

Environmental & regulatory services

Performance Indicators 2002/03

Comparing the performance of Scottish councils

Prepared for the Accounts Commission

February 2004



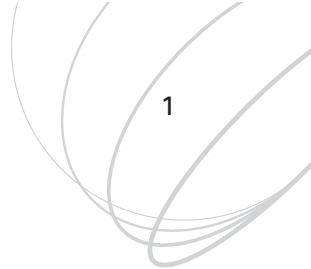
The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is a statutory, independent body, which through, the audit process, assists local authorities in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has five main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
- reviewing the management arrangements which audited bodies have in place to achieve value for money
- carrying out national value for money studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government
- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information which they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils and 35 joint boards (including police and fire services). Local authorities spend over £9 billion of public funds a year.

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland. Together they ensure that the Scottish Executive and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.



Main findings

Methods of waste disposal

Indicator 1 Page 4

Almost 88% of household, commercial and industrial waste was used for landfill. Councils recycled 9.6% of all waste in 2002/03, an increase compared with the previous year (7.4%). The amount of waste recycled varied widely, ranging from 3.5% in Highland to 24.3% in Angus.

Refuse collection and disposal costs

Indicator 2 Page 7

The average cost of refuse collection per premise was £50.43, an increase (8%) compared with the previous year. The cost varied widely from £35 in Aberdeenshire and South Ayrshire to almost £74 in Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar.

Across Scotland, the average disposal cost per premise was £55.22 per premise, an increase of almost 24% compared with 2000/01. Costs varied widely between councils ranging from just under £34 per premise in North Ayrshire to almost £119 per premise in Argyll & Bute.

Building warrants and certificates of completion

Indicator 3 Page 11

Across Scotland, the proportion of building warrant applications responded to within 15 days by councils that reported reliable information was 65%. This proportion varied widely from 18% in Clackmannanshire to almost 94% in Dundee City.

The proportion of warrants issued within six days by councils that provided reliable information was 80%. This proportion varied widely from 37% in Perth & Kinross to almost 99% in East Renfrewshire.

Across Scotland, the proportion of applications for certificates of completion issued within three days was slightly over 82%. This proportion varied from 48% in Perth & Kinross to almost 99% in Dundee City and Moray.

Overall, the average time to respond to an application for a certificate of completion was slightly over four days.

Four councils (Argyll & Bute, Dundee City, Eilean Siar, and Fife) met all the national targets set by the Scottish Executive for responding to or issuing building warrants and certificates of completion. Four councils (Dumfries & Galloway, Perth & Kinross, South Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire) did not meet any of the targets.

Food hygiene inspections

Indicator 4 Page 15

Almost 95% of inspections of premises within the two highest risk categories, were carried out within the target time – a similar percentage compared with the previous year. The percentage of inspections carried out within time varied from 38% in Orkney Islands to 100% in East Renfrewshire.

Trading Standards complaints and business advice requests

Indicator 5 Page 19

Across Scotland, 80% of consumer complaints were processed within 14 days – a similar percentage to previous years. The proportion dealt with within 14 days varied from 45% in South Ayrshire to almost 98% in Dundee City and East Lothian.

Slightly over 95% of business advice requests were dealt with within 14 days – a proportion similar to previous years. These ranged from 80% at Eilean Siar to 100% at five councils.

Planning applications

Indicator 6 Page 22

Councils reported that they dealt with four out of every five householder applications within two months, and just over 50% of non-householder applications within two months. However,

- only six councils (Clackmannanshire, Eilean Siar, Inverclyde, Moray, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian) met the Scottish Executive's National Planning Policy Guideline of determining 90% of householder applications within two months
- overall, Scotland's councils still only determine 67% of all applications within two months, well below the Executive's Planning guideline of 80% within two months. Clackmannanshire and West Lothian were the only councils that met the Executive's Planning guideline for all applications.

Repairs to faulty street and traffic lights

Indicator 7 Page 25

At least nine in every ten street light repairs were carried out within seven days, a figure similar to previous years. The proportion of repairs carried out within time varied among councils from 70% in Aberdeenshire to 99% in East Renfrewshire, Perth & Kinross and South Lanarkshire.

Across Scotland, 89% of repairs to traffic lights were carried out within 48 hours which is a year-on-year improvement over the past five years. Nine councils (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, East Lothian, Highland, Midlothian, Stirling and West Lothian), have over the past five years, consistently carried out nine in every ten repairs within target.

Introduction

>>> If you want to know more
access our website at:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/performance

Each year councils publish a range of information to show people how well they are providing their services and how they compare with other bodies.

This pamphlet contains information on seven indicators relating to the councils' management of environmental and regulatory services. The indicators are:

- methods of household waste disposal
- refuse collection and disposal costs
- the time to deal with applications for building warrants and completion certificates
- the proportion of food hygiene inspections undertaken within target time
- the proportion of trading standards complaints and enquiries undertaken within time
- the proportion of planning applications processed within target time
- the time taken to repair faulty street lights and faulty traffic lights.

Other pamphlets published by the Commission cover:

Children's services
Corporate management
Cultural and community services
Housing and social work services
Police and fire services

The Commission will also be providing on its website:

- a comprehensive compendium of the information for all the services for which there are performance indicators
- council profiles analysing indicators on a council-by-council basis.

Using the information

For each activity we have set out why some of the differences in performance may have arisen. We also highlight particular features of the information - for example, the range in performance achieved by different councils or the overall change in councils' performance over time.

Several factors affect the way a council performs its activities. You need to be aware of these in order to understand why results may vary. Some of these factors are outwith the control of a council - for example, population size and density, geographical area, and the mix between urban and rural settlements. Others may be specific to the service or the groups of people it serves. These local factors may mean that a council with a performance which, at first sight, appears to be worse than that of another has, in fact, done better given the circumstances it faces.

In this pamphlet we have shown information for councils for 2002/03 and where appropriate made comparison with previous years. However, for some indicators, councils have submitted data that their auditors have identified as unreliable because of doubts about the reliability of the arrangements for producing the information (see below).

In such cases we have shown the information separately and have not included it in the calculation of any overall Scottish averages, although such information was included prior to 2001/02.

Key

Auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission have reviewed authorities' arrangements for producing the performance information. In the tables shown in this pamphlet, an asterisk (*) against the data for a council indicates that the auditor expressed doubts about the reliability of its arrangements for producing the information.

Indicator 1: Waste disposal

The methods of disposal of household, commercial and industrial waste and the proportion that was recycled.

The indicator shows the methods adopted by councils for disposing of household, commercial and industrial waste and the percentage of waste, per premise, disposed of by each method.

Recycling and recovery methods include waste used for the recovery of heat, power and other energy sources, composting, and the reuse of ash following waste incineration.

Points to bear in mind

The European Commission (EC) landfill directive (July 2002) sets targets for the amount of biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill. The first of these targets is that by 2010 the weight of biodegradable municipal waste that is sent to landfill across Scotland must be reduced to three-quarters of its 1995 level. Therefore, councils will require to find alternative methods of disposing of refuse, and recycling, composting and other waste recovery activities will become a higher priority. Individual council targets for the weight of biodegradable waste being used for landfill will be set from 2004/05.

In addition to the EC directive the Scottish Executive has set two targets for councils:

- to increase the amount of waste that is recycled or composted to 25% by 2006.
- to reduce landfilling of biodegradable waste to 1.5 million tonnes by 2006.

In some cases councils estimate the weight of waste because they have no weighing facilities. Some councils use their composted material as daily or top cover at landfill sites.

Commentary

Local authorities collected around 3.2 million tonnes of waste in 2002/03 compared with 3 million tonnes the previous year. Household waste accounted for 2.6 million tonnes. On average, each household produces slightly over 1 tonne of refuse per year, while each trade and commercial premise produces around 8 tonnes per year.

Almost 88% of household, commercial and industrial waste was used for landfill, a small reduction compared with the previous year (90%). Recycling and composting accounted for 9.6% of waste collected. However, around a quarter of this amount was reported as composting which at some councils was used as a daily or top cover at landfill sites.

Landfill

Biodegradable waste accounts for around 62% (1.8 million tonnes) of the total refuse disposed of by councils. Overall, there is a requirement for councils to reduce the amount that is sent to landfill to 1.5 million (i.e. by 300,000 tonnes) by 2006 to meet the Scottish Executive target. Councils failed to reduce the amount of waste that was sent to landfill compared with the previous year.

Five councils (Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar, Highland, East Ayrshire, and Midlothian), reported that 95% or more of their waste goes to landfill sites. Compared with the previous year, Aberdeenshire, Orkney Islands, Scottish Borders and Shetland Islands were the only councils to report an increase in the amount of waste that was used as landfill.

Recycling and recovery of heat, power and other energy sources

Recycling

Councils recycled and composted 9.6% of household, commercial and industrial waste in 2002/03, an increase compared with the previous year (7.4%). The amount of waste recycled varied widely, ranging from 3.5% in Highland to 24.3% in Angus (Table 1).

Where comparison with the previous year could be made, only two councils (Aberdeenshire and Scottish Borders) reported a reduction in the amount recycled or composted. Three councils (Angus, Dundee and Perth & Kinross) recycled more than 15% of their waste. A further five councils (Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar, Highland, East Ayrshire and Midlothian) reported recycling 5% or less of their waste.

Councils recycle or recover a range of waste materials, for example, paper and glass. Overall this type of waste accounts for 6.6% of the total waste collected, an increase compared with the previous year (4.9%). Three councils (Angus, East Renfrewshire and North Lanarkshire) recycle more than 10%. Four councils (Dumfries & Galloway, Glasgow, Highland and North Ayrshire) reported that they recycled less than 4%.

Twenty-two councils, the same as the previous year, reported that they collect green waste which is composted centrally. This waste is used for a variety of purposes: some councils use it as daily/top cover for their landfill sites, others put the material to use as a soil improver on, for example, farmland, while a few councils provide it to local householders for use in their gardens. Councils reported that they composted 2.6% of the total waste collected, a slight increase compared with the previous year (2.1%).

Recovery of heat, power and other energy sources

There are two incineration plants in Scotland used by five councils. Angus and Perth & Kinross use the Dundee plant, while Orkney Islands ship their waste to the Shetland Islands. These councils reported that 2.5% of waste was recovered for heat, power or other energy sources – an amount consistent with the previous year. Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands councils use the ash recovered following incineration as a top/daily cover at landfill sites. Dundee City (9.8%), Perth & Kinross (4.8%) and Angus (0.3%) recycle ash which is used in the construction industry.

Table 1

The percentage and methods of household, commercial and industrial waste disposal – 2002/03

	Total tonnes (000s)	Landfill %	Recovery of heat, power and other energy sources %	Percentage recycled			Total recycled
				Other recycling or recovery methods	Composted by the authority	Ash from incineration which is recycled	
RURAL COUNCILS							
Aberdeenshire	150	86.8		4.7	8.3		13.0
Argyll & Bute	64	90.9		9.1			9.1
Dumfries & Galloway	83	96.4		3.6			3.6
Eilean Siar	22	95.0		5.0			5.0
Highland	143	96.5		3.3	0.2		3.5
Orkney Islands	12	28.0	43.5	6.5 (15.2)	6.9		13.3 (15.2)
Perth & Kinross	98	81.0	1.3	9.3	8.0	0.3	17.7
Scottish Borders	61	90.3		9.7			9.7
Shetland Islands	24	30.0	47.4	5.6 (17.0)			5.6 (17.0)
MIXED COUNCILS							
Angus	74	48.7	27.0	13.5	6.0	4.8	24.3
Clackmannanshire	31	93.4		6.1	0.5		6.6
East Ayrshire	60	95.0		5.0			5.0
East Lothian	60	88.4		7.7	3.8		11.6
East Renfrewshire	58	85.5		11.6	2.8		14.5
Fife	261	94.8		4.2	1.0		5.2
Inverclyde	38	94.2		5.8			5.8
Midlothian	53	95.9		4.1			4.1
Moray	74	87.8		8.3	3.9		12.2
North Ayrshire	82	87.7		3.2	9.1		12.3
South Ayrshire	82	89.3		4.1	6.6		10.7
South Lanarkshire	169	87.6		9.3	3.1		12.4
Stirling	61	89.8		8.2	2.0		10.2
West Lothian	101	90.2		6.9	2.9		9.8
URBAN COUNCILS							
Aberdeen City	134	92.5		6.0	1.5		7.5
Dundee City	102	36.9	41.2	8.0	4.1	9.8	21.9
East Dunbartonshire	67	89.6		7.7	2.7		10.4
Edinburgh, City of	261	92.3		6.2	1.5		7.7
Falkirk	105	93.2		4.7	2.0		6.8
Glasgow City	325	93.8		3.4	2.8		6.2
North Lanarkshire	192	86.2		13.8			13.8
Renfrewshire	104	91.6		6.1	2.2		8.4
West Dunbartonshire	58	93.4		6.6			6.6
Scotland	3,209	87.7	2.5	6.6	2.6	0.4	9.6

The figures in brackets for Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands show the percentages of ash used for daily/top cover at their landfill site.

Indicator 2: Cost of refuse collection and disposal

The gross cost of refuse collection and disposal per property.

The indicator shows the overall cost to each council of collecting and disposing of refuse per property, including both domestic and commercial premises. It includes both the direct costs (eg, depots, vehicles and the wages of the crews involved) and the indirect costs (eg, the cost of the service management offices). It also includes the cost of undertaking special uplifts of bulky items from domestic premises, which are not usually uplifted as part of the normal waste collection round.

Refuse disposal commences when a council's collection vehicle discharges the waste collected at a transfer station, a treatment plant, a material recycling facility or at landfill.

The Commission's report '*Benchmarking refuse collection*' (April 2000), arranged councils into family groups based on population dispersal, which measures the degree to which the population is spread across the council's area, and the number of properties served. Councils have been divided into three groups – urban, mixed urban/rural and rural – to allow more like-for-like comparison to be made. These groupings have been used for the purposes of this indicator.

Points to bear in mind

The majority of councils collect domestic refuse once a week, though a small number operate a twice-weekly uplift – mainly for tenement and high rise flats. Generally, commercial uplifts are carried out two or three times a week. Some councils undertake separate collections of garden refuse and waste paper.

New funding provided by the Scottish Executive to encourage councils to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill is likely to lead to increases in the cost of collecting waste. The European Union landfill directive may also mean that councils incur higher costs disposing of waste.

Most councils use the wheeled bin method of collection. Alternative methods are the uplift of static bins or sacks from either backdoor or kerbside.

A council that has a population which is scattered over a wide geographical area is likely to incur a higher cost of refuse collection than one where the population is relatively concentrated. However, in urban areas the impact of traffic congestion and restricted access to collection points can affect costs.

The costs of waste disposal includes, for example, landfill management, recycling plant and landfill tax.

The allocation of overheads costs to this function should follow CIPFA guidance, but may vary among councils.

Commentary

Refuse collection

The average cost of refuse collection per premise was £50.43, an increase (8%) compared with the previous year. The cost varied widely from £35 in Aberdeenshire and South Ayrshire to almost £74 in Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar (Table 2a). Three councils (Eilean Siar, South Ayrshire and Stirling reduced their costs while all other councils where comparison could be made reported higher costs.

Five councils (the three Islands councils, Argyll & Bute and City of Edinburgh), one more than the previous year, reported costs above £60 per premise, while three councils (Aberdeenshire, Falkirk and South Ayrshire), two fewer than the previous year, reported costs below £40 per premise.

Refuse disposal

Across Scotland, the average disposal cost per premise was £55.22 per premise, an increase of almost 24% compared with 2000/01. Costs varied widely between councils ranging from just under £34 per premise in North Ayrshire to almost £119 per premise in Argyll & Bute (Table 2b). Only three councils (Argyll & Bute, Fife and North Ayrshire) reported lower costs compared with the previous year.

Eight councils (the three Islands councils, Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Perth & Kinross, Moray and Dundee City) reported costs of disposal per premise above £70, while three councils (Inverclyde, North Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire) reported costs below £40 per premise.

Table 2a

Gross cost of refuse collection per premise

	Refuse collection (£)			
	2002/03	2001/02	2000/01	1999/2000
RURAL COUNCILS				
Aberdeenshire	35.45	33.63	31.16	34.58
Argyll & Bute	73.99	66.58	56.32	53.61
Dumfries & Galloway	49.12	*45.12	49.88	43.21
Eilean Siar	73.96	86.57	71.94	72.17
Highland	53.70	51.55	49.21	46.02
Orkney Islands	72.43	67.65	67.30	65.13
Perth & Kinross	58.10	53.58	51.81	49.43
Scottish Borders	44.87	38.56	38.70	37.00
Shetland Islands	73.06	59.75	39.49	48.38
MIXED COUNCILS				
Angus	47.80	44.46	36.19	35.97
Clackmannanshire	57.76	52.11	55.37	60.44
East Ayrshire	52.72	49.16	51.73	52.38
East Lothian	47.68	43.94	47.70	42.95
East Renfrewshire	43.72	42.23	40.54	41.88
Fife	45.43	*38.03	36.82	42.73
Inverclyde	45.57	43.55	44.65	43.62
Midlothian	43.00	40.93	39.57	37.69
Moray	43.89	35.26	46.94	39.66
North Ayrshire	47.58	46.19	45.28	43.64
South Ayrshire	35.93	45.00	39.85	37.11
South Lanarkshire	41.07	39.79	46.19	43.42
Stirling	58.21	62.52	62.56	61.47
West Lothian	52.73	48.57	46.43	41.68
URBAN COUNCILS				
Aberdeen City	45.85	41.98	41.30	42.41
Dundee City	55.70	47.65	46.98	53.22
East Dunbartonshire	49.17	46.20	45.46	42.90
Edinburgh, City of	60.78	54.41	49.04	48.29
Falkirk	39.61	37.60	35.29	34.15
Glasgow City	54.26	*49.95	49.42	48.22
North Lanarkshire	52.07	49.11	46.80	47.37
Renfrewshire	49.00	45.93	46.54	47.41
West Dunbartonshire	48.87	41.58	41.47	45.27
Scotland	50.43	46.94	45.63	45.23

Table 2b**Gross cost of refuse disposal per premise**

	Refuse disposal (£)		
	2002/03	2001/02	2000/01
RURAL COUNCILS			
Aberdeenshire	74.74	65.56	64.46
Argyll & Bute	118.88	119.99	61.09
Dumfries & Galloway	59.95	*50.80	28.17
Eilean Siar	96.62	84.58	65.18
Highland	47.70	43.15	45.24
Orkney Islands	102.77	98.77	101.87
Perth & Kinross	78.27	72.57	65.16
Scottish Borders	40.32	33.88	32.72
Shetland Islands	105.37	63.90	76.53
MIXED COUNCILS			
Angus	57.42	50.58	37.16
Clackmannanshire	56.60	42.52	52.81
East Ayrshire	56.38	51.07	50.03
East Lothian	50.80	46.30	44.95
East Renfrewshire	50.35	45.94	42.28
Fife	45.92	50.75	45.33
Inverclyde	38.94	36.26	36.23
Midlothian	43.32	37.23	35.31
Moray	70.39	48.74	58.41
North Ayrshire	33.89	36.22	31.03
South Ayrshire	49.92	42.42	39.88
South Lanarkshire	38.77	37.68	36.50
Stirling	48.68	47.00	42.20
West Lothian	51.64	43.20	41.32
URBAN COUNCILS			
Aberdeen City	55.53	50.87	41.37
Dundee City	72.88	68.34	60.31
East Dunbartonshire	47.92	47.27	44.45
Edinburgh, City of	52.97	43.91	38.38
Falkirk	51.53	49.87	46.13
Glasgow City	57.91	*52.29	52.33
North Lanarkshire	52.52	41.06	31.36
Renfrewshire	47.11	44.66	37.19
West Dunbartonshire	43.82	40.73	31.45
Scotland	55.22	49.53	44.63

Indicator 3: Building warrants and certificates of completion

The proportions of building warrants and certificates of completion that were completed within the target times.

The indicator shows:

- the proportion of requests for building warrants responded to within 15 days and the proportion of building warrants issued within six days
- the average time to respond to a request for a certificate of completion and the proportion of certificates of completion that were issued within three days.

The processing time is the period from receipt of a request for a building warrant, which contains the necessary information, until a response is provided to the applicant from the council.

The time to respond to a request for a certificate of completion is from receipt of an application until the council has carried out an inspection.

The Scottish Executive has set national targets for the times to deal with building warrants and certificates of completion. Based on the target days (set out above) councils should aim to respond to and issue 80% of building warrants and certificates of completion within the target times.

The Building Regulations (1981), require councils to respond to a request for a completion certificate, within 14 calendar days (10 working days). The Executive has not, therefore, set a target for this part of the indicator.

This is the first year councils have reported against the national targets.

Commentary

Four councils (Argyll & Bute, Dundee City, Eilean Siar, and Fife) met all the national targets set by the Scottish Executive for responding to or issuing building warrants and certificates of completion. Four councils (Dumfries & Galloway, Perth & Kinross, South Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire) did not meet any of the targets.

Building warrants

Twenty-nine councils reported reliable information for this indicator. Falkirk, Midlothian and Orkney Islands reported unreliable data. Those councils that reported reliable information processed slightly over 60,000 building warrant applications 3,000 more compared with the same councils the previous year. New building regulations that came

into force for conservatories during 2002/03 partly explain the reason for the increase in the numbers of warrants.

Across Scotland, the proportion of building warrants responded to within 15 days by councils that reported reliable information was 65% (Figure 3a). The target set by the Scottish Executive is 80%. Five councils (Argyll & Bute, Dundee City, Eilean Siar, Fife and Glasgow) achieved the target. The proportion responded to within time varied widely from 18% in Clackmannanshire to almost 94% in Dundee. Eight councils (Aberdeen City, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire, Inverclyde, Perth & Kinross, South Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire) responded to less than 50% within the 15-day target time.

The proportion of warrants issued within six days by councils that provided reliable information was 80%. The target set by the Scottish Executive is 80%. Overall, the proportion responded to within the target time varied widely from 37% in Perth & Kinross to almost 99% in East Renfrewshire. Nineteen councils issued 80% or more of building warrants within the national target time (Figure 3b).

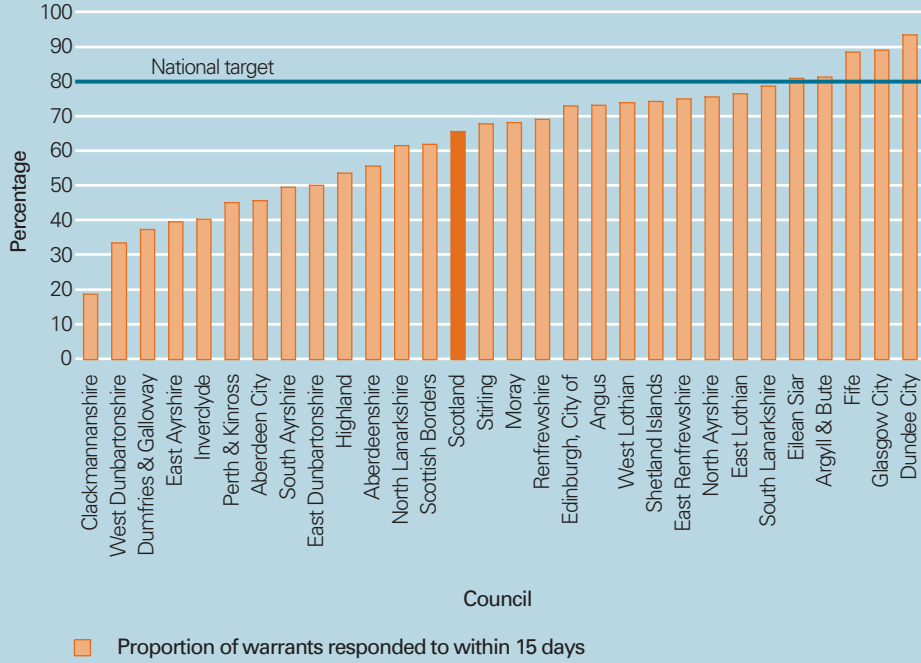
Certificates of completion

Councils that reported reliable information dealt with slightly over 53,000 completion certificates, an increase of 1,000 compared with the previous year. Across Scotland, the proportion of applications for certificates of completion issued within three days was slightly over 82%, against the Scottish Executive target of 80%. The proportion issued within three days varied from 48% in Perth & Kinross to 99% in Dundee City and Moray. (Figure 3c). Eighteen councils issued 80% or more certificates of completion within the national target time.

Overall, the average time to respond to an application for a certificate of completion was slightly over four days, which is consistent with previous years. The average time to respond to an application for a certificate of completion varied among councils from 1.6 days in the City of Edinburgh to 9.4 days in Eilean Siar (Figure 3d). Nine councils reported taking, on average, more than five working days to respond to an application for a certificate of completion.

Figure 3a

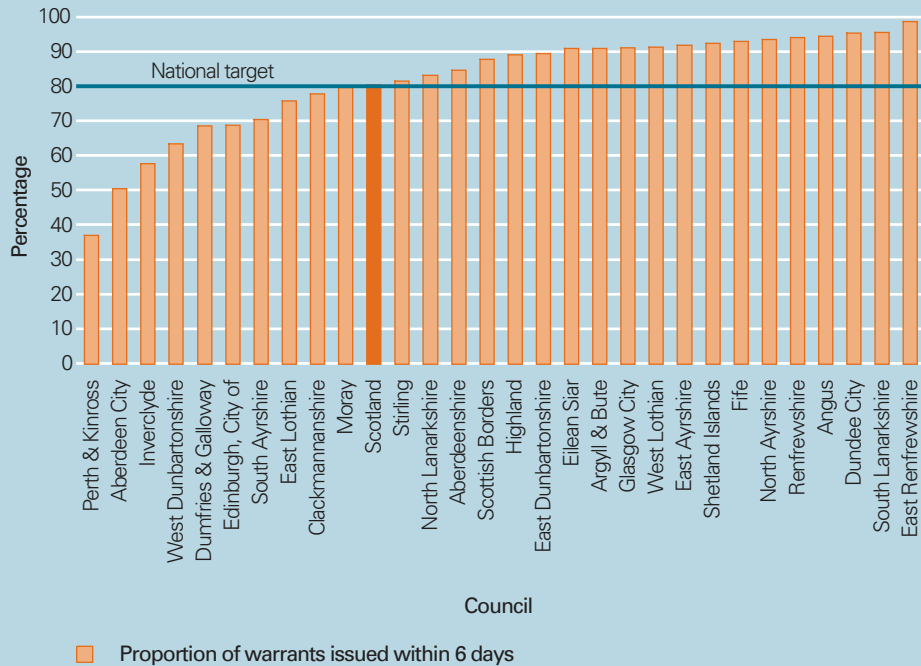
The proportion of requests for building warrants responded to within 15 days



Falkirk, Midlothian and Orkney Islands reported unreliable information and are excluded from the Scotland figures.

Figure 3b

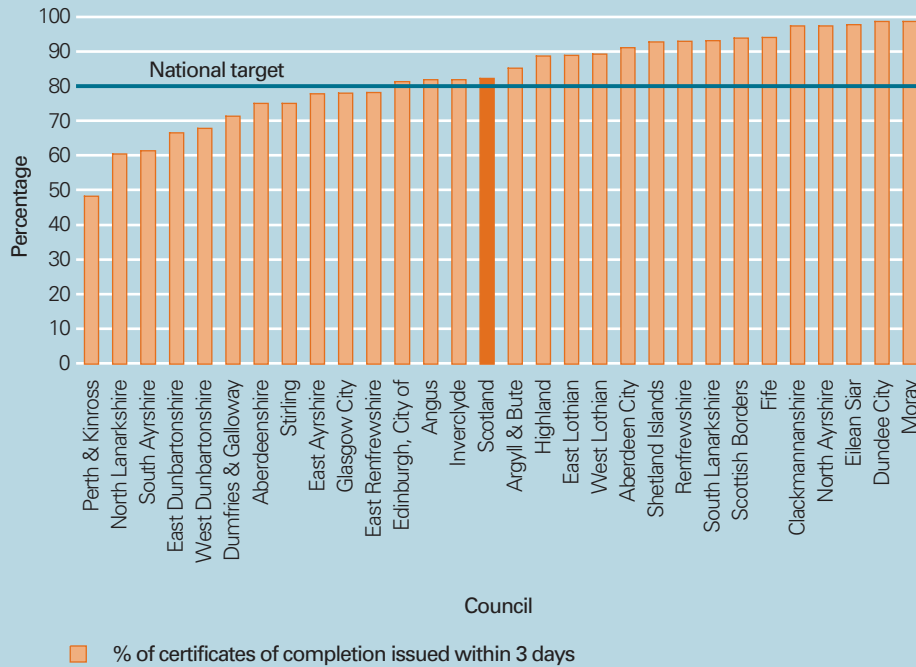
The proportion of requests for building warrants issued within six days



Falkirk, Midlothian and Orkney Islands reported unreliable information and are excluded from the Scotland figures.

Figure 3c

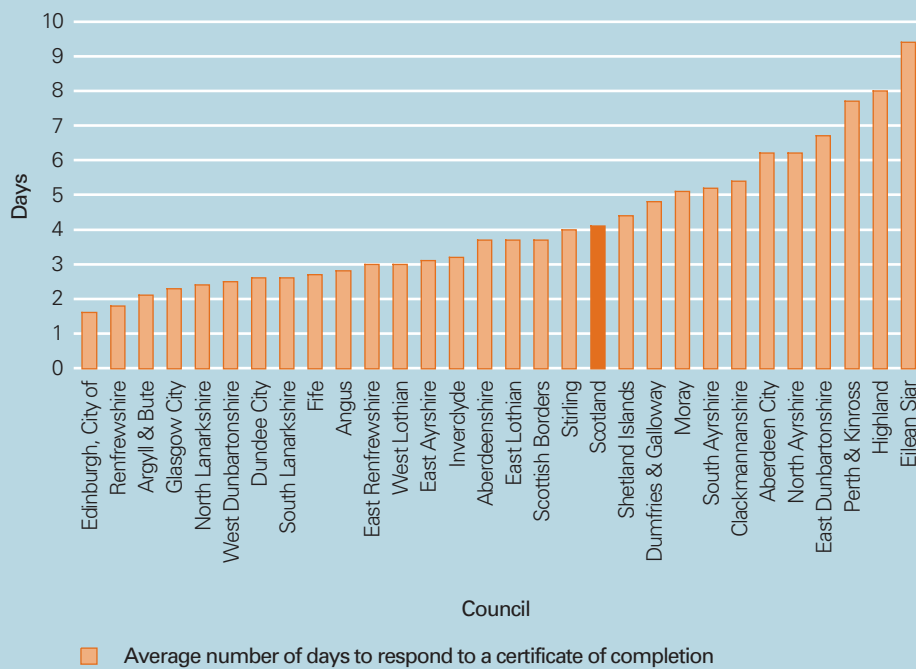
The proportion of applications for a certificate of completion issued within three days



Falkirk, Midlothian and Orkney Islands reported unreliable information and are excluded from the Scotland figures.

Figure 3d

The average time to respond to an application for a certificate of completion



Falkirk, Midlothian and Orkney Islands reported unreliable information and are excluded from the Scotland figures.

Indicator 4: Food hygiene inspections

The number of establishments in the two highest risk categories requiring inspections during the year, and the percentage of inspections which were undertaken within the prescribed period.

Food hygiene inspections confirm that the processing, cooking, handling and storage of food at business premises meet the requirements of the revised *'Food Safety Act Code of Practice'* issued in 2000 and identify potential risks to the health of the public.

Business premises dealing in food are categorised according to the frequency with which they should be inspected, depending on their level of risk to food safety. The higher the level of risk, the more often inspections should be carried out.

The indicator specifies two categories of premises according to the target time between inspections:

- within six months – premises with the highest risk of food hygiene problems, requiring the most frequent inspection visits
- between six and 12 months – premises with an intermediate level of risk.

The indicator reports councils' planned food hygiene inspection workload and their success in achieving their inspection targets.

Points to bear in mind

Factors that influence a council's decision on the required number of inspections are:

- the likely risk according to the type of food
- the extent to which food is handled, and the risk of cross-contamination where a process involves both raw and cooked food
- the method of processing – particularly where conditions may favour the growth of food poisoning organisms, eg, canning, vacuum packing and any process where temperature is a controlling factor
- the number of consumers likely to be put at risk if there is a failure in food hygiene and safety procedures
- the cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and structural condition of the premises
- the attitude and technical knowledge of the management on hygiene and safety matters.

Some premises, particularly those in the 'within six months' risk category, may be visited more frequently due to their high level of risk but these additional visits are not reflected in the indicator.

The Food Standards Agency revised its Code of Practice in relation to the 'Food Safety Act' issued in 2000. The revision allowed councils a degree of flexibility when undertaking inspections. As long as inspections are undertaken within a two-week period of the target date, premises are considered as meeting the minimum frequency of inspection.

Commentary

Thirty councils reported this information. Scottish Borders reported unreliable information and Glasgow City did not report any information. Over 7,600 premises were subject to food hygiene inspections in 2002/03 for the two highest risk categories, a reduction of almost 1,000 where comparison could be made with those councils that reported reliable information in 2001/02 (Table 4a).

'The Pennington report (1997)' required councils to reassess the risk categories of premises and this resulted in a significant increase in the number of premises in the high-risk category in 1998/99. Since then councils have worked closely with businesses, and as a consequence there has been a significant reduction in the number of premises that fall within the highest risk 'within six months' category. In 2002/03, there were 1,016 properties in this risk category, however, the reduction is primarily a result of Glasgow City not reporting this information. Comparison with councils that reported reliable data for this risk category showed a reduction of around 200 premises compared with the previous year.

Almost 95% of inspections of premises within the two highest risk categories were carried out within the target time - a similar percentage to the previous year (Table 4b). The percentage of inspections carried out within time varied from 38% in Orkney Islands to 100% in East Renfrewshire. Twenty-six of the 30 councils that reported this information in 2002/03 carried out at least nine in every ten inspections within time. Only four councils (Orkney Islands - 38%, Moray - 67%, Falkirk - 89%, Stirling - 89%) reported fewer than nine in ten inspections within time.

Table 4a

The number of premises requiring food hygiene inspections

	Number of premises in each risk category		
	Within 6 months	Between 6-12 months	Total
2002/03	*1,016	*6,663	*7,679
2001/02	1,985	9,056	11,041
2000/01	3,273	9,300	12,573
1999/2000	4,175	8,764	12,939
1998/99	5,706	8,637	14,343
1997/98	3,049	8,068	11,117
1996/97	2,332	10,249	12,581

* The reduction in the numbers of premises in these risk categories compared with the previous year is primarily a result of Glasgow City not reporting the information.

Table 4b

The proportion of inspections conducted within the target time of 12 months

	Number of premises		% of inspections made within target			
	2002/03	2001/02	2002/03	2001/02	2000/01	1999/2000
Aberdeen City	189	245	99.0	99.6	97.3	95.2
Aberdeenshire	520	552	95.0	93.0	87.2	77.9
Angus	243	270	90.7	81.5	67.8	76.8
Argyll & Bute	257	304	99.3	95.2	85.0	71.8
Clackmannanshire	72	70	92.5	91.3	41.8	76.9
Dumfries & Galloway	223	283	93.1	87.9	81.3	85.8
Dundee City	226	231	92.6	88.4	95.8	98.3
East Ayrshire	140	139	98.2	95.8	97.8	98.7
East Dunbartonshire	199	195	95.8	98.7	96.5	93.2
East Lothian	310	239	92.9	92.8	63.8	86.4
East Renfrewshire	172	216	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.5
Edinburgh, City of	830	1,435	99.8	98.4	99.0	99.3
Eilean Siar	52	72	93.8	98.9	75.3	69.8
Falkirk	122	126	88.8	89.9	75.8	88.0
Fife	163	185	93.3	89.6	87.3	86.8
Highland	323	394	97.8	96.8	98.0	99.5
Inverclyde	128	91	98.5	100.0	96.1	97.5
Midlothian	99	102	96.4	94.8	97.5	99.3
Moray	258	282	66.8	89.2	68.8	71.2
North Ayrshire	518	560	97.7	98.3	92.4	91.1
North Lanarkshire	556	641	99.2	94.8	99.0	96.1
Orkney Islands	44		37.8		79.5	83.2
Perth & Kinross	201	156	97.6	92.1	60.8	94.0
Renfrewshire	572	531	99.7	100.0	93.7	90.1
Shetland Islands	30	32	93.5	91.2	15.2	41.0
South Ayrshire	185	194	92.2	90.8	74.0	70.3
South Lanarkshire	558	648	97.9	98.9	98.2	96.7
Stirling	155	133	88.8	85.1	90.4	91.9
West Dunbartonshire	147	143	92.8	89.8	57.4	43.8
West Lothian	187	196	96.9	98.3	96.0	97.1
Scotland	7,679	11,041	94.9	95.3	89.9	88.5
UNRELIABLE DATA						
Scottish Borders	*310	*439	*87.4	*91.0	74.7	74.9
NOT REPORTED						
Glasgow City		2,376		97.0	94.6	87.3

Scottish Border's unreliable information is excluded from the Scotland figures.

Orkney Islands did not report the information in 2001/02.

Glasgow City's information for 2001/02 is included in the Scotland total for that year.

Indicator 5: Trading standards complaints and business advice requests

The percentage of trading standards complaints and business advice requests completed within 14 days.

Dealing with complaints and business advice requests is one of the most significant of the trading standards services provided by councils. This assistance is provided to two separate groups – consumers (ie, the general public) and businesses.

Complaints are requests to the council to investigate the activities of a trader or traders. Complaints relate to goods or services which the consumer suspects or believes have been poor, unfair or based on illegal trading practice by a trader, for example, selling faulty, dangerous or wrongly described goods, or setting unreasonable conditions of sale.

Business advice is given in response to enquiries by individual businesses. It includes approaches made in person and enquiries received by letter and telephone, but excludes advice given as part of a routine inspection of trading premises.

The time taken covers the period between:

- the date the council receives all the information necessary to allow action (eg, advice or investigation) to commence
- the date on which the council's contact with the consumer and/or the trader concerned finished, ie, the council provided the information requested, or the outcome of an investigation was reported to the consumer or business making the complaint.

Points to bear in mind

The indicator does not provide information on the quality of any advice or investigation, or on its usefulness to the consumer or business.

The number, complexity and investigative work involved in complaints will affect the indicator.

A report on the performance of trading standards services in Scotland, '*Made to Measure – an overview of Trading Standards Services in Scotland*' (October 2002), was published by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission.

The report recommends that councils review their trading standards services in light of the DTI's new National Performance Framework and to consider options for establishing joined-up trading standards services eg, through local consortia arrangements among neighbouring councils.

Commentary

Consumer complaints

Overall, councils dealt with over 67,000 consumer complaints, a reduction of almost 5,000 compared with the previous year (Table 5a). Sixteen councils reported increases in the number of complaints while Glasgow reported over 6,000 fewer complaints.

Across Scotland, 80% of consumer complaints were processed within 14 days – a similar percentage to previous years. The proportion dealt with within 14 days varied from 45% in South Ayrshire to almost 98% in Dundee City and East Lothian. Nine councils, one more than the previous year dealt with 90% or more within 14 days while seven councils, the same as the previous year, dealt with fewer than 70% on time, five of these were the same councils (East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire) as the previous year (Table 5b).

Business advice requests

There were just over 7,250 business advice requests in 2002/03, a considerable reduction compared with the previous year (over 9,000), however, the number of requests in 2001/02 was significantly distorted by the foot and mouth outbreak at a number of councils. Twenty councils reported a reduction in the number of business advice requests compared with the previous year.

Slightly over 95% of business advice requests were dealt with within 14 days – a proportion similar to previous years. These ranged from 80% at Eilean Siar to 100% at five councils. Twenty-six councils dealt with at least nine in every ten requests within 14 days (Table 5b).

Table 5a

The overall processing of consumer complaints and business advice requests

	Consumer complaints		Business advice requests	
	Number	% dealt with within 14 days	Number	% dealt with within 14 days
2002/03	67,492	79.9	7,250	95.4
2001/02	72,024	81.7	16,529	97.8
2000/01	61,599	78.0	10,321	96.6
1999/2000	59,828	76.6	8,052	95.7
1998/99	42,617	70.9	11,522	96.7
1997/98	45,942	70.1	9,968	93.5

Table 5b

The processing of complaints and business advice requests, 2002/03

	Consumer complaints		Business advice requests	
	Number	% dealt with within 14 days	Number	% dealt with within 14 days
Aberdeen City	3,093	89.6	270	94.4
Aberdeenshire	1,707	81.0	272	91.5
Angus	933	85.9	188	91.5
Argyll & Bute	1,268	90.0	357	99.4
Clackmannanshire	639	74.3	18	100.0
Dumfries & Galloway	2,301	88.4	587	97.6
Dundee City	2,807	97.5	339	98.2
East Ayrshire	1,065	52.3	169	99.4
East Dunbartonshire	1,233	59.8	77	96.1
East Lothian	602	97.8	109	100.0
East Renfrewshire	636	72.2	17	100.0
Edinburgh, City of	6,682	90.7	702	94.2
Eilean Siar	271	87.8	15	80.0
Falkirk	1,659	72.0	70	88.6
Fife	6,232	90.4	225	98.7
Glasgow City	5,109	69.2	401	87.5
Highland	3,581	87.1	346	96.2
Inverclyde	1,384	80.0	138	93.5
Midlothian	856	91.9	143	100.0
Moray	1,676	96.5	269	97.4
North Ayrshire	2,080	79.1	110	96.4
North Lanarkshire	2,916	55.0	282	89.4
Orkney Islands	298	82.9	138	96.4
Perth & Kinross	1,354	95.6	283	97.9
Renfrewshire	3,172	89.1	231	99.6
Scottish Borders	670	64.2	188	95.7
Shetland Islands	122	91.8	26	88.5
South Ayrshire	3,446	44.5	303	96.4
South Lanarkshire	4,382	62.2	243	97.1
Stirling	1,344	78.2	150	84.0
West Dunbartonshire	1,316	81.2	44	100.0
West Lothian	2,658	89.7	540	96.1
Scotland	67,492	79.9	7,250	95.4

Indicator 6: Planning applications

The percentage of planning applications dealt with within two months.

The indicator provides information on how long it takes each council to deal with planning applications by:

- householders – seeking approval to build extensions to their homes, or to make other alterations to their properties which need permission
- non-householders, such as developers – seeking approval for a wide range of generally larger developments.

In dealing with planning applications, councils:

- take a number of steps to consult on and assess the application
- decide whether to approve the application
- notify the applicant of the decision.

Points to bear in mind

Householders have to notify their neighbours that they have submitted an application and councils are usually required to carry out only limited consultations before a decision is reached. Many of these applications are straightforward and result in permission being granted. However, applications other than those by householders are generally more complex and the time to deal with them may require to be extended where:

- the council needs to undertake an analysis of the impact on either the environment or the local economy
- an application requires an agreement between the council and the applicant, regulating the future use of the land or development
- an application is contrary to the approved local or structure plan.

The time taken to deal with an application will be affected by:

- the extent to which councillors delegate responsibility for approving applications to staff (greater delegation will generally allow applications to be processed more quickly)
- whether there are any objections to the application (eg, from neighbouring property owners)
- the proportion of cases where an applicant needs to submit amended plans before the planning officer feels able to recommend approval.

Some cases, particularly those in conservation areas or affecting listed buildings, may take longer to deal with because of the need for additional advertising and consultation. The proportion of such applications varies between councils.

In 2000, the Scottish Executive published a National Planning Policy Guideline NPPG 1 (revised) in which it established that:

- 80% of all planning applications should be determined within two months
- 90% of householder planning applications should be determined within two months.

Commentary

Across Scotland, in 2002/03 there were slightly over 48,000 planning applications determined by councils. This represents an increase of around 3,000 applications compared with councils that provided reliable information the previous year. Slightly over 22,000 were household applications and just over 26,000 were non-householder applications.

Councils reported that they dealt with four out of every five householder applications within two months, and just over 50% of non-householder applications within two months. However,

- only six councils (Clackmannanshire, Eilean Siar, Inverclyde, Moray, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian) met the Scottish Executive's National Planning Policy Guideline of determining 90% of householder applications within two months (Table 6)
- overall, Scotland's councils still only determine 67% of all applications¹ within two months, well below the Executive's Planning guideline of 80% within two months. Clackmannanshire and West Lothian were the only councils that met the Executive's Planning guideline for all applications.

The proportion of all applications dealt with within two months varied widely from slightly less than 56% in East Ayrshire to almost 85% in Clackmannanshire. Four councils (East Ayrshire, Glasgow City, North Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire) reported that they determined fewer than six in every ten applications within two months.

The proportion of householder planning applications determined within two months varied amongst councils from 71% in East Ayrshire to almost 96% in West Lothian. Eight councils (Aberdeen City, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, City of Edinburgh, North Lanarkshire, Orkney Islands, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire) reported that they dealt with fewer than 80% of planning applications within two months.

The proportion of non-householder applications determined within two months varied amongst councils from 35% in East Dunbartonshire to 77% in Clackmannanshire. Ten councils determined fewer than 50% of applications within the required time while five councils (Clackmannanshire, Eilean Siar, Fife, Inverclyde and West Lothian) dealt with at least two in every three applications within the required time.

¹ Information provided by the Scottish Executive Planning Services Audit Unit indicates that in 2002/03 the proportion of listed building and conservation area determinations expressed as a proportion of all determinations (ie, in relation to non-householder as well as householder applications) ranged from 1% to 17%. City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Glasgow City, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire and Shetland Islands were 10% or more.

Table 6

The processing of planning applications – 2002/03

	Householder applications		Non-householder applications		All applications
	Number of applications	% dealt with within two months	Number of applications	% dealt with within two months	% dealt with within two months
Aberdeen City	1,511	75.4	755	45.6	65.4
Aberdeenshire	1,693	86.5	1,840	54.7	70.0
Angus	591	84.6	604	57.5	70.9
Argyll & Bute	514	88.9	996	56.2	67.4
Clackmannanshire	164	93.3	188	76.6	84.4
Dumfries & Galloway	737	83.2	1,303	51.1	62.7
Dundee City	327	82.3	410	44.1	61.1
East Ayrshire	380	71.1	466	43.3	55.8
East Dunbartonshire	915	79.3	259	34.7	69.5
East Lothian	725	89.1	498	57.4	76.2
East Renfrewshire	739	85.0	175	46.9	77.7
Edinburgh, City of	2,089	74.8	2,423	52.0	62.5
Eilean Siar	92	90.2	286	73.1	77.2
Falkirk	440	88.4	481	46.4	66.4
Fife	1,655	87.6	1,675	66.9	77.2
Glasgow City	837	82.7	2,225	46.4	56.3
Highland	1,135	83.1	2,661	50.4	60.1
Inverclyde	193	93.3	277	67.5	78.1
Midlothian	475	85.5	292	48.3	71.3
Moray	473	92.0	717	63.9	75.0
North Ayrshire	391	82.4	441	39.7	59.7
North Lanarkshire	790	78.6	789	38.9	58.8
Orkney Islands	118	78.0	195	66.2	70.6
Perth & Kinross	796	82.5	1,060	53.4	65.9
Renfrewshire	576	79.7	576	51.4	65.5
Scottish Borders	735	82.0	1,240	52.7	63.6
Shetland Islands	114	88.6	263	55.9	65.8
South Ayrshire	577	82.5	724	51.8	65.4
South Lanarkshire	1,051	91.2	1,074	54.9	72.8
Stirling	463	87.3	507	50.7	68.1
West Dunbartonshire	180	77.2	228	54.8	64.7
West Lothian	596	95.6	655	66.9	80.6
Scotland	22,072	83.4	26,283	53.0	66.9

Indicator 7: Time taken to repair faulty street lights and faulty traffic lights

The percentage of repairs to street lights completed within seven days and the percentage of traffic light repairs completed within 48 hours.

The indicator shows the percentage of repairs to street lights which are undertaken within seven calendar days, and repairs to traffic lights which are carried out within 48 hours. It covers a range of different problems including such things as lamp failure, control box failure, accident damage, vandalism, shade damage and supply failure.

Points to bear in mind

The indicator captures the time taken for the full range of activity, from notification of the fault to the completion of the repair. The actual repair work is often carried out by a contractor, and in such cases it is the contractor's performance which is, in part, being measured. However, it is the council's responsibility as the client, to ensure that the contractor's performance is satisfactory.

Commentary

Street lights

Overall, councils reported that they carried out slightly over 269,000 street light repairs, an increase of almost 7,000 compared with the previous year (Figure 7a). The number of repairs in 2002/03 has risen by 80,000 (43% increase) compared with 1997/98. For 2002/03 councils reported that, overall, at least nine in every ten street light repairs were carried out within seven days, a figure similar to previous years.

The proportion of repairs carried out within seven days varied among councils from 70% in Aberdeenshire to 99% in East Renfrewshire, Perth & Kinross and South Lanarkshire (Table 7a). Twenty-one councils reported that nine in every ten repairs were undertaken within target time – the same as the previous year. Twelve councils reported a higher proportion of repairs being carried out compared with the previous year.

Six councils (Aberdeenshire, Angus, Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar, Midlothian and Shetlands Islands) reported that fewer than eight in every ten repairs were carried out within seven days. These councils also reported poorer performance compared with the previous year.

Traffic lights

Overall, councils carried out 22,300 repairs to traffic lights, an increase of over 1,000 compared with the previous year. A similar pattern to street lighting emerges where the number of repairs to traffic lights has increased significantly showing an increase of almost 10,000 repairs (75% increase) compared with 1997/98. Glasgow City (almost 13,000 repairs) accounted for over half of all repairs in Scotland in 2002/03 (Table 7b).

Across Scotland, 89% of repairs to traffic lights were carried out within 48 hours which is a year-on-year improvement over the past five years. Ten councils reported that they carried out more repairs within time compared with the previous years. **Nine councils** (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, East Lothian, Highland, Midlothian, Stirling and West Lothian), have over the past five years, consistently carried out nine in every ten repairs within target. With the exception of Inverclyde (72%) and Shetland Islands (36%), all other councils carried out at least eight in every ten repairs within the target time.

Figure 7a

Percentage of all street lighting repairs undertaken within seven days, and traffic light repairs undertaken within 48 hours

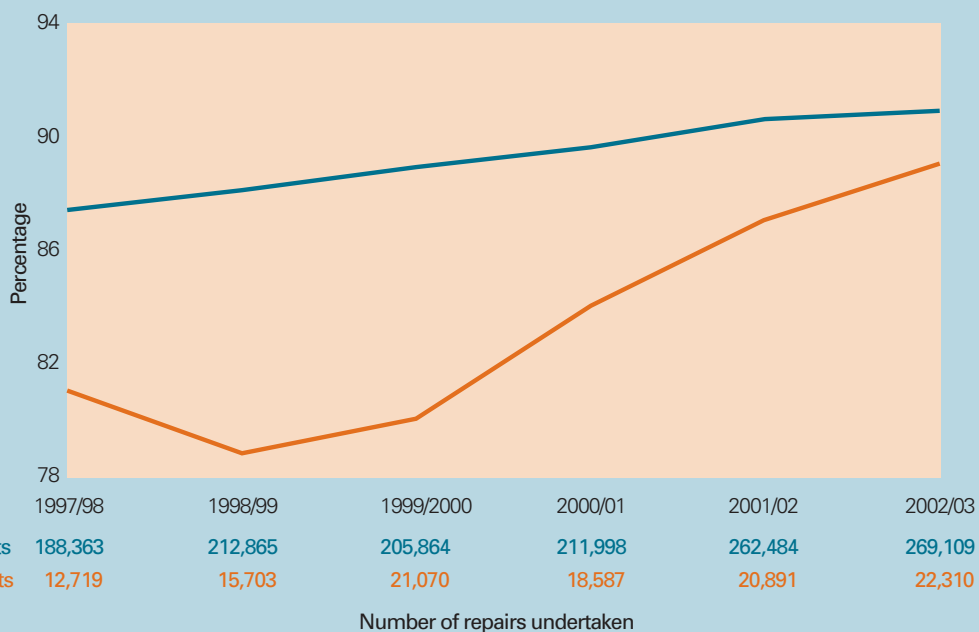


Table 7a

Percentage of all street light repairs completed within seven days

	Total repairs	Percentage of all street light repairs completed within 7 days		
	2002/03	2002/03	2001/02	2000/01
Aberdeen City	10,777	86	91	84
Aberdeenshire	9,081	70	72	88
Angus	6,136	76	90	96
Argyll & Bute	3,389	91	80	* 90
Clackmannanshire	1,967	90	90	80
Dumfries & Galloway	7,935	79	81	87
Dundee City	8,337	98	98	97
East Ayrshire	6,060	98	94	97
East Dunbartonshire	4,741	93	95	97
East Lothian	2,002	92	77	
East Renfrewshire	3,330	99	96	100
Edinburgh, City of	29,356	85	85	* 77
Eilean Siar	124	79	93	
Falkirk	7,382	97	97	98
Fife	27,161	85	91	91
Glasgow City	27,955	97	95	90
Highland	7,635	97	98	98
Inverclyde	4,125	90	80	71
Midlothian	2,531	78	87	82
Moray	4,841	97	97	96
North Ayrshire	5,922	96	90	96
North Lanarkshire	23,478	93	81	83
Orkney Islands	585	87	82	80
Perth & Kinross	6,730	99	99	98
Renfrewshire	9,967	97	90	87
Scottish Borders	8,040	86	93	92
Shetland Islands	113	77	80	77
South Ayrshire	5,194	97	93	94
South Lanarkshire	17,828	99	99	98
Stirling	1,070	90	89	85
West Dunbartonshire	2,892	94	94	98
West Lothian	12,425	94	95	93
Scotland	269,109	91	91	90

Blank cells indicate the council did not report the information.

Table 7b

Percentage of all traffic lights repaired within 48 hours

	Total repairs	Percentage of traffic lights repaired within 48 hours		
	2002/03	2002/03	2001/02	2000/01
Aberdeen City	1,028	95	94	98
Aberdeenshire	68	91	99	98
Angus	204	94	96	96
Argyll & Bute	66	96	90	*95
Clackmannanshire	19	90	94	100
Dumfries & Galloway	228	83	86	80
Dundee City	378	99	99	100
East Ayrshire	186	86	90	71
East Dunbartonshire	372	83	85	86
East Lothian	64	98	99	100
East Renfrewshire	251	80	87	90
Edinburgh, City of	2,131	97	97	97
Eilean Siar	18	94	100	83
Falkirk	98	94	92	97
Fife	569	83	93	91
Glasgow City	12,799	88	85	79
Highland	238	100	100	96
Inverclyde	47	72	92	100
Midlothian	71	94	98	100
Moray	4	100	100	88
North Ayrshire	121	84	87	81
North Lanarkshire	1,210	81	63	69
Perth & Kinross	342	85	91	87
Renfrewshire	574	92	91	91
Scottish Borders	18	100	95	97
Shetland Islands	11	36	87	87
South Ayrshire	175	95	94	84
South Lanarkshire	443	83	88	86
Stirling	39	97	94	94
West Dunbartonshire	283	89	81	83
West Lothian	255	93	93	98
Scotland	22,310	89	87	84

Orkney Islands do not provide this service.

Contacts

If you have any specific queries about the performance information, you may wish to contact your council. A contact person for each council is given below. If you have general queries about this pamphlet, you may wish to contact Alec Taylor or Jim Lachie at Audit Scotland (see back cover)

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