

Introduction

This supplement contains three categories of information:

- (a) performance on best value performance indicators and selected other national and local indicators;
- (b) explanations for all those indicators for which we did not meet our targets in 2004/05;
- (c) performance on those indicators that make up the basket of performance indicators in the Council's Public Service Agreement (PSA) cost-effectiveness target.

(a) Performance indicator tables

The tables shown in this section exhibit the performance indicators (PIs) we are using to help us to monitor whether our objectives are being achieved. Many indicators, just like activities, relate to more than one objective. But each indicator has been assigned to just one corporate objective. It is hoped that this approach simplifies the presentation and makes it easier to follow. The performance indicator information provides only part of the picture of our performance.

The tables of indicators show:

- our actual performance in 2003/04 compared with the targets for performance that we set at the start of that year, and compared with the actual performance of other councils where the information is available;
- the targets for 2004/05 that we set on indicators in last year's Best Value Performance Plan, alongside our actual performance in meeting them;
- targets for performance in 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08, wherever possible.

Comparisons with other authorities

The comparisons of performance against other authorities shown in the tables are based on Leicestershire's statistical 'nearest neighbours', i.e. those authorities that are similar with regard to a range of socio-economic factors. Some socio-economic factors are more relevant to some services than to others, so the same basic approach can lead to slightly different groups of authorities for different services.

For Social Services, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has included Leicestershire in a group of 16 comparator authorities. For Education, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) has included Leicestershire in a group of 11 authorities. For all other services we have included Leicestershire in a group of 13 authorities which are most similar, as identified by the 'nearest neighbours' analysis provided by the Institute of Public Finance. The lists of these authorities are shown overleaf.

Comparator Groups

Education (OFSTED)	Social Services (CSCI)	All Other Services
Cheshire	Bedfordshire	Bedfordshire
Derbyshire	Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire
East Riding of Yorkshire	Cheshire	Cheshire
East Sussex	Derbyshire	Derbyshire
Essex		
	Gloucestershire	Gloucestershire
	Hampshire	Hampshire
Leicestershire	Leicestershire	Leicestershire
	Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire
Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire
	Oxfordshire	
	Shropshire	
Staffordshire	Staffordshire	Staffordshire
	Suffolk	
Warwickshire	Warwickshire	Warwickshire
West Sussex		
	Wiltshire	Wiltshire
Worcestershire	Worcestershire	Worcestershire

The information on the performance of the relevant comparator group shows the average (median) performance of the group and the performance of the best-scoring 25% of authorities in the group. For some indicators, it is better to achieve a high score, e.g., the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 mathematics test (BV40). In these cases, the score shown under 'best 25%' is higher than the average and is that of the authority ranked the 75th percentile (i.e. the authority that is three-quarters of the way up the table if authorities' scores are ranked with the highest at the top). For some indicators, it is better to achieve a low score, e.g., the number of vehicle crimes per 1,000 population (BV128). In these cases, the score shown under 'best 25%' is lower than the average and is that of the authority ranked the 25th percentile (i.e. the authority that is one-quarter of the way up the table if authorities' scores are ranked with the highest at the top). For some indicators, it cannot be said that either a high or a low score is desirable in itself, e.g., youth service expenditure per head of population (BV33). How much an authority spends on this will depend, to some extent, on how efficiently the authority makes use of resources. But, primarily, it will depend on the importance of spending in this area for the authority's overall objectives, given its local circumstances. In such cases, the best-scoring 25% of authorities cannot be identified from their position in the 'league table' for the indicator and 'N/A' (for 'not applicable') is shown under the 'best 25%' heading.

We compare ourselves against the best 25% annually and set targets to reach the best 25% within 5 years (if we are not already there), wherever this is appropriate. It should be noted that best-25% performance is a moving target, as local authority performance generally improves year on year.

The following cautions should be borne in mind. It is generally desirable to score high on quality and low on cost, thereby providing value for money. But it is possible to achieve low

cost by providing poor quality, and improvements to quality often require spending more. Wherever possible, scores on cost indicators need to be considered in conjunction with scores on indicators of service quality.

Changes of definition

There are many cases in which the definition of an indicator has changed from one year to the next. In most cases where this has happened, the change is identified by an asterisk and a note explaining that the inter-year comparison is not strictly like-for-like. This plainly diminishes the value of much of the performance information presented. But the Government and the Audit Commission make the changes to definitions of national indicators, so this is beyond our control.

In some cases, where the change between years is substantial, the indicator is treated as being a different indicator in the two years, despite having the same PI code (i.e. it is listed twice). It is unfortunate that the Government does not change the PI code when it changes an indicator definition. It means that sometimes a year (e.g. 2004/05) must be specified as well as a PI code to ensure that a specific indicator is identified. An example is BV159 (under 'Achieving Excellence in Education and Learning').

Base Numbers and Confidence Intervals

A number of the Best Value Performance Indicators report the results of surveys. For each of these, we are required to report the base number and confidence interval. The **base number** is the number of people who responded to the survey. As the base number is usually substantially smaller than the whole population, the response to the survey gives only an approximate indication for the population as a whole. The **confidence interval** shows the margin of error. So, for example, a PI result of 75% satisfaction with a confidence interval of 3% means that 75% of respondents to the survey were satisfied with the service while the percentage satisfied in the population as a whole lies between 72% and 78% (that is, $75\% \pm 3\%$).

Types of indicators

The indicators shown are either national indicators (set by the Government) or local indicators developed or adopted voluntarily. The national indicators that we are required to publish here are the Best Value Performance Indicators, set by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

We have chosen to include, under objective C, 'Improving Social Care and Support for Vulnerable People', a selection of the national Performance Assessment Framework Indicators, set by the Department of Health.

National standards and targets

The Government sets national standards or national targets for local authorities on a number of the national PIs. These apply to twelve of the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). A national standard is a minimum acceptable level of performance. A national target sets a level of performance that the Government encourages authorities to achieve.

In setting our targets for future performance, we have taken account of national standards and targets. Our targets for future performance are always at least as high as national standards. They are also always higher than national targets, with just the following exceptions.

BVPI	Description	National Target	County Target	Explanation
12	Days lost to sickness	7.69		National target is 'aspirational'. But we have an initiative to reduce sickness absence from 9.1 to 8.7 days per FTE.
14	Early retirements	0.22%	0.29%	National target is 'aspirational'.
15	Ill-health retirements	0.20%	0.25%	National target is 'aspirational'.