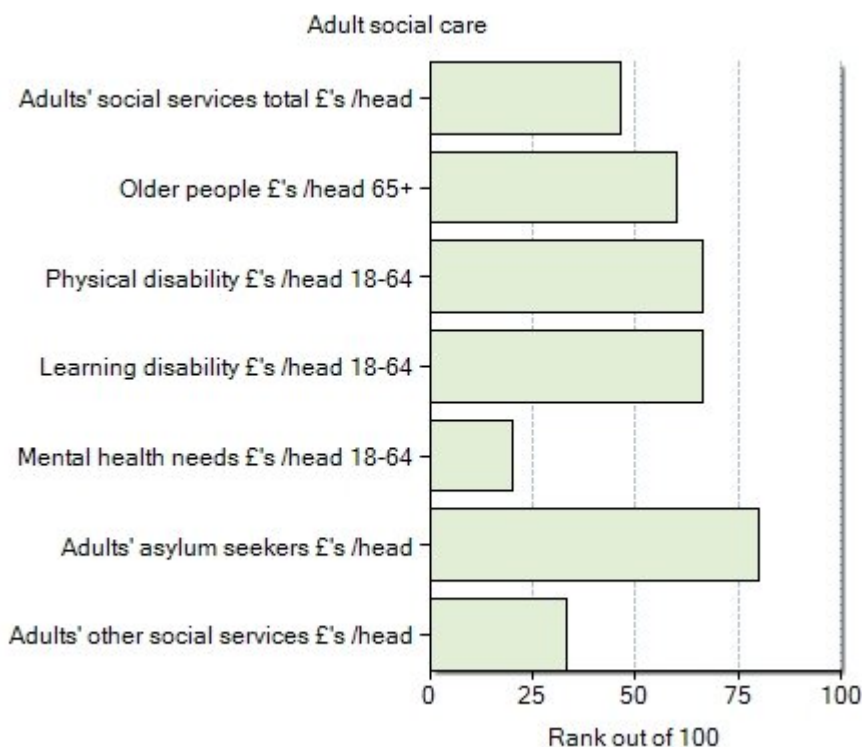
This chart shows total spending on social care strategy for children's services.

Spending will reflect the critical mass required to run any service and the size of the population being served.

How far is this council's spending on social services strategy consistent with spending by councils with a similar population? Councils with low levels of spending may have allocated a significant share of their commissioning, policy or management costs to operations rather than strategy.

## Social Care for Adults

### Social Care - Adults



Social care spending on adults including older people accounts for approximately 18 per cent of total spending on services in most single tier and county councils.

Each year CSCI make an assessment of the council's performance in providing services for adults. In 2007 the council's social care services for adults were assessed as grade 2 (adequate performance - only at minimum requirements) out of a possible 4.

Each bar of the chart shows how the council's spending for adult social care ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council spends more on older people than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on older people than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

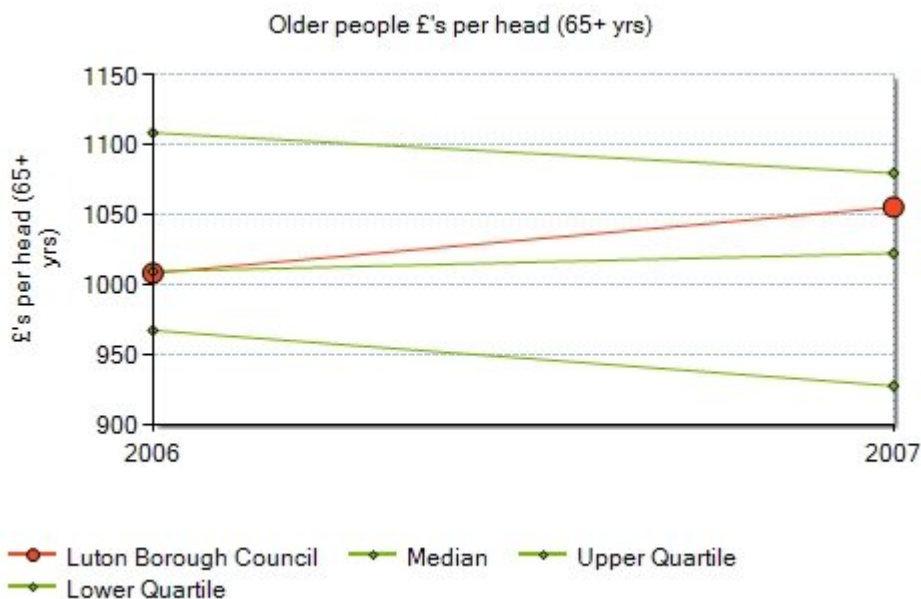
There is a close relationship between adult social care services and health care. So council spending in this area should be looked at in the context of related healthcare expenditure.

Note: Supporting People Programme expenditure is shown under the housing chapter.

**For more information about the data used in this report refer to Annex One.**

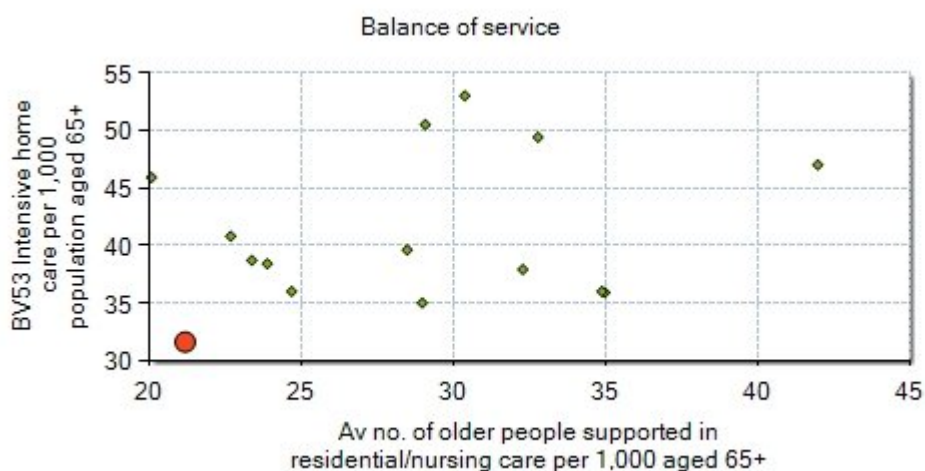
## Social care for older people

### Older people



This chart shows spending per older person on social care for older people. Spending on services for older people aged 65 and over reflects the council's level of provision of two key services; residential and domiciliary care. Typically councils commission most of these services from the independent sector. While spending commitments on residential care tend not to change significantly from year to year, spending on domiciliary care can change significantly between years.

### Service mix

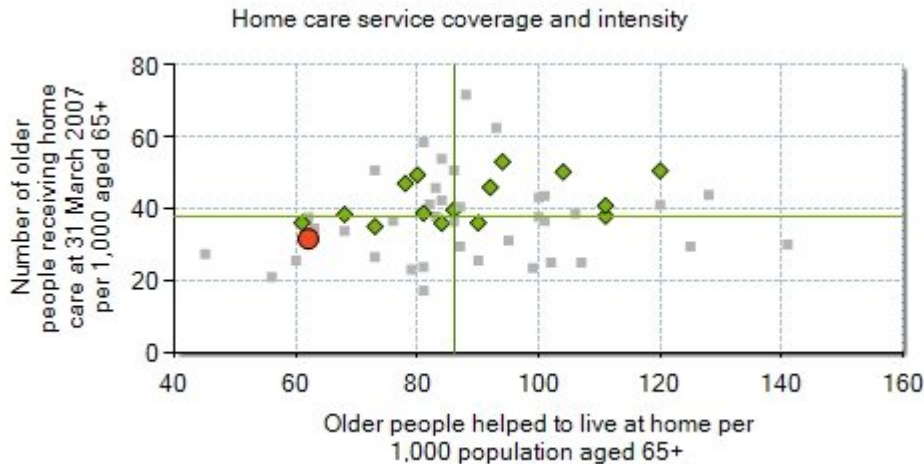


This chart shows how the council's service mix, i.e. levels of domiciliary and residential care provided, compares with other councils in the comparator group. The council's overall level of spending on older people should be consistent with the number of residents it supports in residential care and the level of intensive domiciliary care provision.

Where provision for one or both of these services is high you should check whether the council's unit costs are consistent with their level of service.

## Social care for older people

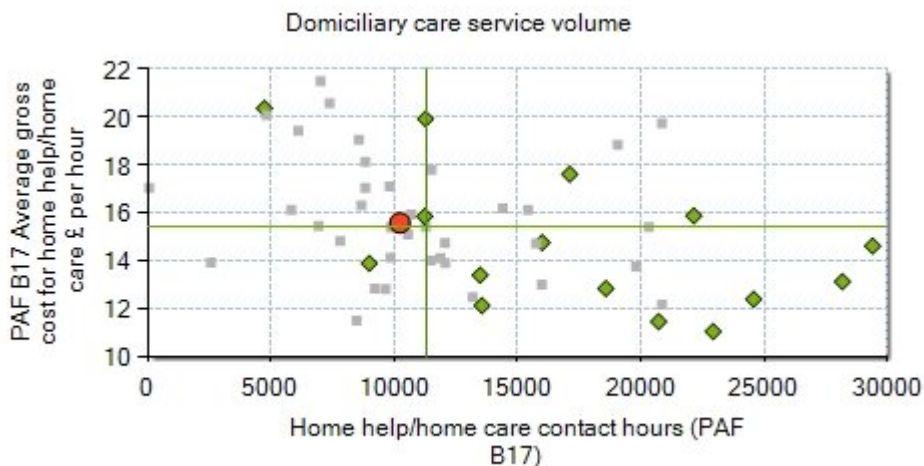
### Domiciliary care service coverage and intensity



The chart shows the extent to which the service provided by the council is characterised by high coverage; the proportion of older people that receive a service; and the proportion of older people that receive intensive services.

Councils should be able to demonstrate how their pattern of domiciliary care provision impacts on their use of residential and nursing care.

### Domiciliary care service volume

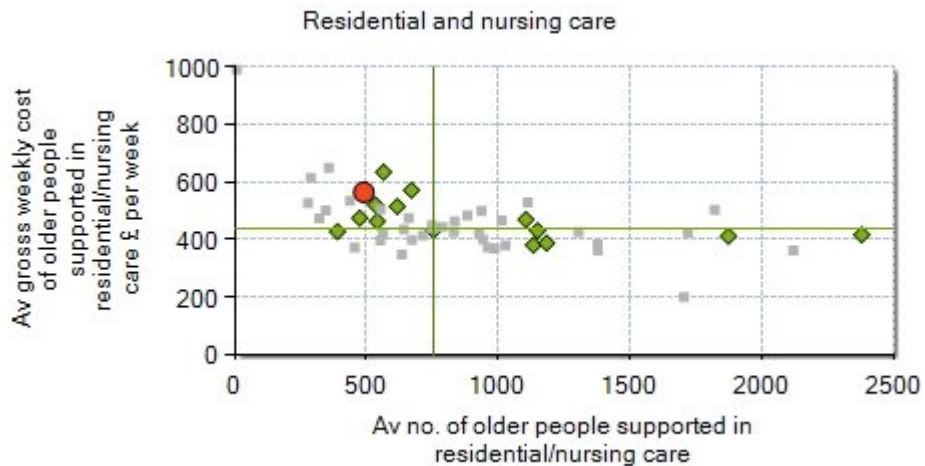


This chart compares the relationship between cost per hour of domiciliary care and the number of hours of care provided. There is an inverse relationship between the gross cost per hour of domiciliary care and the number of hours of domiciliary care that councils purchase or provide.

Note that unit costs will vary for councils in London and the south east compared to the rest of the country. Costs may also vary based on the extent to which the council uses an in-house provider, where councils purchase highly specialised services and/or serve dispersed communities.

## Social care for older people

### Residential and nursing care



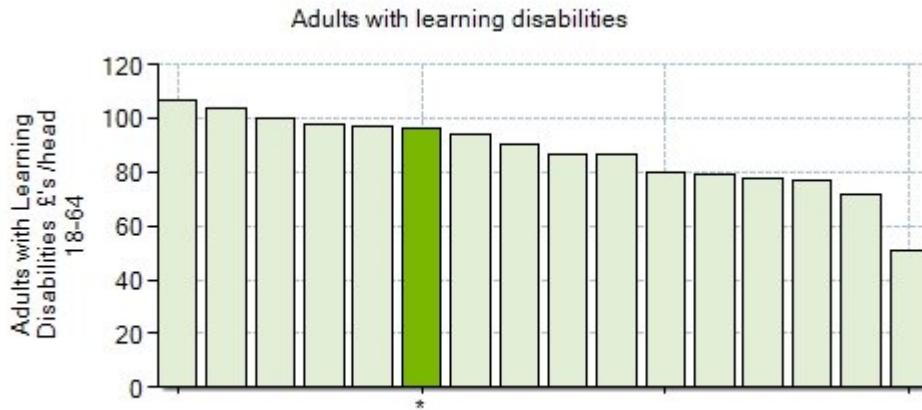
This chart shows the relationship between costs of residential care and the amount of residential care purchased or provided.

There is an inverse relationship between the number of residents that councils support and the gross cost per week of residential care.

Historical spending patterns and the level of in-house provision also play a part. In-house provision is usually more expensive but councils with high levels of in-house provision face considerable challenge if they try to reduce these levels. In-house provision may also cater for clients who need higher levels of care.

## Social care for adults

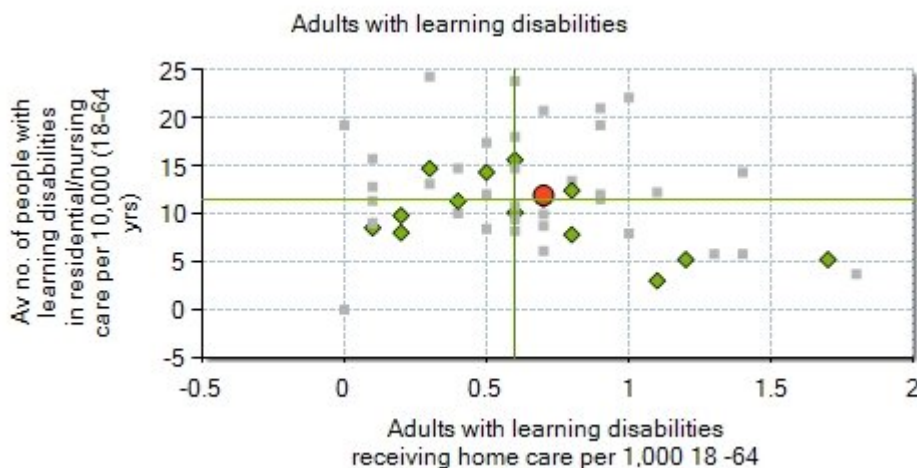
### Adults with a learning disability



This chart compares the council's spending on adults with learning difficulties with that of other councils in the comparator group. Spending on adults with a learning disability will vary according to the model of service adopted by the council; that is the way in which it uses its resources to provide day services, community support and long term residential care.

The way in which the council provides for the small number of people with the most intensive needs may also impact on its level of spending compared to other councils.

### Service mix



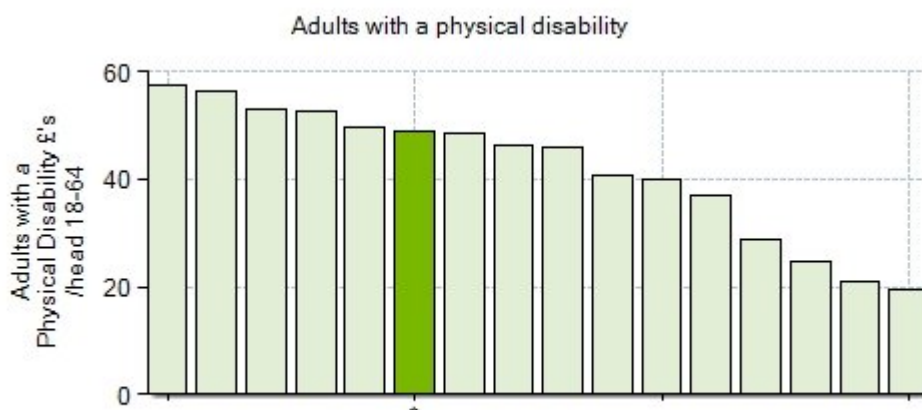
This chart shows how the council's learning disability service mix, i.e. levels of domiciliary and residential care provided, compares with other councils in the comparator group.

Higher levels of spending on services are associated with:

1. higher levels of use of residential care relative to help at home;
2. high unit costs of residential care purchased; and
3. high levels of provision both in terms of residential care and help in the home.

## Social care for adults

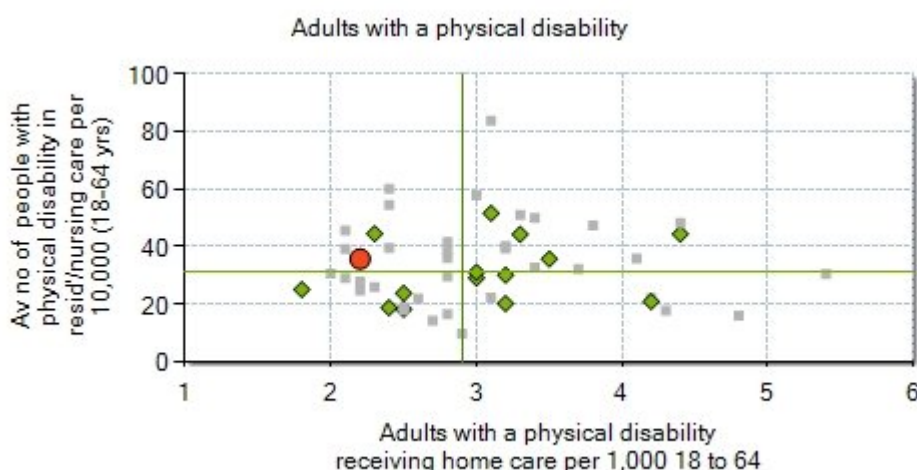
### Adults with a physical disability



This chart compares the council's spending on adults with physical disabilities with that of other councils in the comparator group. Spending on adults with a physical disability will vary according to the model of service adopted by the council; that is the way in which it uses its resources to provide day services, community support and long term accommodation.

The way in which the council provides for the small number of people with the most intensive needs may also impact on its level of spending compared to other councils.

### Service mix

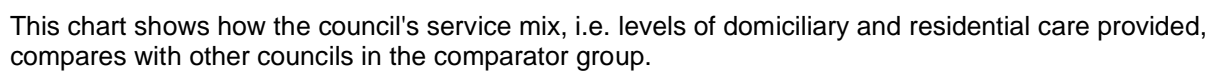


This chart shows how the council's service mix, i.e. levels of domiciliary and residential care provided, compares with other councils in the comparator group.

Higher levels of spending on services are associated with:

1. higher levels of use of residential care relative to help at home;
2. high unit costs of residential care purchased; and
3. high levels of provision both in terms of residential care and help in the home.

## Adults with mental health needs



Councils with the highest and lowest levels of spending should show how the services they commission link to their strategy for mental health.

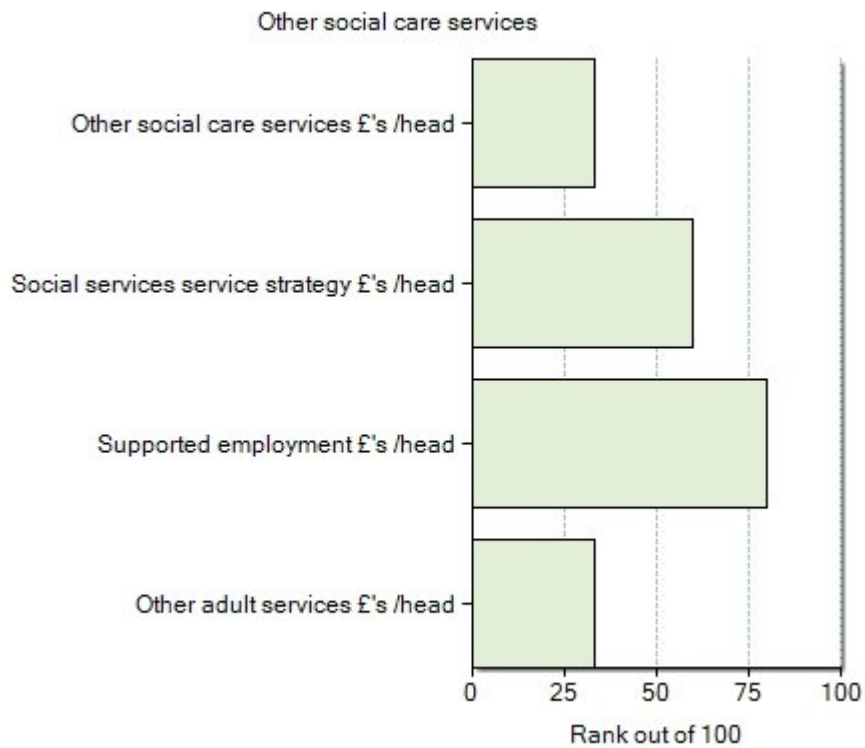
A bar chart titled "Asylum seekers - adults". The y-axis is labeled "Asylum £'s per head" and ranges from 0 to 25 in increments of 5. The x-axis has labels for age groups: 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85-89, 90-94, 95-99, and 100+. The bars show a sharp decline from the youngest group to older groups.

Age Group	Asylum £'s per head
0-4	23
5-9	2
10-14	0.5
15-19	0.2
20-24	0.1
25-29	0.1
30-34	0.1
35-39	0.1
40-44	0.1
45-49	0.1
50-54	0.1
55-59	0.1
60-64	0.1
65-69	0.1
70-74	0.1
75-79	0.1
80-84	0.1
85-89	0.1
90-94	0.1
95-99	0.1
100+	0.1

N.B. it reflects spend per head of population and not spend per asylum seeker supported.

## Social care for adults

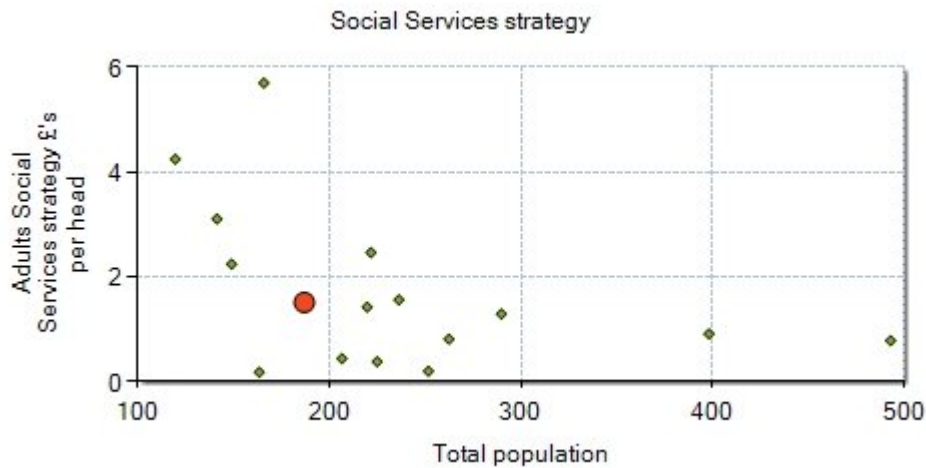
### Other social services



Councils typically spend approximately less than 1 per cent of their resources on other social care services.

## Social care for adults

### Adult social care strategy

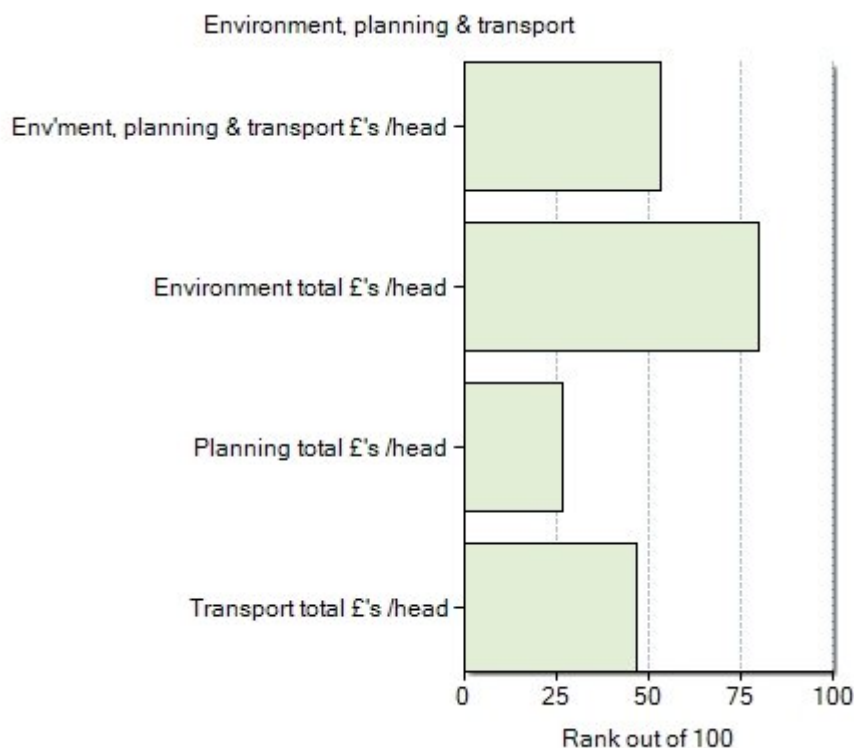


This chart shows the relationship between spending on social care strategy and the total population.

Spending will reflect the critical mass required to run any service and the size of the population being served.

How far is this council's spending on social care strategy consistent with spending by councils with a similar population? Councils with low levels of spending may have allocated a significant share of their commissioning, policy or management costs to operations rather than strategy.

## Environment, Planning and Transport



Each bar of the chart shows how the council's spending for these services ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council spends more on planning than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on planning than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

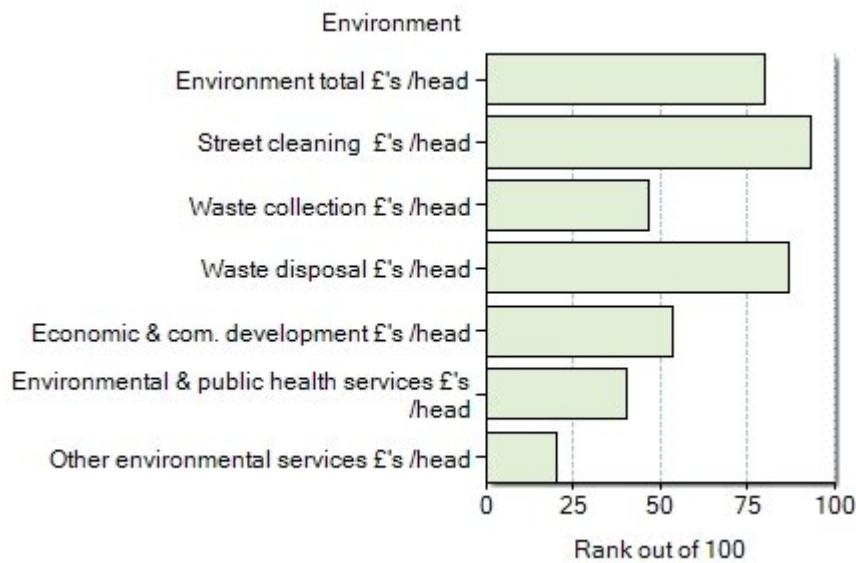
Each year the Audit Commission makes an assessment of the council's performance in providing environmental services. The assessment is made by combining environment inspection reports with a range of performance indicators. In 2007 the council's environmental services were scored as level 3 (performing well - consistently above minimum requirements) out of a possible 4.

In single tier councils, the environmental services account for around 8 per cent of expenditure.

**For more information about the data used in this report please refer to Annex One.**

# Environmental services: Street cleaning

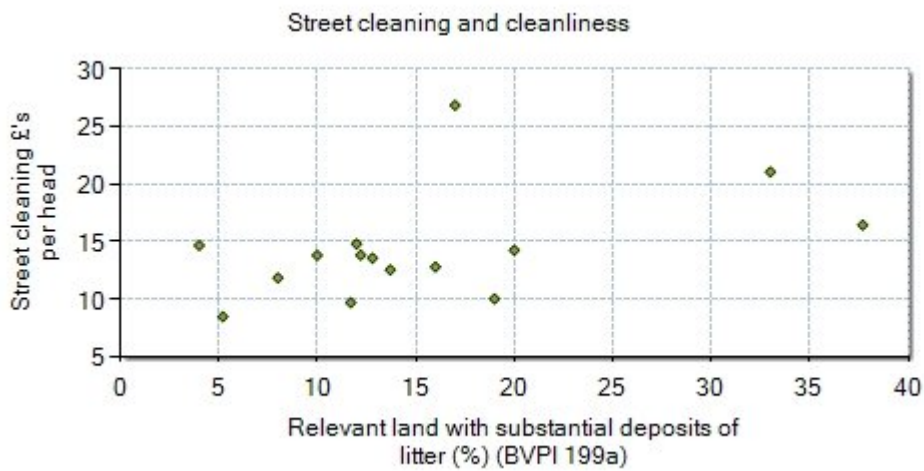
## Environment



Waste collection and waste disposal for councils with this responsibility are the two largest areas of spending among this group of services.

High levels of spending in one or both of these areas are likely to feed through into higher level spending on environment services as a group.

### Street cleaning and heavy littering

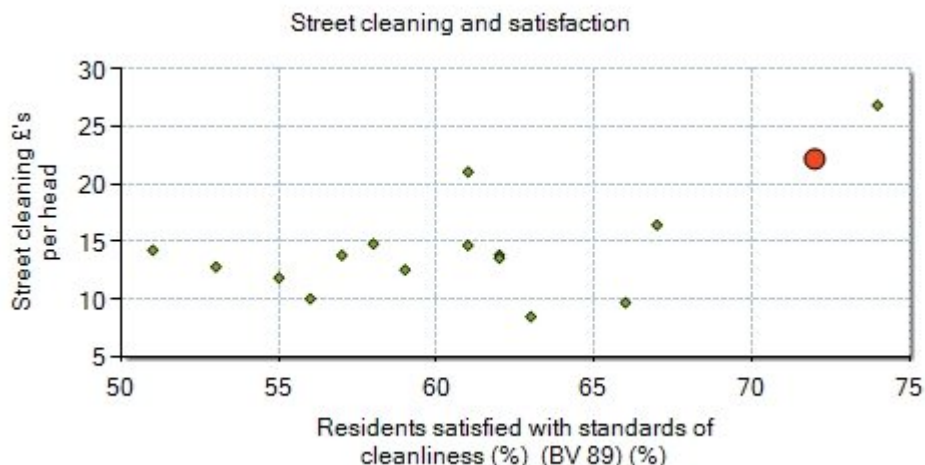


This chart shows the relationship between spend per head on street cleaning and street cleanliness as measured through BVPI 199a relevant land with substantial deposits of litter.

Councils with higher levels of spending need to be able to relate their spending to the character of the area they serve and the standards of cleanliness they achieve.

## Environmental services: Street Cleaning

### Street cleaning and satisfaction



This chart shows the relationship between spending on street cleaning per head and satisfaction with standards of cleanliness in 2006/07.

Levels of satisfaction with street cleaning is often juxtaposed with performance as measured through BVPI 199a. Reported levels of satisfaction may refer to a broader set of issues than cleanliness alone, for example general street appearance. A cross check against BV199a (street cleaning and littering) is therefore advisable.

## Environmental services: Waste

### Waste collection per head



This chart compares the cost of waste collection per head.

Costs of municipal waste collection and disposal are rising steadily due to increases in waste arisings, the need to fund investment in alternatives to landfill and increases in landfill tax.

Consider how this council's spending compares to others in the comparator group? If it is significantly higher or lower than other similar councils, and if so what are the reasons for this? How good are the council's arrangements for procuring waste collection services?

## Environmental services: Waste

### Waste collection per head and volume of waste collected



This chart shows the relationship between spend per head waste collection and the volume of waste collected.

In interpreting the results of this chart it is important to bear in mind the waste hierarchy (*Waste Strategy for England 2007*, Defra, 2007) which ranks the most effective environmental solutions as follows:

- reduce the production of waste, i.e. prevention;
- reuse;
- recycle/compost;
- energy recovery;
- disposal;

Where a council seems to have higher costs and collects a high volume of waste, consider whether or not this fits in with its overall strategy and objectives.

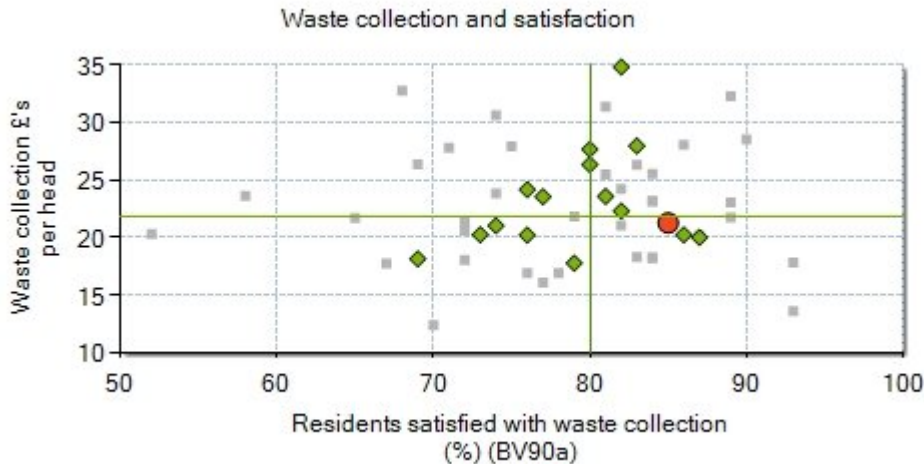
### Volume of waste collected



This chart illustrates how the volume of waste collected has changed over time. There is an expectation that councils should be reducing waste volumes. If waste volumes are increasing it is important that the council understands why and takes appropriate action. It may be that a new green waste collection service has increased the volume of waste collected, although more is being recycled or composted. Where volumes are declining is this due to a reduction in waste being produced? Or is it because the council is not collecting trade waste or has otherwise reclassified waste (out of the municipal waste stream).

## Environmental services: Waste

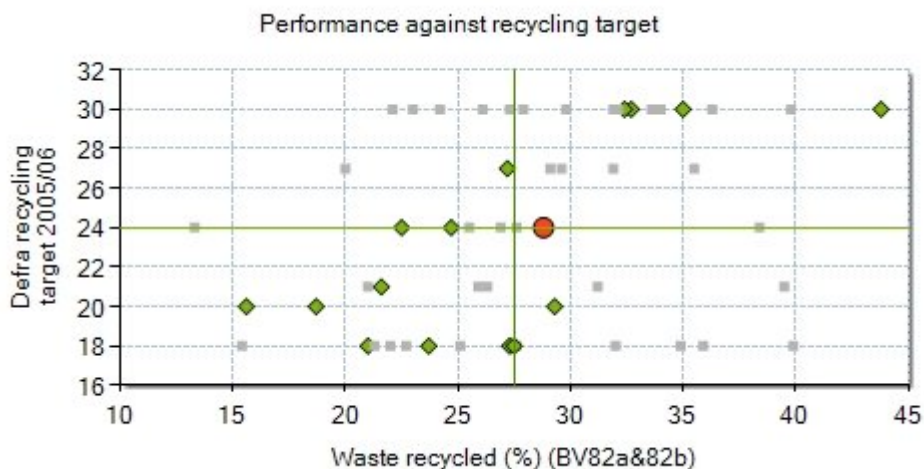
### Waste collection and satisfaction



This chart shows the relationship between spend per head on waste collection and levels of satisfaction with waste collection in 2006/07.

Typically this area of service is among the local services with the highest levels of public satisfaction. In some areas this has declined, possibly as a result of the introduction of fortnightly residual waste collection as part of increasing collection of dry recyclables and green waste. It may also be due to the way the service is managed. Low satisfaction or one that has declined significantly since it was last measured should be investigated.

### Performance against the waste recycling target

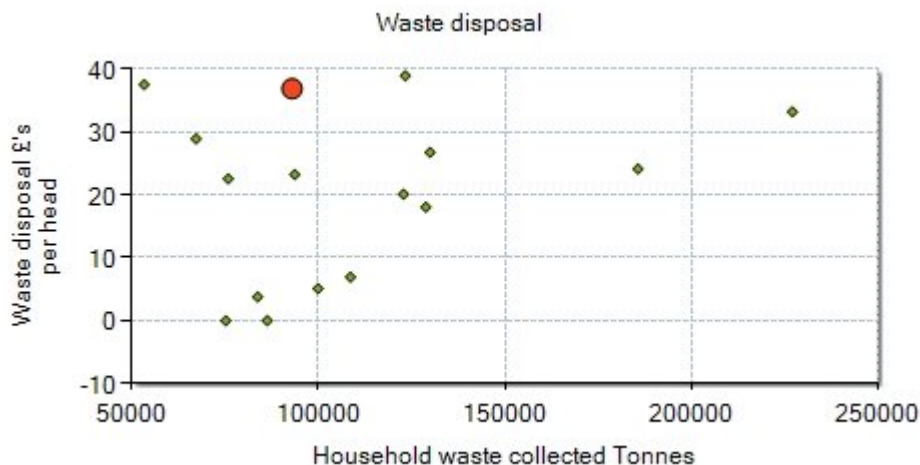


This chart shows the council's performance against its 2005/06 target for recycling. The recycling target is depicted on the vertical axis, while the percentage of waste recycled is shown on the horizontal axis. No targets for recycling and composting were set for 2006/07. Councils will be working to different recycling and composting targets. DEFRA set the 2005/06 recycling targets on the basis of councils' performance in the early part of the decade. Targets vary between 15% and 30% nationally. New targets have been set for 2007/08. This council's target for 2007/08 is 24%.

Councils need to be able to show that the proportion of waste they recycle is consistent with that achieved by other councils with similar spending on waste collection.

## Environment Services: Waste

### Waste disposal

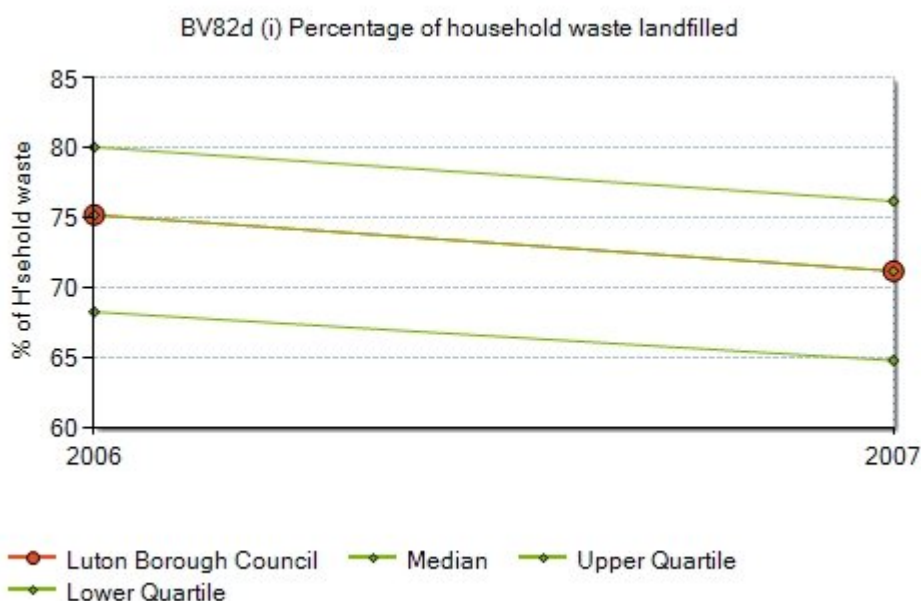


Waste disposal is carried out by all county councils, unitary councils and by some metropolitan and London boroughs acting on behalf of their neighbours.

This council has responsibility for disposing of waste.

In metropolitan areas and London care should be taken to only compare councils with the same responsibilities in relation to waste disposal.

### Volume of waste landfilled

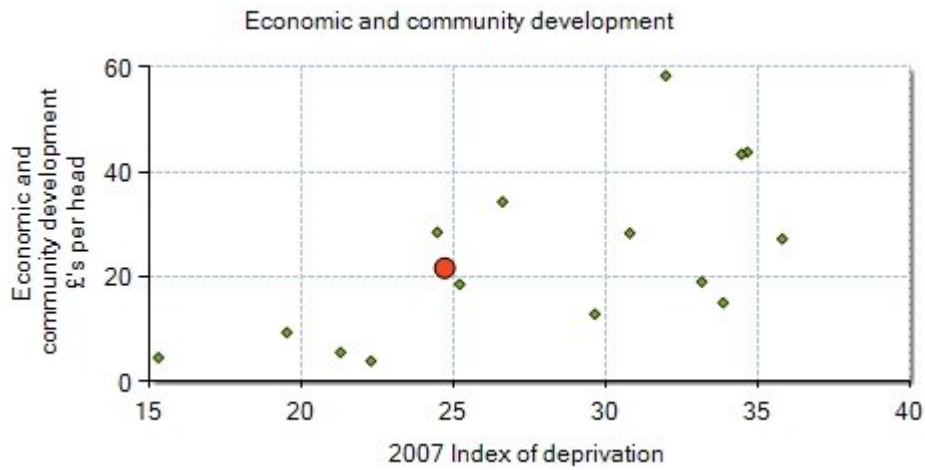


This chart shows the volume of waste landfilled over the last four years. Councils are expected to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill in order to reduce its negative environmental impact.

Consider how the share of waste going to landfill has changed over time alongside the council's performance on recycling?

## Environment: Other

### Economic and community development

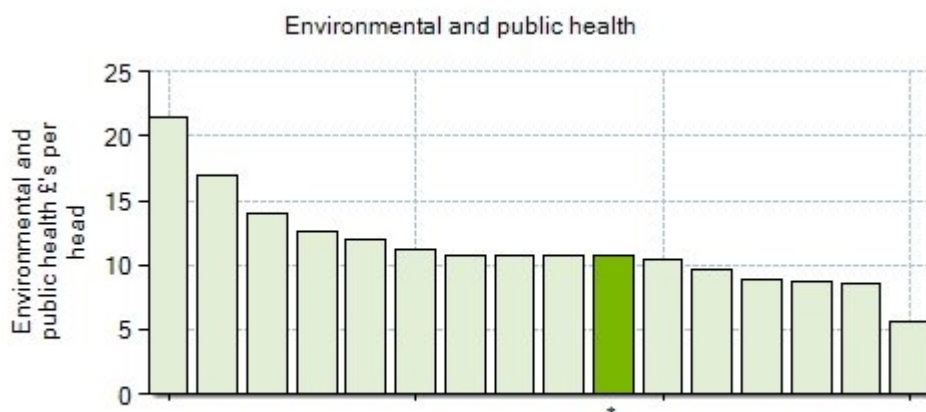


Spending on these services is positively correlated with levels of deprivation.

Is the council's level of spending consistent with other councils with similar levels of deprivation?

## Environment: Other

### Environmental and public health

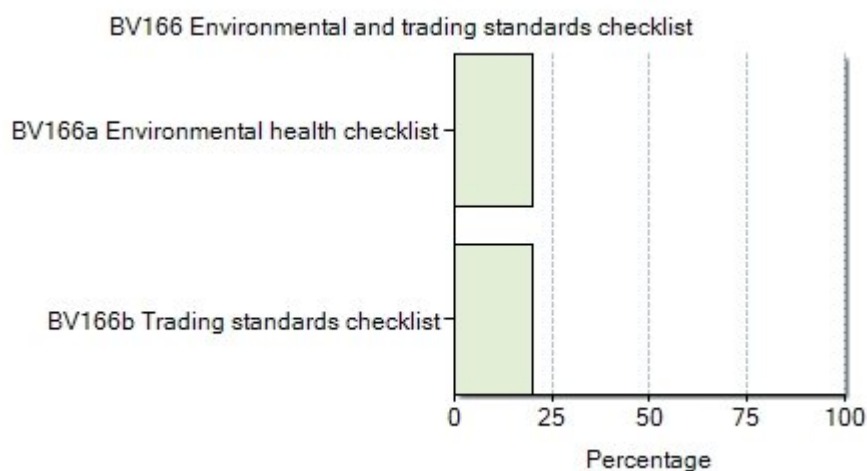


This chart compares the council's expenditure on environmental and public health services with other councils in the comparator group. Environmental and public health covers a very wide range of services including food safety, public conveniences and pollution reduction.

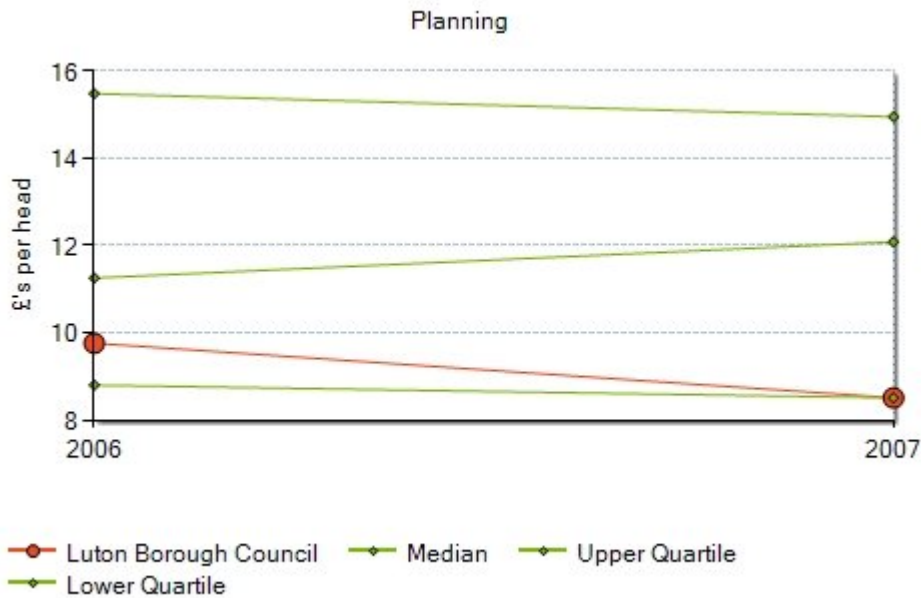
Expenditure may also be affected by the characteristics of an area, expenditure on food safety activities may be higher in areas with a large number of city centres and shops and restaurants.

The council's score against a checklist of enforcement best practice for environmental health (BVPI 166) which is one of the range of activities included in the expenditure depicted above is shown below.

### Environmental health: Enforcement best practice score



## Planning



This chart shows the council's spending on planning over the last four years. Spending on planning will be driven by the size and complexity of the environment that the council is responsible for.

Income from planning application fees (set nationally) meet a significant share of costs and as a result, net spending on planning represents a small share of spending on environment services.

### Planning delivery grant (PDG)

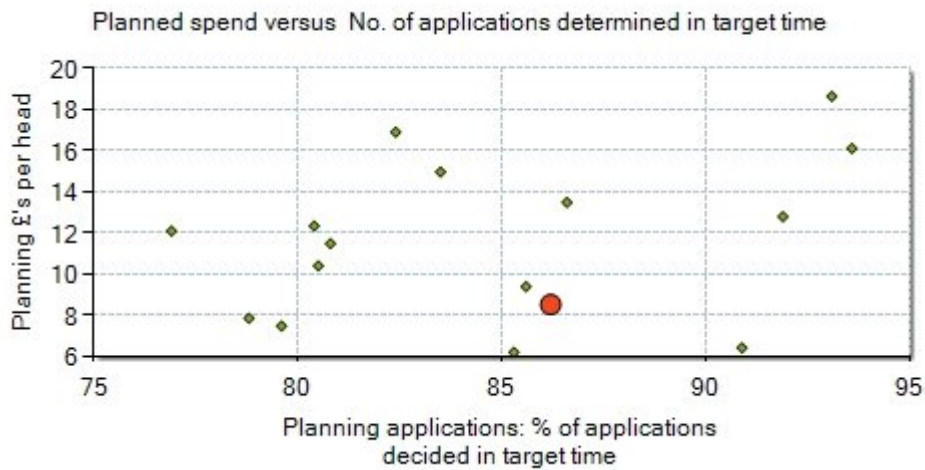


Planning delivery grant (PDG) from CLG is intended to enable councils to invest in faster and more effective planning services. It is additional to the revenue resources allocated to planning by the council.

Councils have discretion over how they apply the grant. Typically the majority of the grant is applied to the planning service.

This chart depicts PDG as a proportion of the council's total spending on planning. Is PDG an exceptionally high proportion of the budget? If this is the case, is it because the PDG has been offset by a reduction in the revenue budget, and if so what are the council's plans for funding its development control services when PDG is replaced by the proposed housing and planning delivery grant?

## Planning

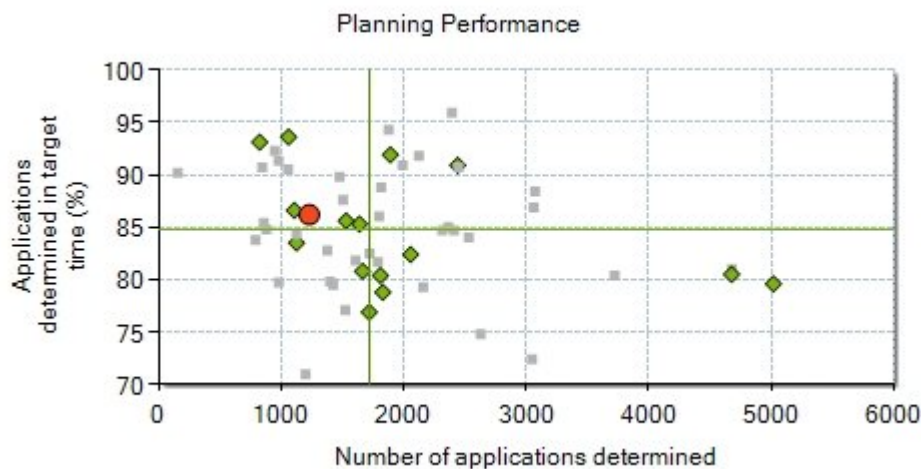


This chart plots the relationship between planning spend per head and the number of applications determined in target time. Determining applications in target time is a key aspect of planning performance. Speed of determining planning applications should be considered alongside information on the number of applications determined and the number of appeals allowed depicted below.

Councils with higher levels of spending should show that their spending is associated with distinctive performance and/or volumes of work.

This chart takes into account the different targets for processing times for major, minor and other applications. Major applications are usually the most difficult to determine within the 13 week target.

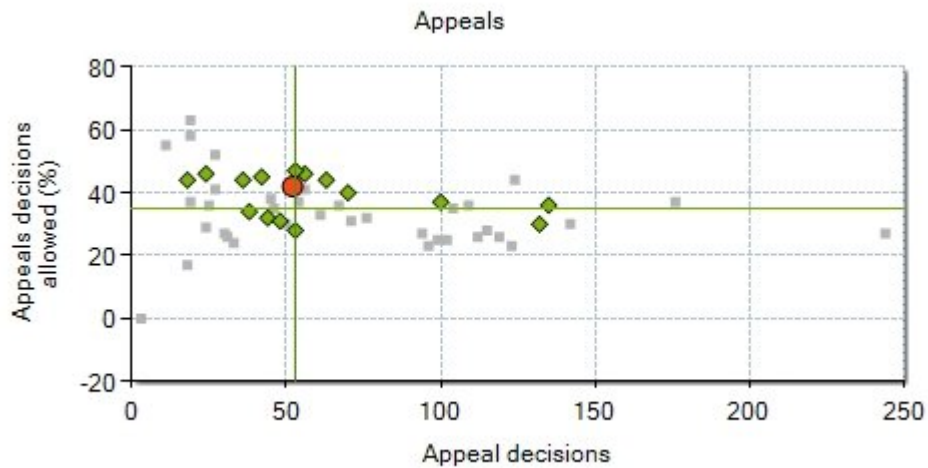
### Planning performance



The chart compares the number of applications decided and the percentage of decisions made in target time.

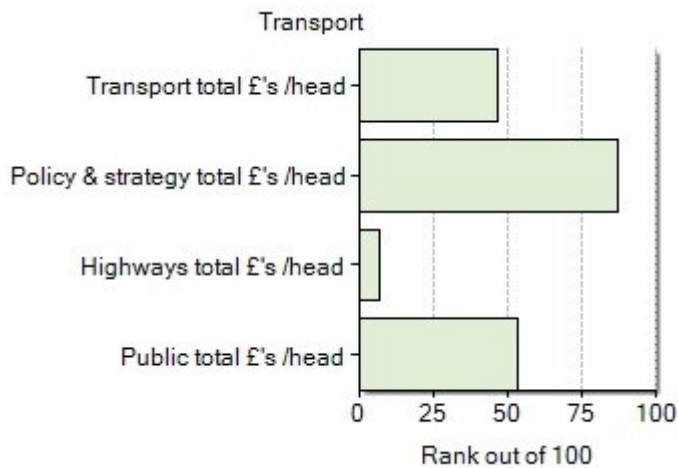
## Planning

### Appeals



This chart compares the number of appeals decided in the year and the percentage of appeals that were allowed. A high proportion of appeals being allowed could point to weaknesses in the council's planning processes.

## Transport

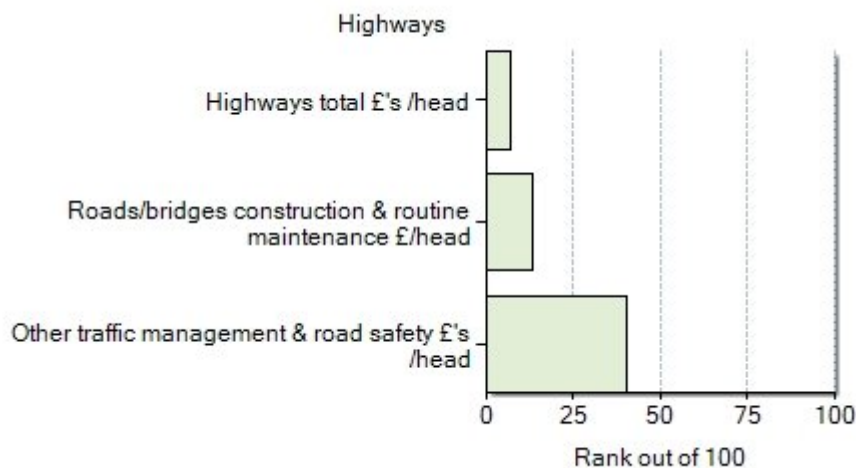


Each bar of the chart shows how the council's spending for transport services ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council spends more on highways than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on highways than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

Spending on transport is made up principally of spending on highways (with the exception of London boroughs) and spend on public transport including concessionary fares, parking spend and income.

## Transport: Highways

### Overview



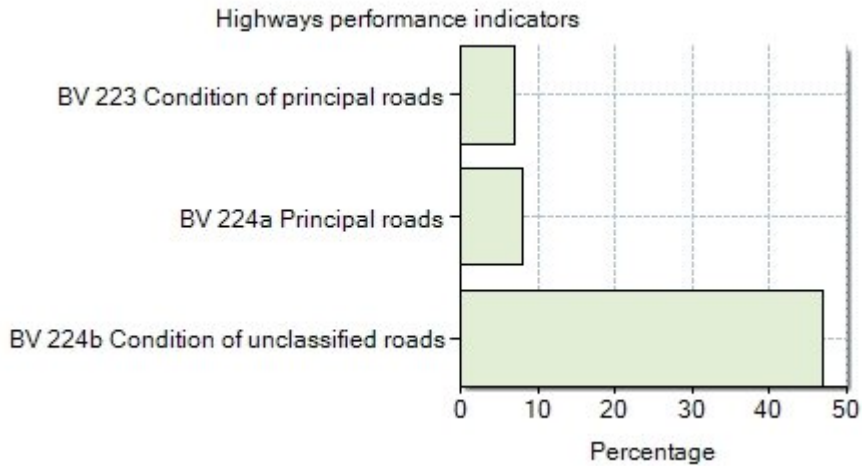
Spending on construction and maintenance typically account for 80-90 per cent of planned spending on highways.

There is a significant time lag between historic measures of road condition and plans for spending to maintain and improve infrastructure.

The Gershon review suggested that substantial efficiency gains are available through roads maintenance procurement.

## Transport: Highways

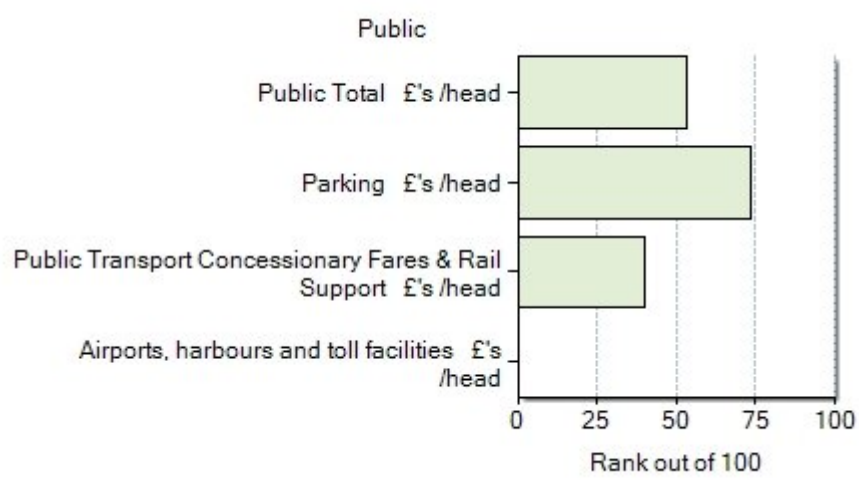
### Highways performance indicators



The chart compares the council's performance on highways indicators - BVPI 223 principal road condition, BVPI 224a non-principal road condition, and BVPI 224b unclassified road condition.

In comparing spending with the performance indicators highlighted above, it is important to bear in mind the time lag between historic measures of road condition and plans for spending to maintain and improve infrastructure.

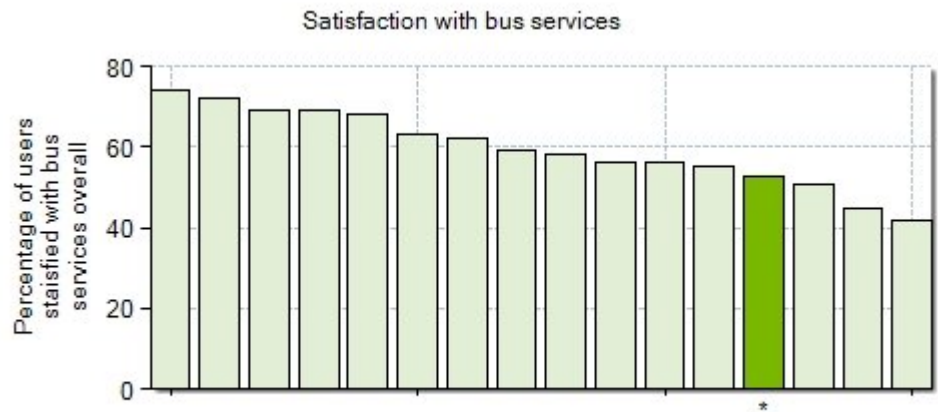
Transport: Public



Outside London, councils may procure socially necessary bus services to complement the service provided by the commercial network.

Transport: Public

Satisfaction with bus services



The chart compares residents' satisfaction with bus services overall.

Transport: Public

Parking



This chart compares the council's spending on parking services, or where it is a negative value, the income gained from parking services with that of other councils in the comparator group.

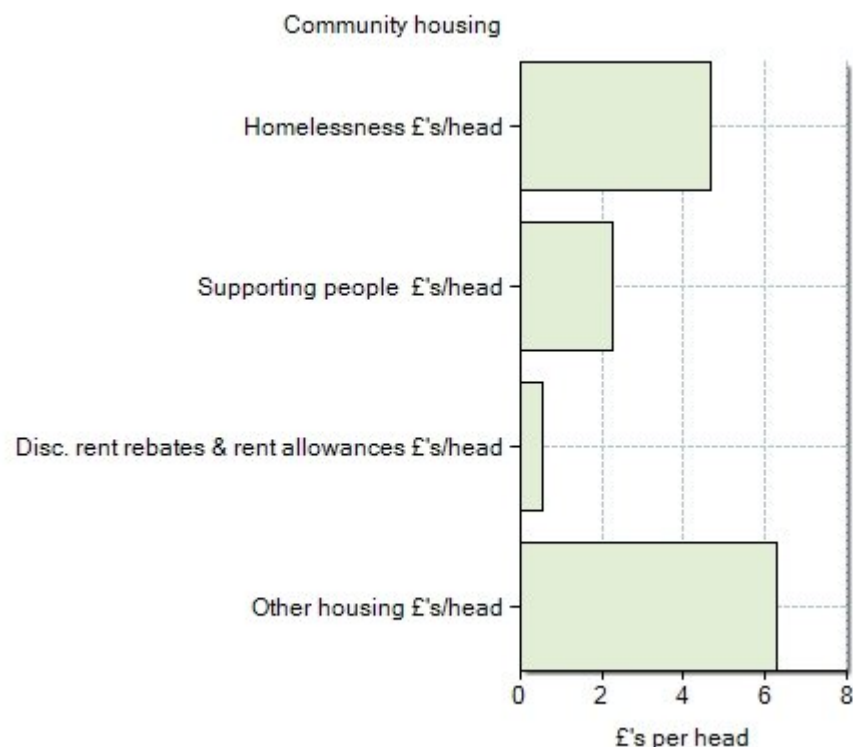
In most councils, spending on parking is more than offset by income. In general terms, councils that attract visitors during the day tend to yield more income than councils with lower day time populations.

However, levels of pricing for parking may reflect wider strategies in the local transport plan, for example for tackling congestion or supporting the local economy.

The Audit Commission has published the findings of its study into charging for local services, it is available from [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=132207AE-6E66-4d54-9549-9EB3A71077B0&SectionID=sect1](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=132207AE-6E66-4d54-9549-9EB3A71077B0&SectionID=sect1).

## Housing

### Expenditure overview - actual spend per head



This chapter on housing includes homelessness, private sector housing, balancing housing markets and supporting people. All single tier and district councils are responsible for providing community housing services even if they do not have their own housing stock. County councils are responsible for administering the supporting people programme.

This chart above shows actual spending per head across the different categories of community housing expenditure - homelessness, supporting people, discretionary rent rebates and rent allowances and other expenditure from the general fund.

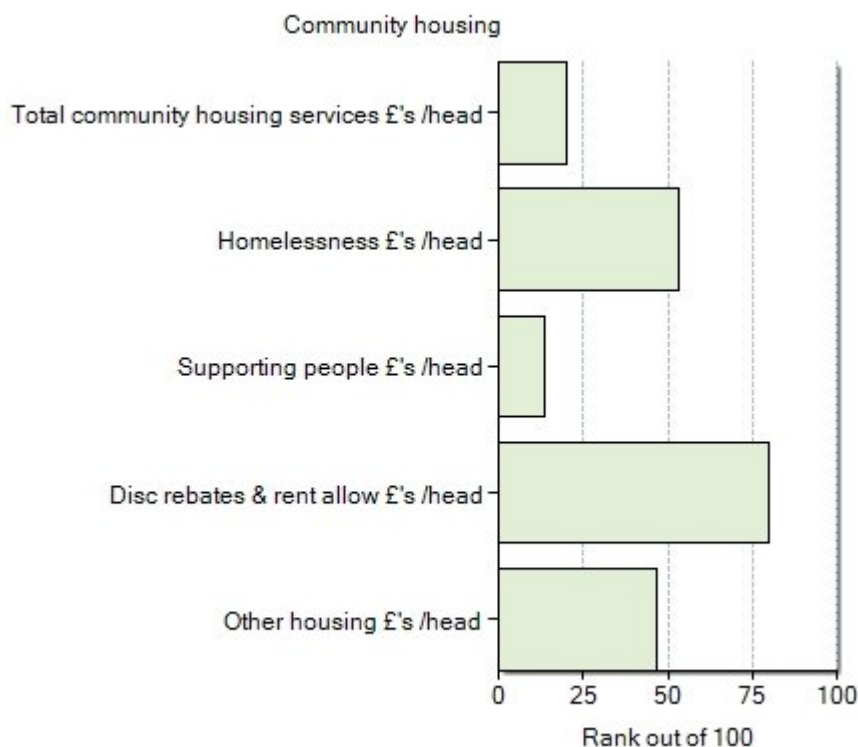
Each year the Audit Commission makes an assessment of a council's performance in providing community housing and, where applicable, housing management. The assessment is made by combining housing inspection reports with a range of performance indicators. In 2007 the council's housing services were scored as level 3 (performing well - consistently above minimum requirements) out of a possible 4.

If significant variances are identified, further detail with suggested lines of enquiry is shown beneath the relevant chart. These are not exhaustive and should be considered alongside the council's priorities.

All housing inspection reports include a section on value for money. If a council has had a recent housing inspection you should consider its findings on value for money. Housing Inspection reports are available from the housing section of the Audit Commission website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/subject.asp?CategoryID=ENGLISH^1628^SUBJECT^2821](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/subject.asp?CategoryID=ENGLISH^1628^SUBJECT^2821).

## Housing

### Expenditure overview - relative ranking



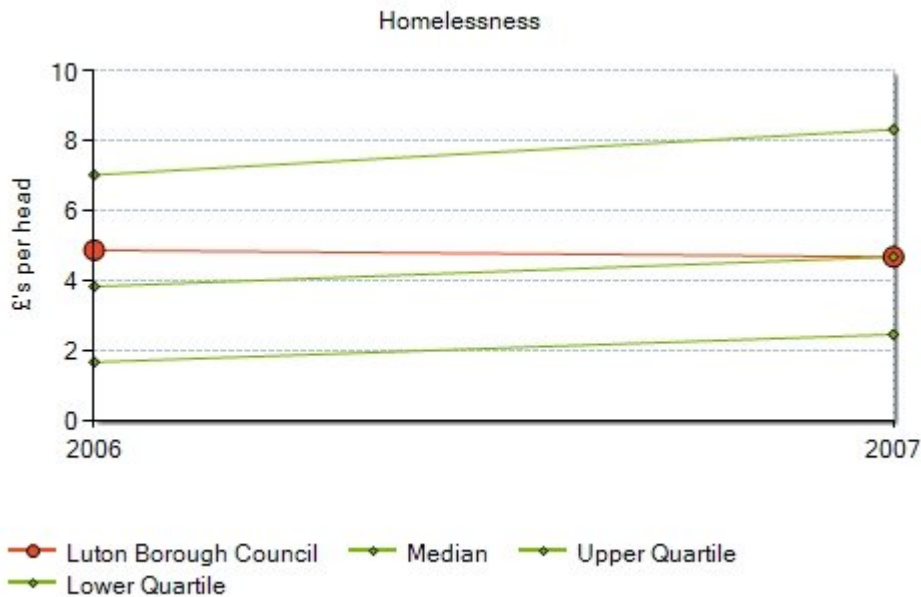
This chart shows how the council's spending for community housing services ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council spends more on homelessness than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on homelessness than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

Typically, single tier councils spend less than 1 per cent of their overall service on community housing services. Councils do spend significantly greater sums on management of housing stock however this is not funded from the general fund. If councils have high levels of spending on community housing services this is unlikely to affect how their overall level of spending compares with others.

**For more information about the data used in this report refer to Annex One.**

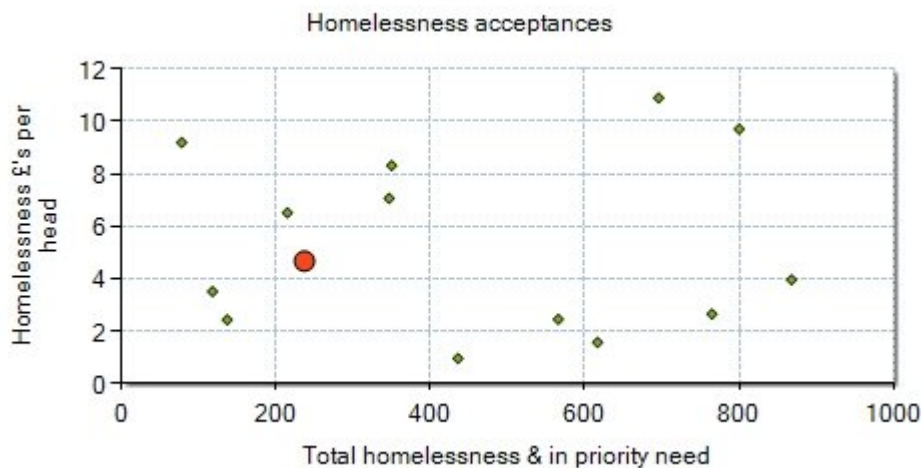
## Housing

### Homelessness



This chart shows the council's spend (£s) per head on homelessness over time.

### Homelessness: level of acceptances



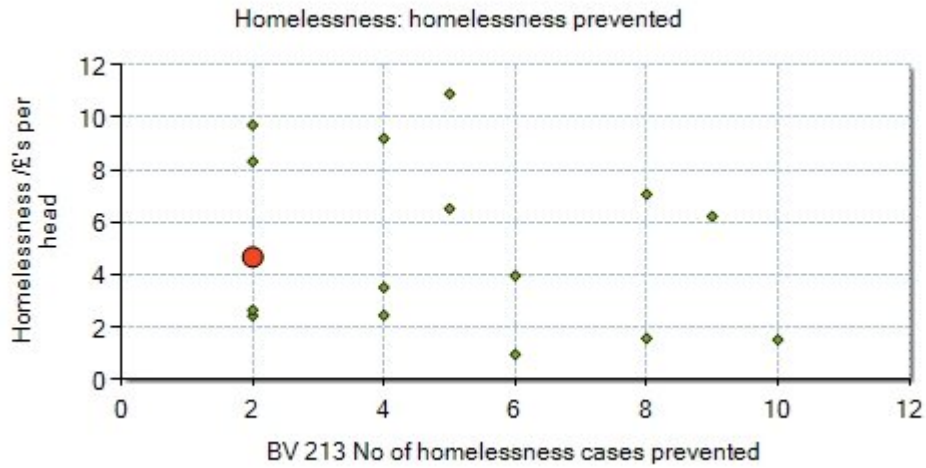
This chart shows the relationship between expenditure on homelessness £s per head and the number of households accepted as homeless.

This information should be considered alongside the information on homelessness prevented (below) and should be used to understand the benefits derived from a council's expenditure on homelessness.

You may also want to consider how the numbers accepted as homeless have changed over time. Councils should be engaged in preventative activity to prevent homelessness amongst all client groups to prevent a statutory duty from arising.

## Housing

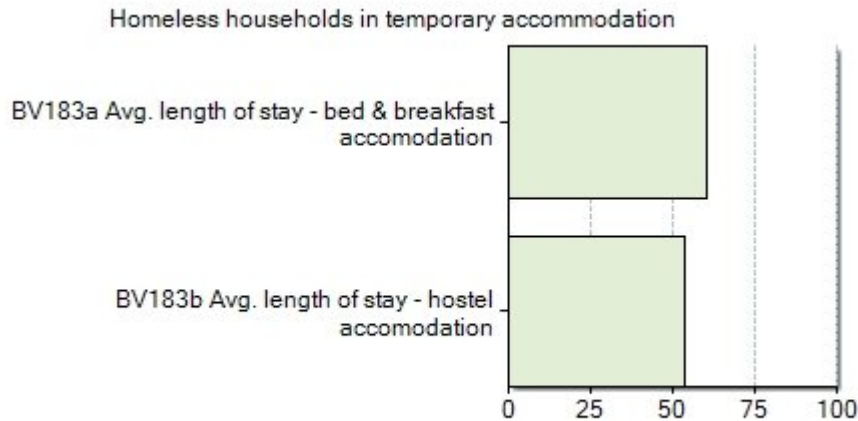
Homelessness: homelessness prevented



This chart shows the relationship between expenditure on homelessness and the number of homelessness cases prevented as measured by BVPI 213.

## Community Housing

### Homeless households in temporary accommodation

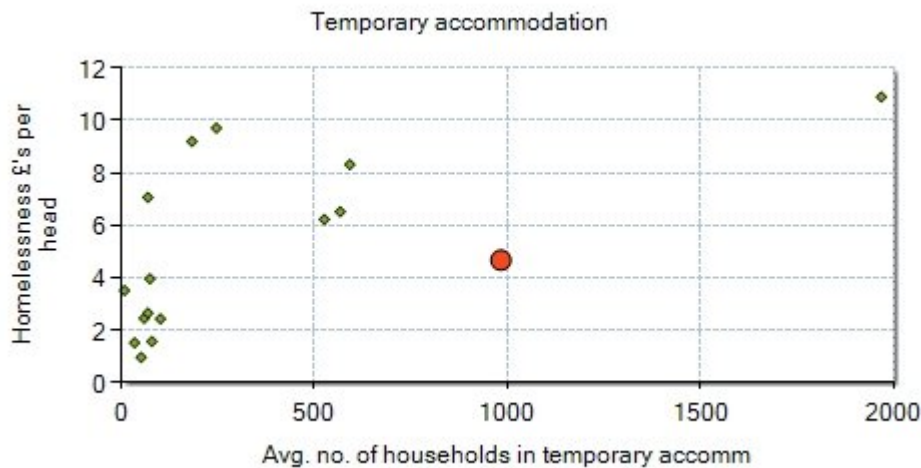


This chart depicts the average length of stay in bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation.

Levels of spending on homelessness are positively correlated with the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation. Where significant variances occur, potential lines of enquiry include:

- what actions has the council taken to reduce the cost of temporary accommodation but ensure quality is improved?
- what if any improvement has been made to the average length of stay in temporary accommodation?
- what proportion of homelessness expenditure is spent on preventative measures? and
- what is being done to reduce homelessness?

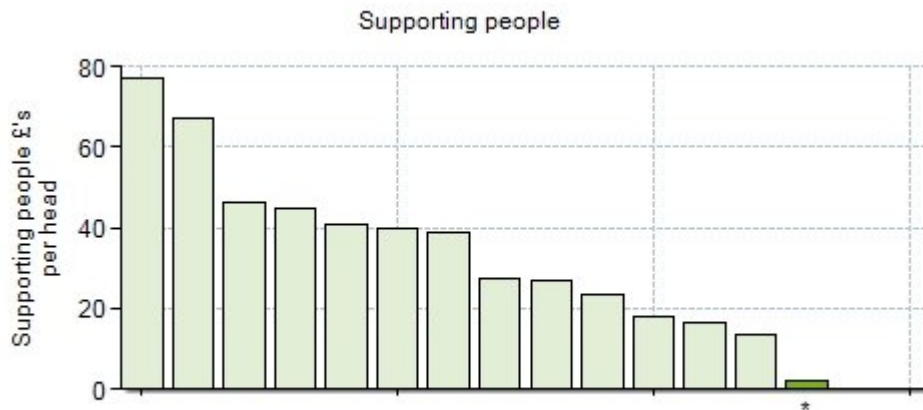
### Homeless households in temporary accommodation over time



Consider how this profile of the number of households in temporary accommodation relates to the profile on spending overleaf. Where the numbers are increasing does the council understand the reason for this? Are the increases likely to continue? What action has the council taken to manage the impact on costs?

## Community Housing

### Supporting people



This chart compares the council's expenditure on supporting people with that of other councils in the comparator group. This programme is grant funded through CLG. Where significant variances occur, potential lines of enquiry include:

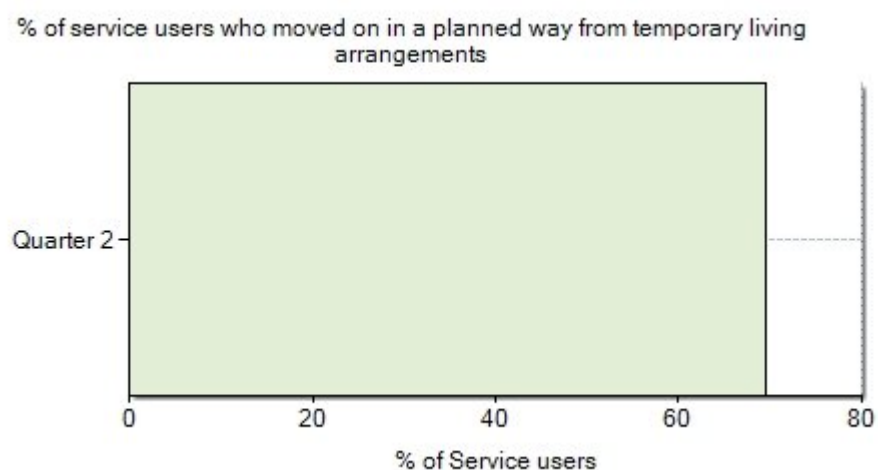
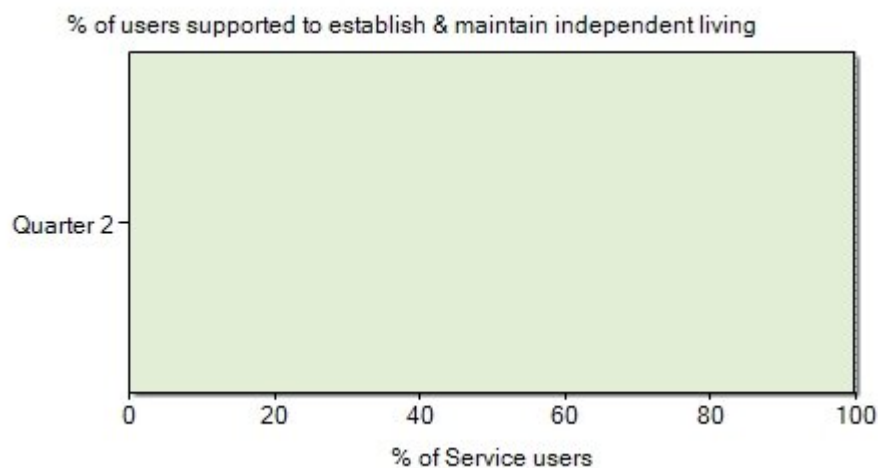
- There is a need to ensure that the grant funding is fully utilised but also to evaluate how efficiently the local authority uses its Supporting People resources.
- Has there been a supporting people inspection and what were its findings?

## Community Housing

### Supporting people: Key Performance Indicators

The charts below set out the council's results for supporting people KPI 1 (service users who are supported to establish and maintain independent living) and KPI 2 (service users who have been supported to move on in a planned way from temporary living arrangements).

This information should be considered alongside the information on supporting people grant depicted above.



## Housing management

### Spending per dwelling



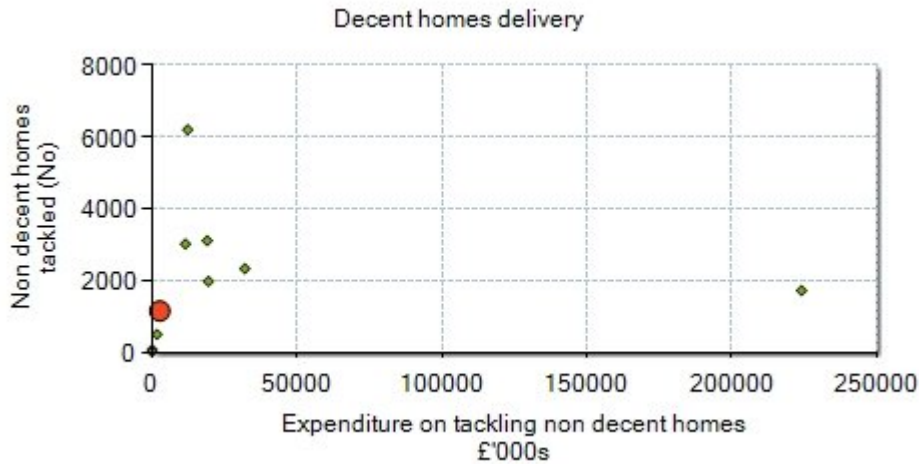
This chart shows how weekly costs and rent levels compare to the costs and rent levels of other councils in the comparator group. This information is only shown for councils that operate a housing stock.

Expenditure per dwelling is made up of a number of costs, for example management and repairs as well as costs associated with capital improvements. These elements together account for more than 80 per cent of spending.

Councils should use cost and quality information as drivers of performance and as a mechanism of identifying efficiency savings. However, costs alone do not reflect value and rent levels do not reflect costs. The council should be able to relate its level of spending to levels of tenant satisfaction and performance in the management of its stock. Local housing authorities in England operate within a national finance system supported by central government. Councils have little discretion over rent levels.

## Housing management

### Decent homes delivery



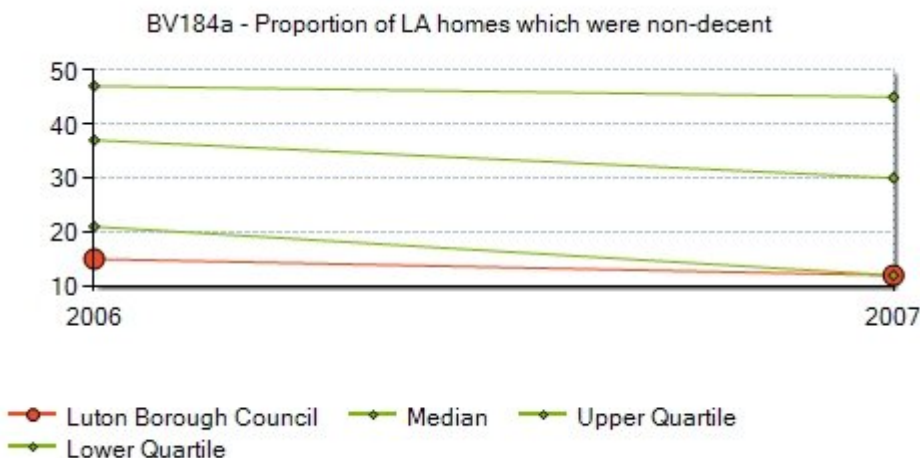
This chart shows the relationship between expenditure on tackling decent homes and the number of decent homes tackled.

The decent homes target requires all social housing to meet standards of decency by 2010. Some councils have negotiated an extension to this deadline. This target also extends to the private sector, where the focus is on reducing the proportion of vulnerable households in non decent homes.

The practical implications of this target will differ for councils based on the size, age and composition of their dwelling stock. Delivery should be tailored to meet local needs as identified through an appropriate stock condition survey and should be part of an overarching strategy for the local authority's stock. Where significant variances occur, it is appropriate to explore the relationship between the:

- number of non decent homes in the council area;
- number of non decent homes tackled during the year;
- average expenditure of tackling each non decent home; and
- the condition of the stock tackled during the year.

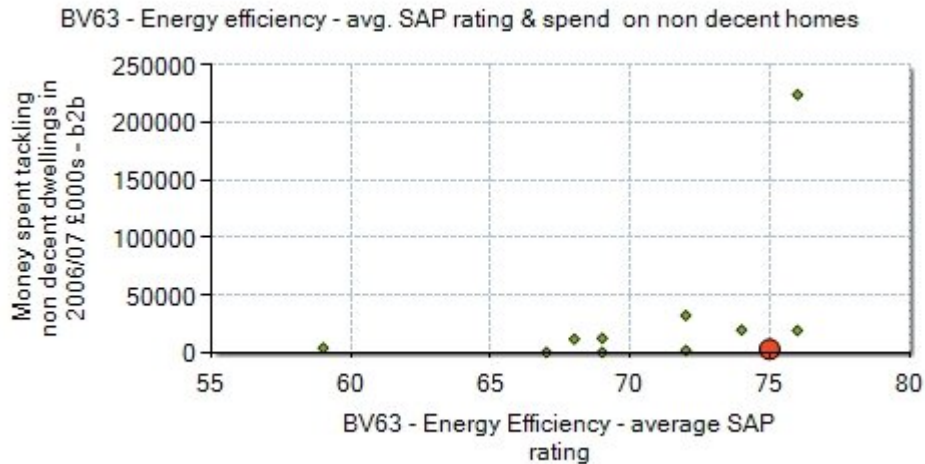
### Decent Homes: Trends



This chart shows progress in tackling decent homes over the last four years.

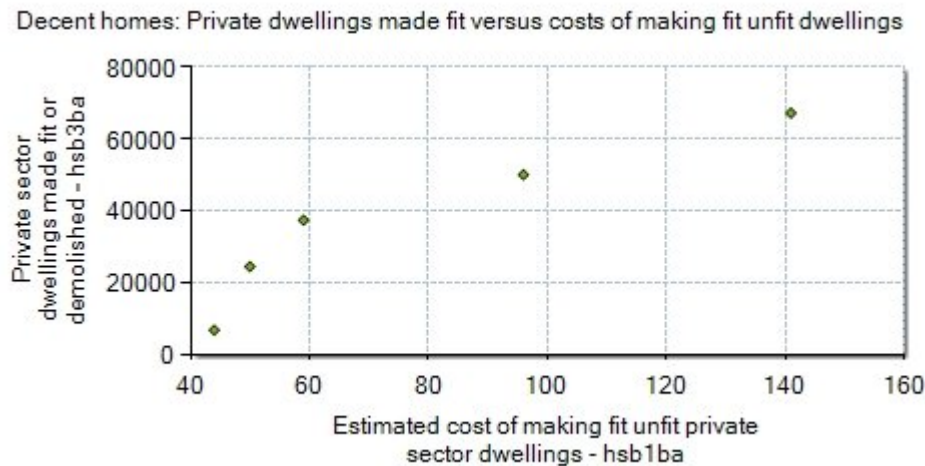
## Housing management

### Decent Homes: SAP rating



This chart shows the relationship between decent homes expenditure and Energy Efficiency of Council stock. Councils should be seeking to improve the energy efficiency of its housing stock as part of its drive to reduce its carbon impact.

### Decent Homes: Private dwellings made fit

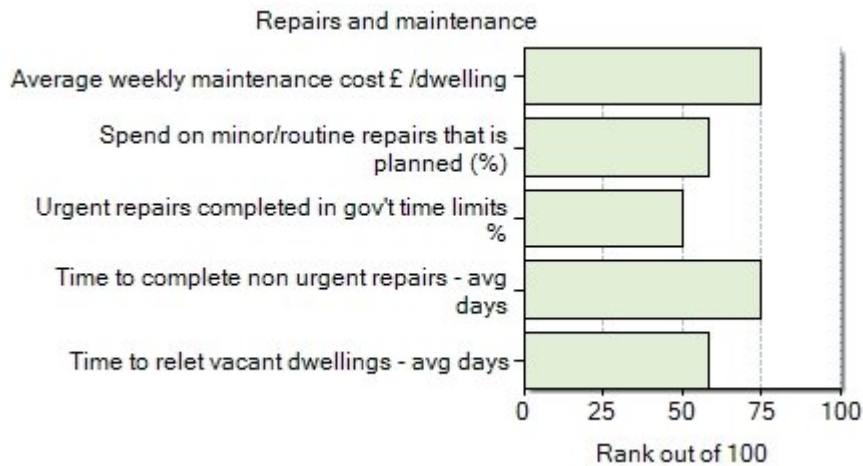


This chart shows the relationship between costs of improving private dwellings and the number of private dwellings made fit. Where significant variances occur, it is appropriate to explore the relationship between the:

- number of private dwellings tackled during the year;
- average expenditure of tackling each non decent private dwelling; and
- the condition of the private dwellings tackled.

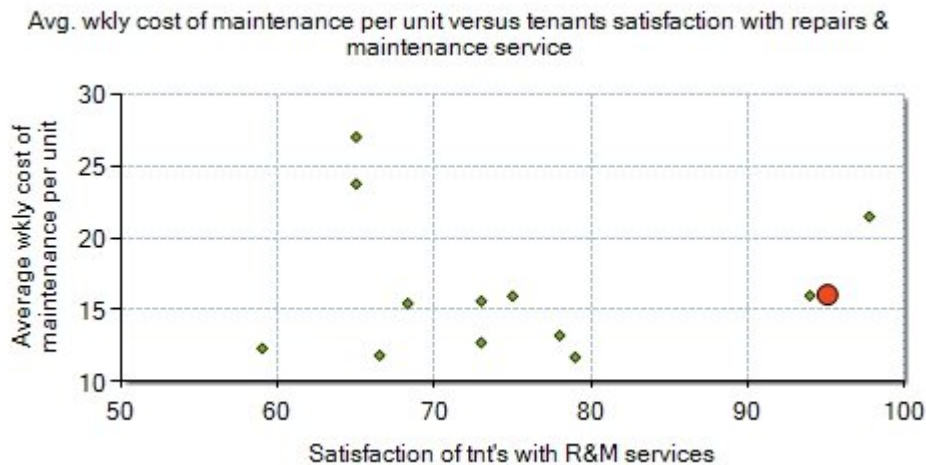
## Housing management

### Repairs and maintenance



This chart highlights the council's expenditure on repairs and maintenance and the quality of services provided as highlighted by the performance measures depicted above.

### Repairs and maintenance: Satisfaction

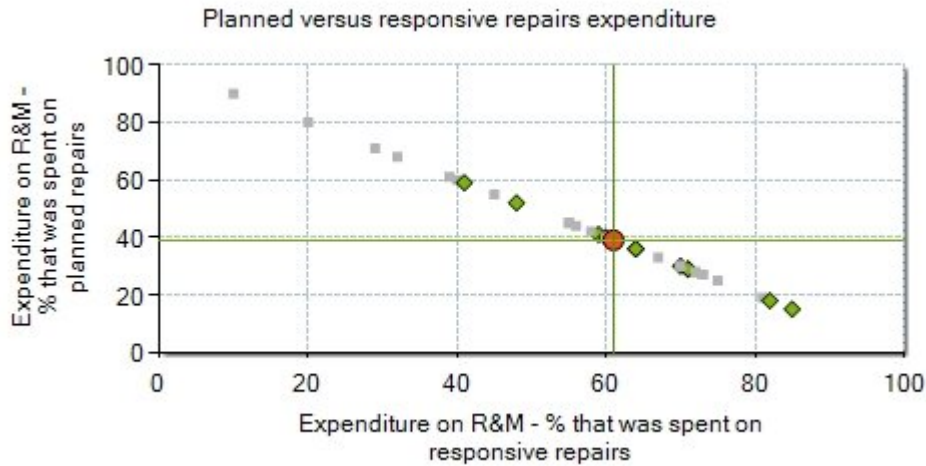


This chart compares the council's spend on (unit costs) repairs and maintenance with levels of satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service.

Councils with higher levels of spending on repairs and maintenance need to be able to demonstrate corresponding good performance in terms of the timeliness of repairs and communication about responsive repairs.

## Housing management

### Repairs and maintenance: Planned and responsive repairs



Because planned or cyclical maintenance is generally more efficient and cheaper than carrying out repairs on a responsive basis, one indicator of efficiency in a repairs service is the ratio between the two types of expenditure.

The implementation of modern procurement practices such as partnering for responsive and planned repairs has the potential to release significant efficiency gains. The Commission has published an innovation pack aimed at decision makers exploring modern procurement practices. [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housingefficiency/partnering/index.asp](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housingefficiency/partnering/index.asp)

## Housing management

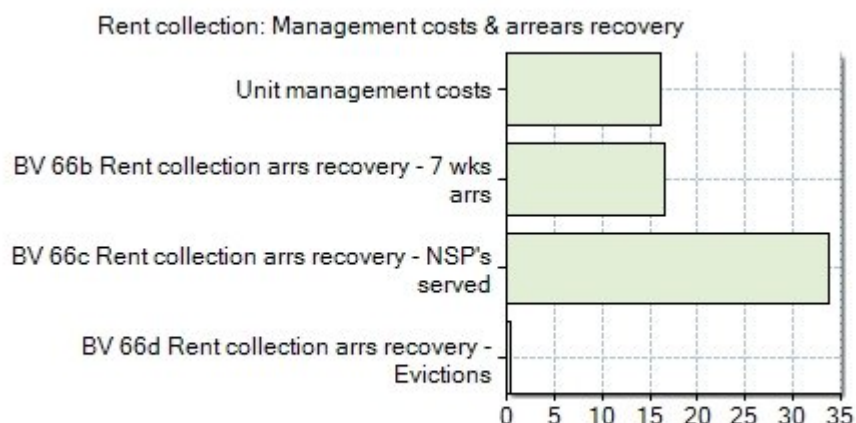
### Rent collection over time



This chart shows level of rent collected over the last four years. Across the country, the councils with poorer levels of rent collection have made progress in achieving collection rates closer to those of better performing councils. Councils with poorer levels of rent collection should be able to demonstrate that they have improved their performance at a faster rate than other councils. The Audit Commission has published a tool to support councils seeking to further improve collection rates. [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/directdebit/index.asp](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/directdebit/index.asp)

This chart compares the council's performance in arrears recovery. How does the council compare to other councils in the comparator group? What action is being taken to address poor performance?

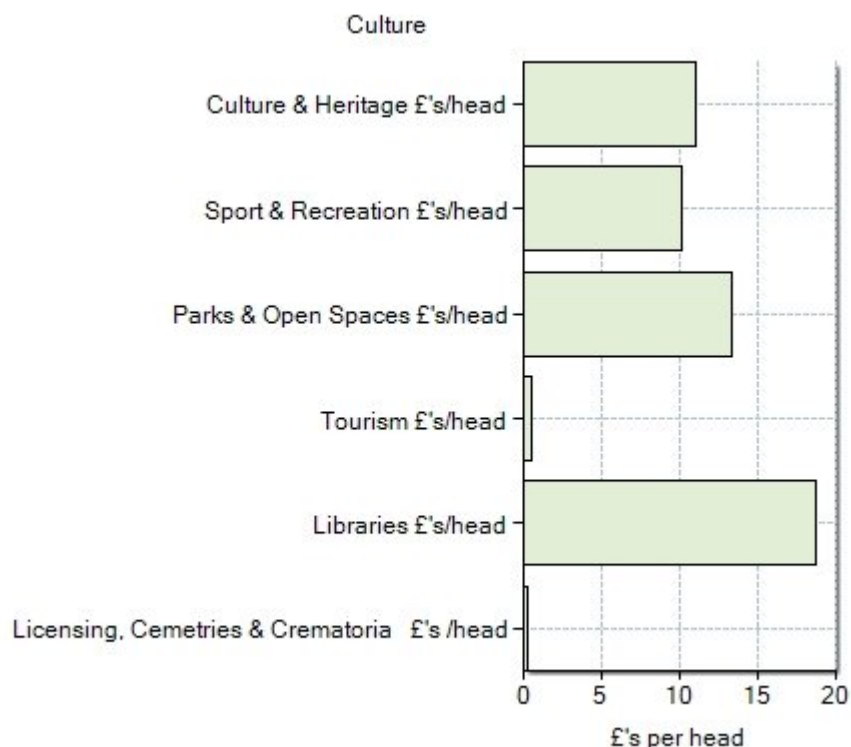
### Rent collection: Management costs and arrears recovery



This chart compares the council's housing management costs and rates of arrears recovery with that of other councils within the comparator group. Consider the relationship between the two. If both are high what are the reasons for this?

## Culture

### Expenditure overview - actual spend per head



This chart shows how much the council spends per head on the different categories of culture.

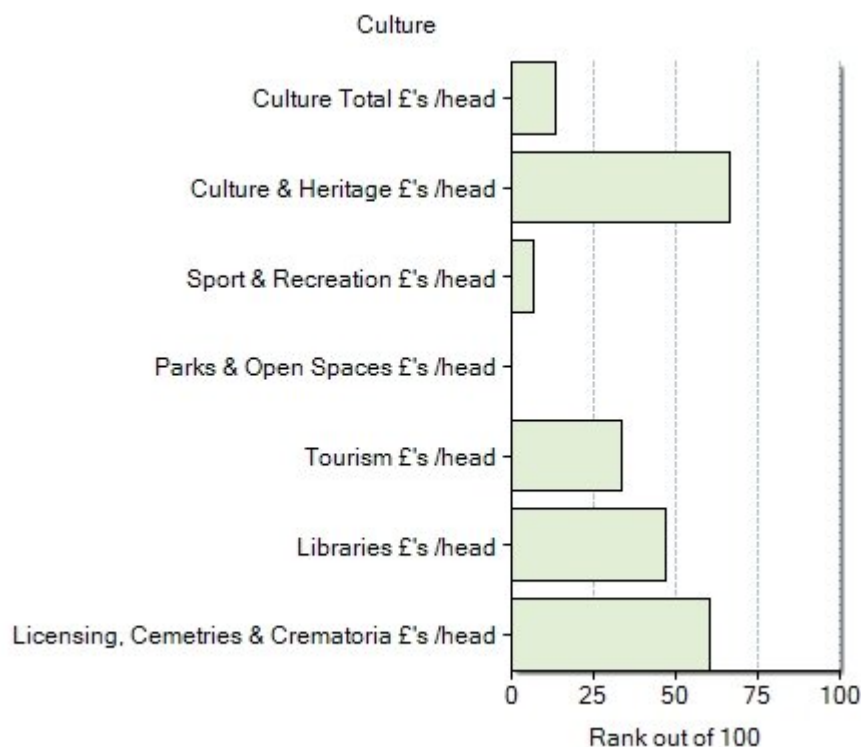
With the exception of library services, and the duty to ensure that children and young people have access to positive leisure time activities, cultural services expenditure tends to be discretionary.

However, policy-driven variation can sometimes disguise underlying value for money and efficiency issues. Where costs are either high or low (compared with authorities that are likely to provide similar levels of service) it will be important to highlight this so that authorities are encouraged to explore the underlying issues and increase efficiency to improve the return on their investment. Most cultural services are supported by benchmarking arrangements but not all authorities use them. (E.g. National Benchmarking Service (NBS), Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) for leisure facilities and sport. IPF data for libraries, archives and other leisure services and Destination Performance UK for tourism.)

**For more information about the data used in this report refer to Annex One.**

## Culture

### Expenditure overview - relative ranking



Whilst the Commission generally uses the definition of cultural services common across government, for the purposes of the VFM profile, culture refers to the range of services depicted in the graph above. Some authorities have large cemeteries or crematoria or extensive culture and leisure facilities whilst others do not. Great care is therefore needed when comparing the total cultural services expenditure figures between areas.

Councils aim to improve the quality of life for their residents through a range of cultural and sporting activities.

Council's investment objectives will vary, but these usually relate not just to culture, but supporting improvement on a wide range of issues including health, education, reducing anti-social behaviour and community cohesion. These are frequently expressed in the Local Area Agreement. Councils need to identify indicators and measures by which they can evaluate the impact of their investment in providing or procuring mainstream services and in relation to cultural activity that they deliver or support through grants.

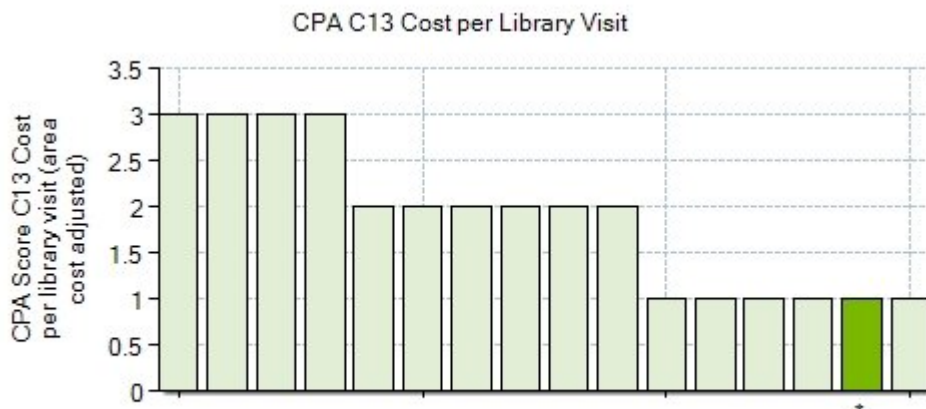
Each year the Audit Commission makes an assessment of a council's performance in relation to culture services and outcomes. The assessment is made by combining culture inspection reports with a range of performance indicators. In 2007 the council's culture services were scored as level 2 (adequate performance - only at minimum requirements) out of a possible 4.

Each bar of the chart shows how the council's spending for culture services ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council spends more on parks and open spaces than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on parks and open spaces than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

Typically, single tier councils spend around 4 per cent of their overall service spending on culture services. In addition to the sums that councils directly spend, there is investment through PFI and the National Lottery.

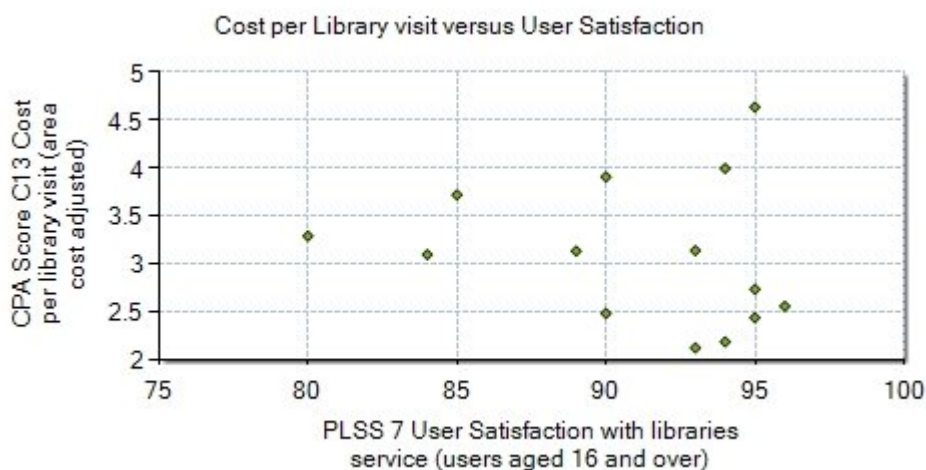
## Culture - Libraries

### Libraries - Cost per visit



This chart compares the unit cost per library visit. Significant differences in spending should be explored. The figures shown have been adjusted for area cost variation.

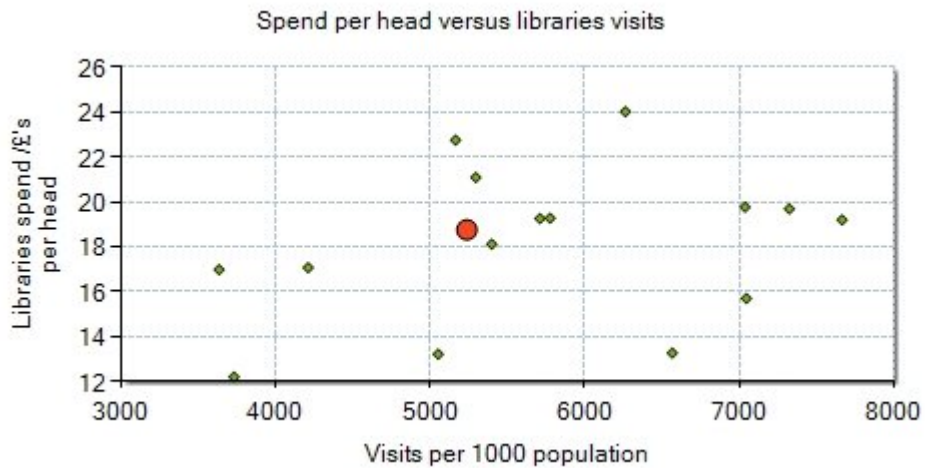
### Libraries - Cost per visit and satisfaction with library services



This chart shows the relationship between cost per library visit and levels of satisfaction with libraries. Consider how spend relates to satisfaction levels. Councils should be able to demonstrate a link between the resources that they invest and the extent to which residents are satisfied with those services.

## Culture - Libraries

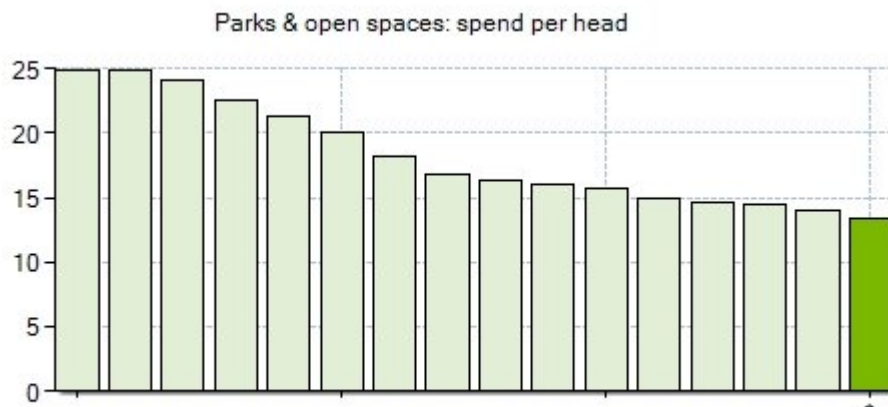
### Libraries - Usage of libraries



This chart shows the relationship between spend per head on libraries and number of visits to libraries. High levels of spending on services should be associated with high levels of take up of those services. How does the council compare to other councils in the comparator group?

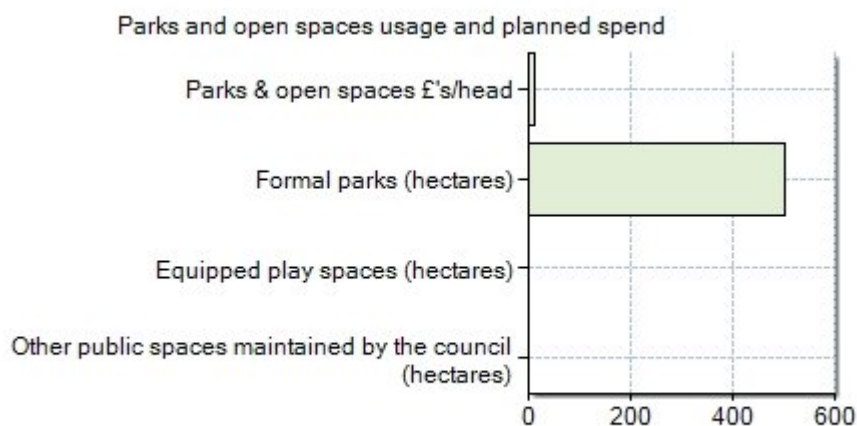
## Culture - Parks and Open Spaces

### Parks and open spaces - Spend per head



This chart compares the council's spend per head on parks and open spaces with that of other councils in the comparator group. Consider how this council's expenditure compares with that of other councils.

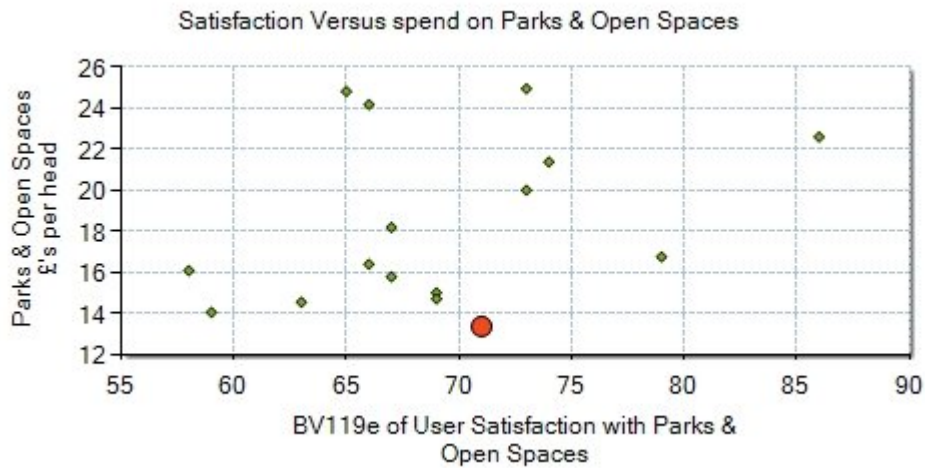
### Parks and open spaces - Hectares managed



This chart provides information on the size and type of facility maintained by the council other authorities in the comparator group. Consider how this compares to the expenditure figures in the chart above. Councils categorise open spaces in different ways. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

## Culture - Parks and Open Spaces

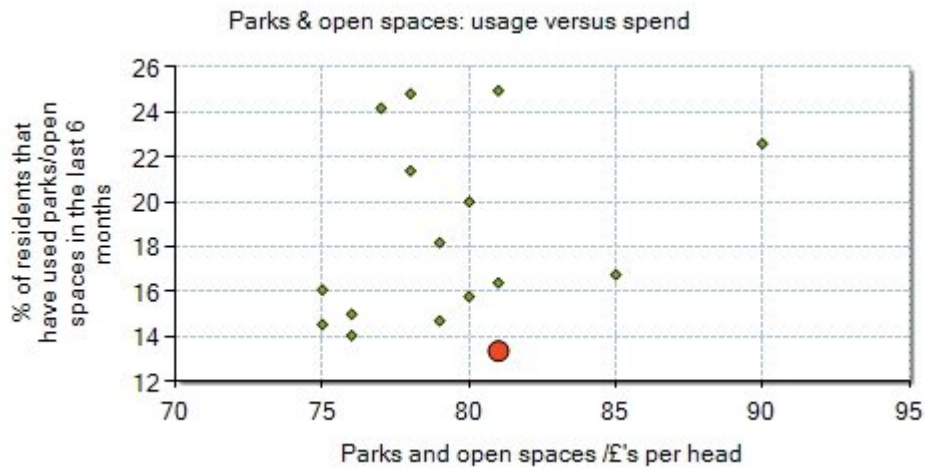
### Parks and open spaces - Satisfaction



This chart shows the relationship between spend per head on parks and open spaces and levels of satisfaction. Consider how spend relates to satisfaction levels. Councils should be able to demonstrate a link between the resources that they invest and the extent to which residents are satisfied with those services.

## Culture - Sport and Recreation

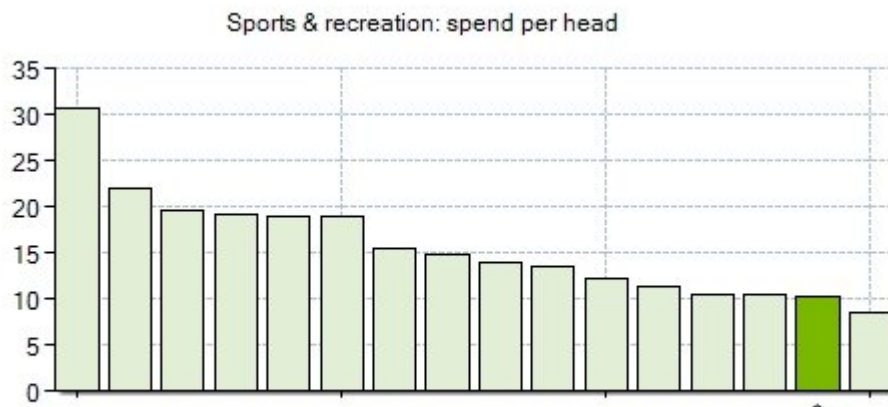
### Parks and open spaces - Usage



This chart shows the relationship between spend per head on parks and open spaces and usage of parks and open spaces. High levels of spending on services should be associated with high levels of take up of those services. How does the council compare to other councils in the comparator group?

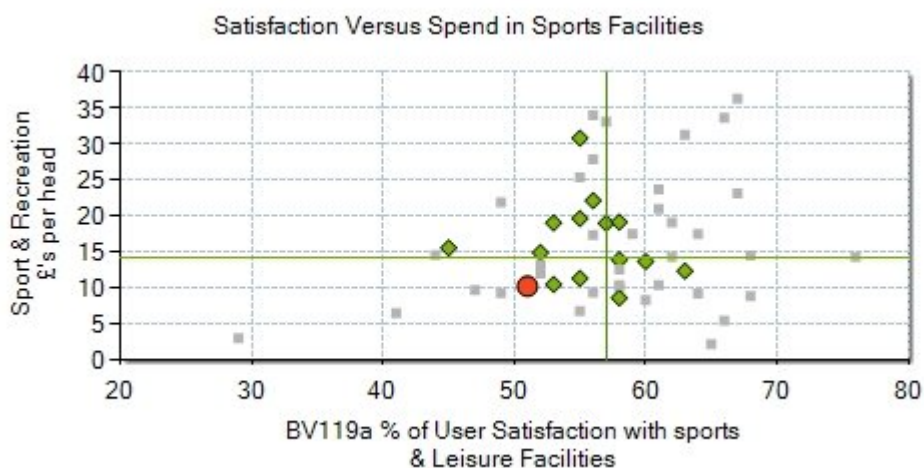
## Culture - Sport and Recreation

### Sport and Recreation - Spend per head



This chart compares the council's spend per head on sports and leisure parks and open spaces with that of other councils in the comparator group. Consider how this council's expenditure compares with that of other councils, but remember that the type and amount of provision varies widely between authorities. Further information on improving value for money in sport and leisure is available from the Audit Commission Improvement Tool *Sport and Leisure Facilities: fit for the future?* Available at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/leisure](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/leisure).

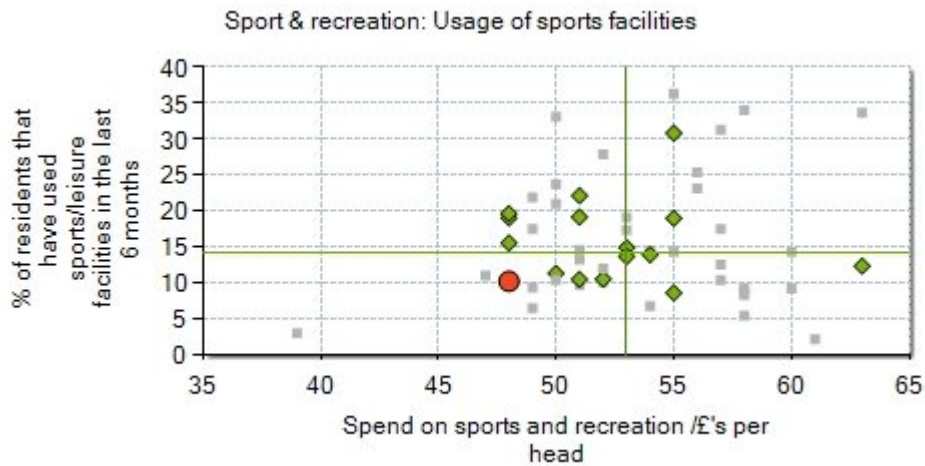
### Sport and Recreation - Satisfaction



This chart shows the relationship between spend per head on sports and leisure and levels of satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities. Consider how spend relates to satisfaction levels. Councils should be able to demonstrate a link between the resources that they invest and the extent to which residents are satisfied with those services.

## Culture - Sport and Recreation

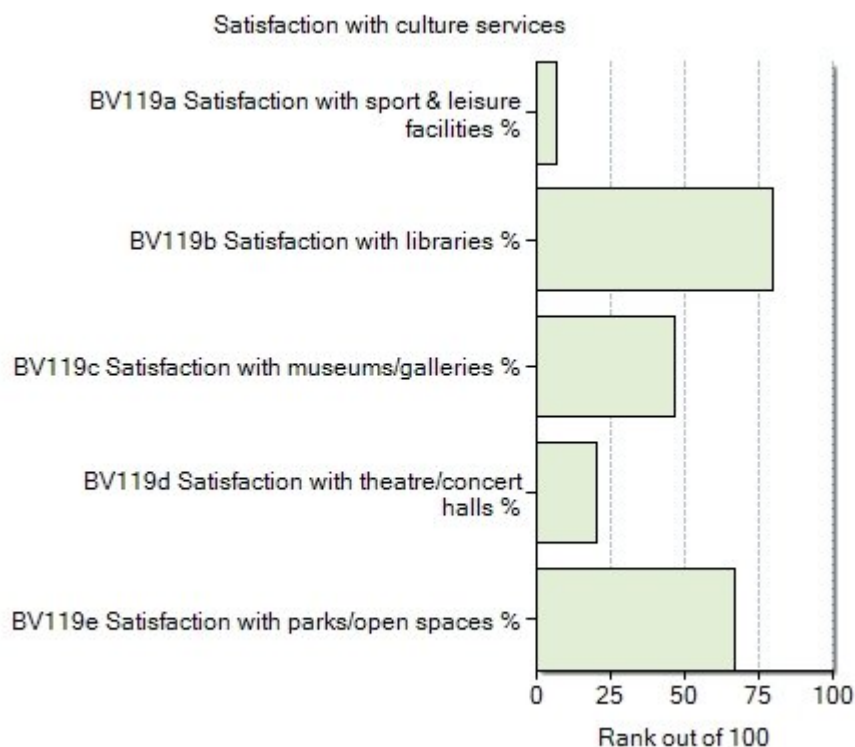
### Sport and Recreation - Usage of sports facilities



This chart shows the relationship between spend per head on sports and leisure and usage of sports and leisure facilities. High levels of spending on services should be associated with high levels of take up of those services. How does the council compare to other councils in the comparator group?

## Satisfaction with and use of culture services

Percentage of residents satisfied with services

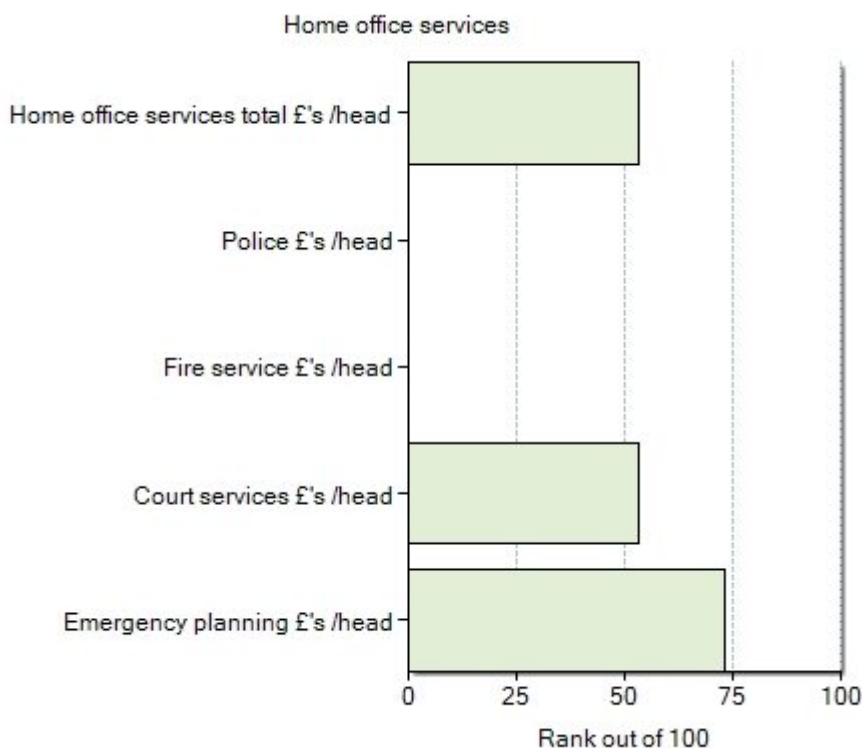


Surveys of residents carried out in all councils in 2006/07 demonstrated that the single biggest factor explaining variation in satisfaction with culture services was the extent to which those services were used by the local population.

Councils should be able to demonstrate a link between the resources that they invest and the extent to which residents are satisfied with those services.

High levels of spending on services should be associated with evidence of comparably high levels of take up and satisfaction with those services.

## Home Office services



Home Office services are not a grouping within BVACOP. These services are presented together because they relate to spending by the council on activities that support spending on protecting public safety by other public bodies.

The information above is included to complete the picture of the spending of the council. In most cases it would not be appropriate to explore the spending on these services in more detail.

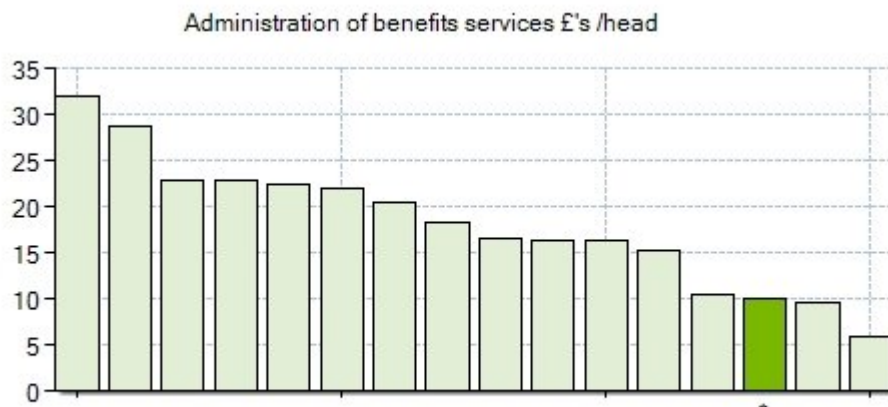
This area of spending typically accounts for less than 0.5 per cent of spending by single tier councils.

Each bar of the chart shows how the council's spending on home office services and others ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council spends more on court services than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on court services than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

**For more information about the data used in this report refer to Annex One.**

## Benefits Administration

### Administration of benefits



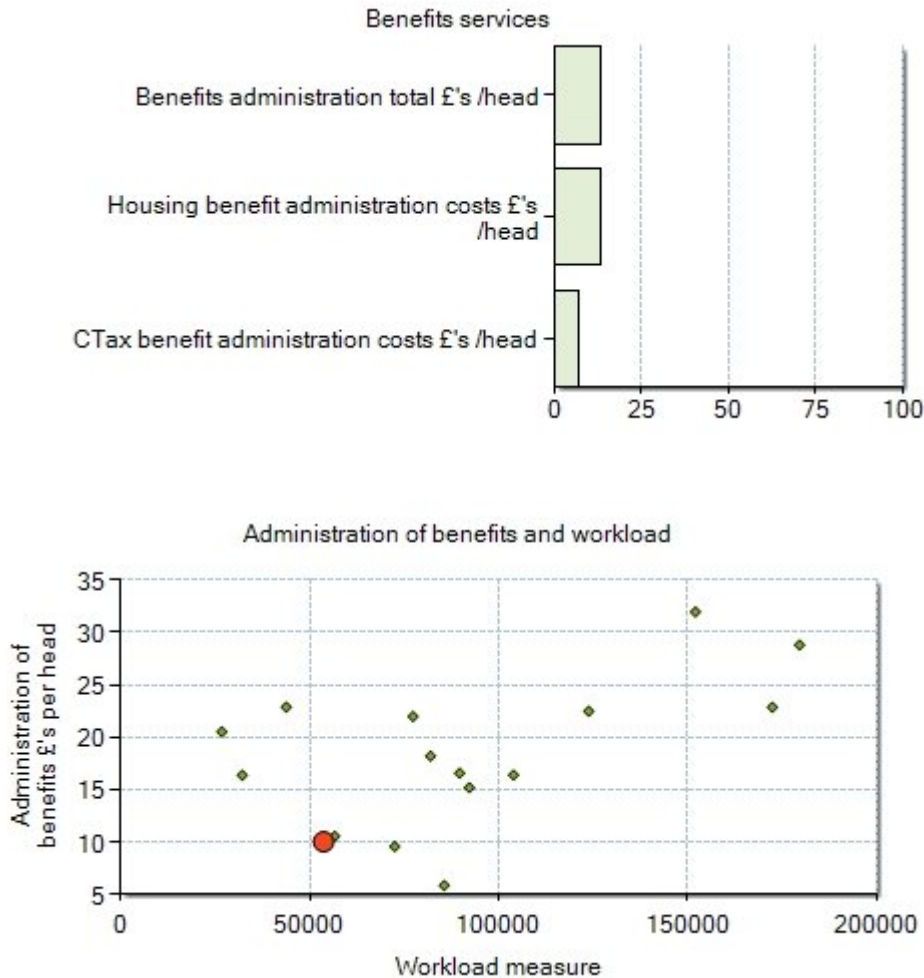
This chart shows expenditure £ per head on benefits administration only compared with the other authorities in the comparator group. In previous years this predefined report has combined the costs of benefits administration and council tax collection. Please note that while administration of benefits (housing and council tax) and collection of local taxes are discrete activities, they have enough in common to make the apportionment of overheads between the different activities a significant influence on the apparent costs of any given service. Where significant variances occur, consider whether they can be explained by variations in the way overheads are apportioned between council tax collection and benefit administration.

In single tier councils benefit administration typically accounts for around 1 per cent of spending.

The Council's performance in providing housing and council tax benefit services was assessed annually by BFI until April 2008. In 2007 the council's benefit services were scored as level 2 (adequate performance - only at minimum requirements) out of a possible 4.

## Benefits Administration

Cost of administering council tax and housing benefits and workload levels

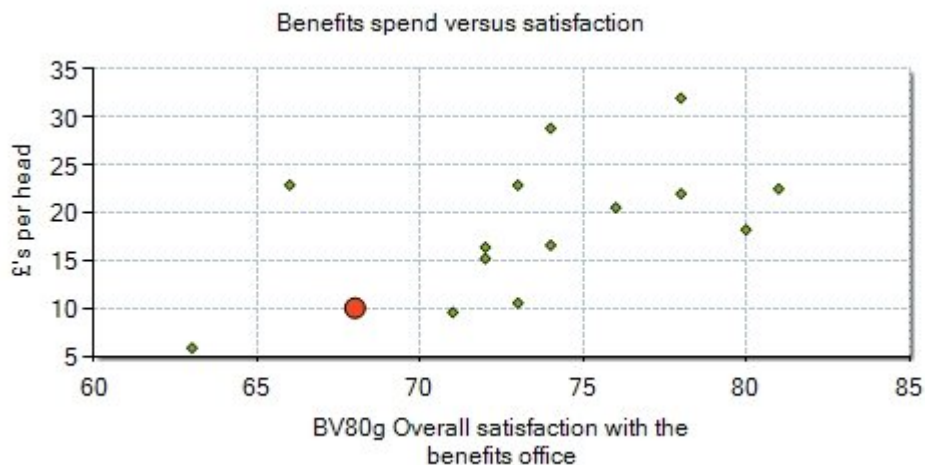


Costs of administering housing and council tax benefits do vary between councils and much of this variation is explained by differences in numbers and types of work. The workload measure combines data about the new claims (council tax and housing benefits) and changes to claims (council tax and housing benefits) with weightings that reflect the different processing costs. How does the council's spending on administration compare with that of other councils with similar workload levels?

More information on the workload measure is available from the following link: [www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/benefits/2007\\_08\\_Benefits and Council Tax Collection Workload Measure \(revised\)\\_01.doc](http://www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/benefits/2007_08_Benefits%20and%20Council%20Tax%20Collection%20Workload%20Measure%20(revised)_01.doc)

## Benefits Administration

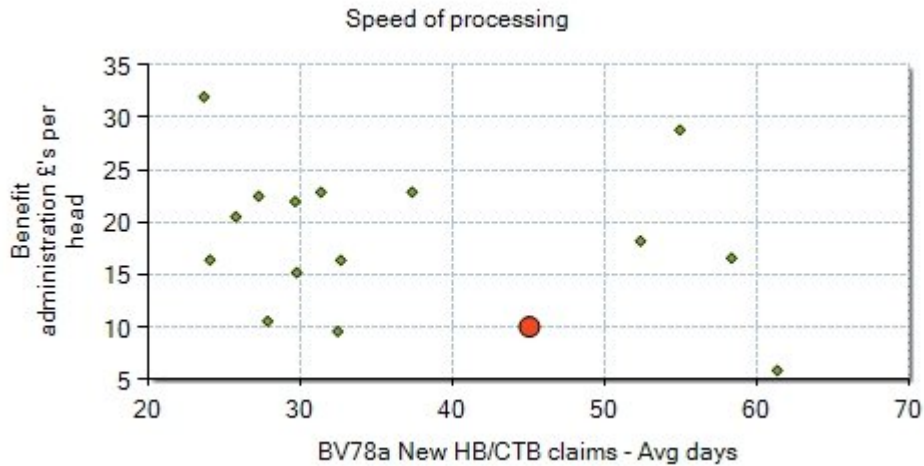
### Cost of administering benefits and satisfaction



This chart compares costs per head with satisfaction levels drawn from the 2006/07 general survey. Nationally there has been little change in satisfaction levels. Satisfaction levels are one dimension of performance, this information ought to be considered alongside the information on workload levels and speed of processing claims in the rest of this report.

## Benefits Administration

Administration of housing and council tax benefit and speed of processing claim



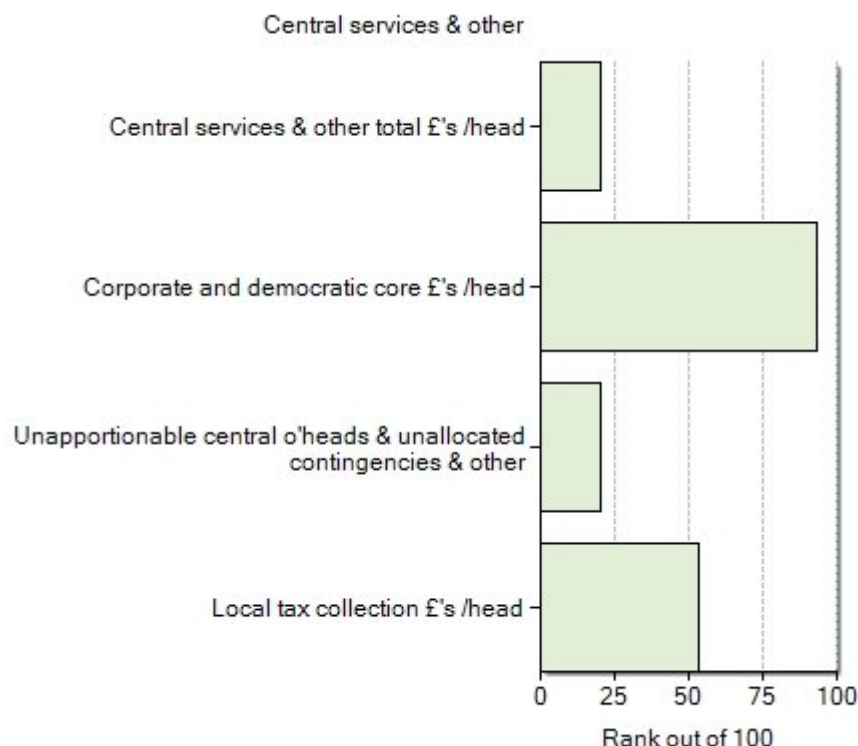
New claims and changes in circumstances represent the majority of activity in benefit claims administration. The indicator is one of speed only though, and does not take into account the number or complexity of the claims involved. High costs may indicate high volumes of activity. Low costs may relate to a relatively small caseload with relatively low numbers of people moving between properties. It is important that councils understand the relationship between these variables in order to identify potential room for efficiency improvements.

## Housing Benefit Security



Councils are committed to reducing the level of fraud and error in the benefit system and are taking a range of actions to address this. New Security measures were introduced from 2007/08. This chart is based on performance information from 2006/07.

## Council tax administration, central services and other

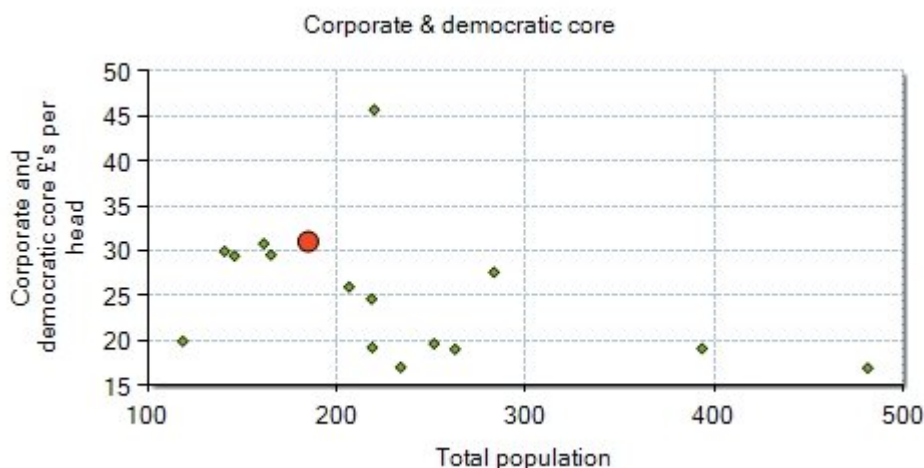


Each bar of the chart shows how the council's spending for central services (like council tax collection, corporate and democratic services and unapportionable overheads) ranks when compared to other councils. For example, if a council spends more on council tax collection than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 100 and if it spends less on local tax collection than all the councils in the comparison group it has a rank of 0.

This area of spending typically accounts for around 3 per cent of spending by single tier councils.

**For more information about the data used in this report refer to Annex One.**

### Corporate and democratic core

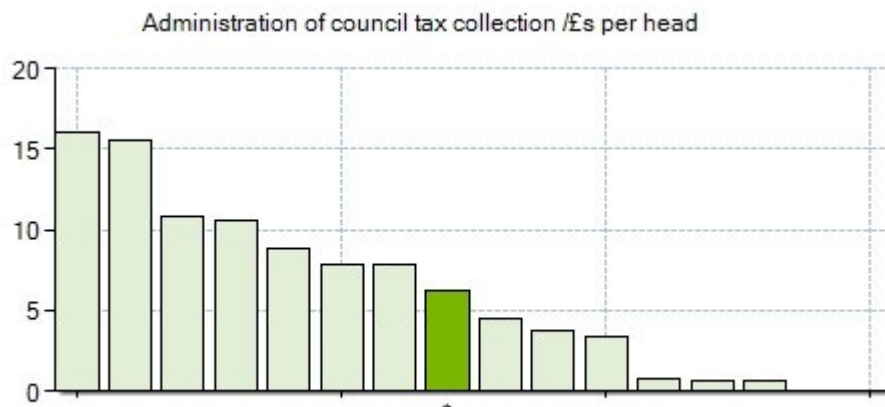


Spending on the corporate and democratic core will reflect the critical mass required to run any council. Where significant variances occur, potential lines of enquiry include:

- How far is this council's spending on corporate and democratic core consistent with spending by councils with a similar population?

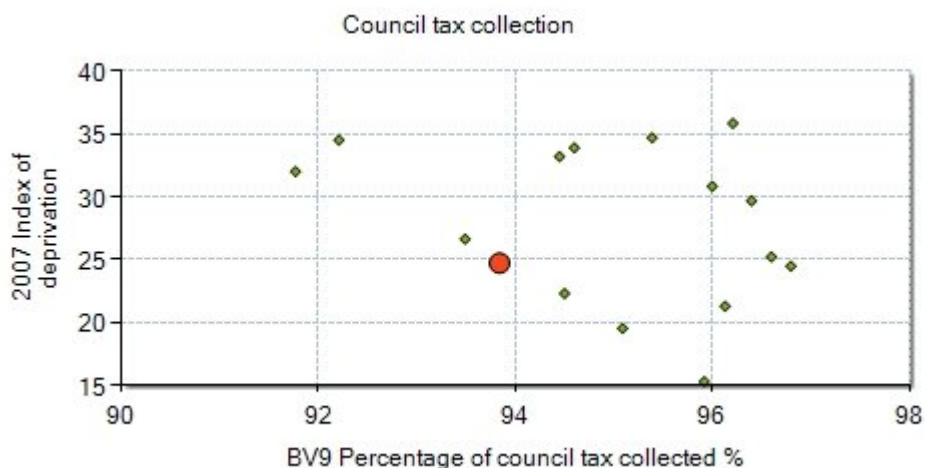
## Council tax collection

### Council tax collection £s per head



This chart depicts how much is spent per head on council tax collection. While administration of benefits (housing and council tax) and council tax collection are discrete activities, they have enough in common to make the treatment of overheads a significant influence on the apparent costs of any given service. Where significant variances occur, consider whether they can be explained by variations in the way overheads are apportioned between council tax collection and benefit administration.

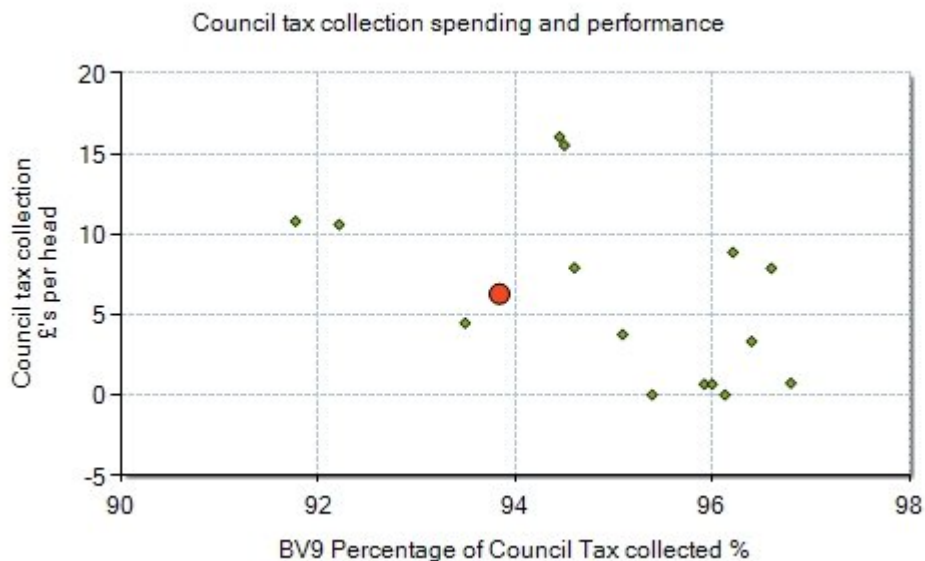
### Council tax collection and deprivation



Across the country, levels of council tax collection have improved in recent years. In particular the councils with poorer levels of collection have made progress in achieving collection rates closer to those of better performing councils. To what extent is the level of council tax collected by the council consistent with what is achieved by councils with similar levels of workload? The Audit Commission has published a tool to support councils seeking to further improve collection rates. [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/directdebit/index.asp](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/directdebit/index.asp)

## Council tax collection

### Administration of council tax collection and tax collection rate



This chart compares spend on council tax collection per head with the percentage of council tax collected. How does the council's spending on administration compare with that of other councils with similar workload levels?

Our research for the publication 'The Efficiency Challenge — the administration costs of revenues and benefits' showed that there is no real relationship between the amount of money spent on administering revenues collection and how well the council performs, in terms of collection rates (taking deprivation into account). Why are costs high when collection rates are low? How do these costs compare with similar councils and does the council understand the reasons?

## Annex One

### Spending information

The majority of spending information in this document is taken from the RA return. Data is for 2007/08 unless otherwise stated.

For more information about the RA return, please refer to [www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/RA/2007\\_08\\_Sources of indicators\\_RA return\\_02.doc](http://www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/RA/2007_08_Sources%20of%20indicators_RA%20return_02.doc).

Spending information relating to Education is taken from the RA return and the Section 52 return.

The section 52 return provides more detailed information about spending than the RA return. As the section 52 is completed later than the RA return the total of spending for education reported in the section 52 may also differ from the total reported by the council in the RA return.

For more information about the Section 52 return, please refer to [www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/S52/2007\\_08\\_Section 52 data sources.doc](http://www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/S52/2007_08_Section%2052%20data%20sources.doc).

The chapters on social care for children and adults both draw on unit cost information provided by Information Centre for Health and Social care.

The chapter for Environment, Planning and Transport includes information about planning delivery grant allocations, from CLG.

The chapter for Housing includes information about unit costs of selected housing management activities. These data are taken from the Business Plan Statistical Appendix (BPSA) annual monitoring return to CLG. This information reflects actual spending in 2006/07. It also includes information on supporting people key performance indicators provided by CLG.

For more information about the source of the Business Plan Statistical Appendix (BPSA) annual monitoring, please refer to [www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/Housing/2007\\_08\\_Sources of indicators\\_Housing\\_01.doc](http://www.vfm.audit-commission.gov.uk/data/LG/Housing/2007_08_Sources%20of%20indicators_Housing_01.doc).

## Annex One

### Standardised spending

All the spending information has been standardised to make it easier to make comparisons between councils. Information about spending from the RA return is standardised using the estimated total population for 2006 provided by ONS.

Information about spending from the Section 52 return is standardised using pupil numbers provided by DCSF. Pupil numbers reflect the number of pupils aged 3 to 19 using council provision and are based on January 2007 data collections. For LEA budget items academy pupil numbers are also included in pupils numbers.

### Context and performance information

The spending information in this report reflects the council's spending plans for 2007/08. As a result there is a lag between the information about planned spending and the actual results we have about the councils' performance. For most context and performance information the report uses the data that would have been the latest available at the time that the spending plans were prepared. For example, when looking at spending information for 2007/08, most context and performance information will relate to the preceding financial year, 2006/07.

Information based on surveys of local residents is taken from the surveys undertaken in 2006/07.

### Council tax

Council tax information is based upon the CIPFA publication Council Tax Demands and Precepts 2007/08. [www.cipfastats.net](http://www.cipfastats.net) (external link).

Data is for 2007/08 unless otherwise stated.

Information from the following columns of the published results is used in this report.

Col 10	Billing authorities council tax requirement inclusive of parish precepts
Col 11	Precepting authorities council tax requirement
Col 12	Tax base for tax settings purposes (Band D equivalents)
Col 13	Average band D equivalent council tax

For single tier and county councils, results for average council tax are calculated as the sum of columns 10 and 11 divided by column 12.

For district councils results for average council tax are calculated as Col 10 divided by column 13.

Authorities used for the Comparison group luton social factors within this report:

- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Derby City Council
- Kirklees Metropolitan Council
- Leicester City Council
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- Medway Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Slough Borough Council
- Thurrock Council