



Chartered
Institute of
Environmental
Health



Public Perception:

Statistics that prove the essential value
of public health pest control

April 2013

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In publishing this survey, CIEH is not entering into the debate on whether local authority pest control services should be kept in-house, charged for, or out-sourced. It does not matter whether the operators work for the council or a private contractor, provided that they are properly trained and competent.

It is, however, concerned that when out-sourcing takes place, the local authority loses the professional expertise needed to promote and protect public health and well-being. Treatments become merely re-active and, in many cases, only provide a short-term solution. This leads to greater costs later.

If the results required under Marmot 2010 and the recommendations from the World Health Organization are to be achieved, it is essential that the local authority retains the expertise required to recognise and understand the health and economic problems pests will cause in their district and to propose and organise pro-active programmes to deal with them.

They must also be able to assess, at the tender stage, the competence of any private contractors employed and to monitor that any work is correctly carried out.

Healthy Lives, Healthy People, a Fair Society! The legacy of Marmot 2010



The challenges raised by Marmot 2010, established the Public Health England Framework, a new approach to public health protection that reaches out to local communities.

A commitment to a reformed, more streamline approach to public health systems will need to focus on:

Local authorities taking new responsibilities for public health.

Giving **this** role to local government opens new opportunities for community engagement and to develop holistic solutions to health and wellbeing

Local authorities be supported by a new integrated public health service

Delivering improved outcomes in health and wellbeing and protect the population from threats to health.

A stronger focus on the outcomes (highlighted in the marmot review),

These outcomes will require the collective efforts of all parts of the public health system, from national to local levels, and across public services and wider society.

Public health has a clear priority,

Public health needs to be seen as a core part of business across Government and is supported with the resources to ensure the focus on public health interventions is maintained; and

A commitment to reduce health inequalities:

is a priority for all parts of the public health system, drawing on the Marmot review to address the wider determinants of health.

- “Inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society – in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. So close is the link between particular social and economic features of society and the distribution of health among the population, that the magnitude of health inequalities is a good marker of progress towards creating a fairer society. Taking action to reduce inequalities in health does not require a separate health agenda, but action across the whole of society.”
- Even backed by the best evidence and with the most carefully designed and well resourced interventions, national policies will not reduce inequalities if local delivery systems cannot deliver them. The recommendations we make depend both on local partnerships and on national cross-cutting government policies.
- Communities are important for physical and mental health and well-being. The physical and social characteristics of communities, and the degree to which they enable and promote healthy behaviours, all make a contribution to social inequalities in health. However, there is a clear social gradient in ‘healthy’ community characteristics



Statistics that prove your worth

The Comprehensive Spending review (CSR) has led to budget cuts which are expected to last until 2018. As a result, many local authorities are introducing charges for pest control as a means of being able to maintain their service in-house. Others have elected to significantly reduce, out-source or disband their existing in-house pest control service.

The control of urban pests has always been a core element of environmental health. However, even though local authorities have a legal obligation to keep their district free from rats and mice under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 (PDPA 1949), there is no statutory duty placed on them to provide the pest control services themselves.

While in the short term savings might be achieved by charging, reducing the pests covered, out-sourcing or disbanding in-house pest management services altogether, the longer term outcome is likely to be a reduction in the reporting and control of pest issues, which will allow pest numbers to increase.

As the World Health Organization has shown, pests spread disease and cause unhealthy living conditions, leading to degraded environments. This has a serious effect on the life and economic well-being of a community. The recent changes in the structure of the provision of pest control services will be putting the health and well-being of local communities at risk.

There is no substitute for local knowledge

The changes and the reduction in local authority in-house pest control services will lead to a loss of expert local knowledge within the authority.

Pest control technicians have a wealth of knowledge and experience that can assess the importance of monitoring and identifying pests and are aware of how to prevent pest-related problems in their communities. Without local authority involvement, there will be no pro-active control of pest issues in common areas. This is why a loss of service will lead to an increased risk to the public's health and wellbeing.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) provides a joined up approach to pest control and beyond. It provides long term interventions that are effective, economical and work on behalf of the whole community while minimising the effects on non-target species. Out-sourcing and simple enforcement encourage short-term measures rather than longer term solutions.

Successful outcome-driven IPM programmes emphasize how to manage the problem and, at the same time, reduce the amount and frequency of pesticide applications by using a number of other available interventions.

However, these interventions will only be effective if the expertise and knowledge needed to organise pro-active treatments continues to be available at a local level.

Shaping the future of pest control

To assess how local residents view the provision of pest control services the National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) carried out a survey of 12 major local authorities in the north, the midlands and the south-west of England. The results make interesting reading.

This survey has shown that the public's expectations of their local authority pest management services remain high; however, many local authorities are struggling to maintain their statutory functions with Pest Liaison Groups (PLG) across the country reporting pest management services being cut.

The public seem to be unaware of the reductions in pest management services that are taking place. This means those who are most vulnerable, or least able to deal with pests, may suffer.

Over the years, the pro-active approach to pest management has helped to provide a pest-free environment. However, the move towards a re-active service is not part of the bigger environmental health picture. Now pest infestations have the potential to increase, thus resulting in a greater risk to public health from pest-borne diseases.

Even in modern societies of the world, pest/vector-borne diseases are a continual threat to public health and every effort should be made to prevent them from degrading the communities in which we live.

“Urban environments are complex systems that challenge those professionals responsible for the control of vector-borne diseases”

“Cost, understanding the needs of the people being served, regulatory restrictions and emergencies have been identified as barriers to implementing IPM programmes”

A well trained public health force, which retains the specialist local knowledge needed to conduct or supervise pro-active pest management is essential.

In addition, information should be developed for the general public which explains the simple steps they can take to assist in keeping their community pest-free.

The World Health Organization definition of health is ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.’

According to research by the World Health Organization, living in a pest infested environment can result in poor health

- Poor health results in lost working days, dependency on benefits, higher use of scarce medical resources and an inability to contribute to the economic health and wealth of the community
- Pest problems are increasing as a result of the effects of climate change and the increased movement of goods, animals and people
- The majority of emerging diseases are expected to be zoonotic based
- The threats from pests will accelerate unless there is a strategy in place to deal with their impact on the health of the general public and the environment.

Fundamentally we need to fight to keep pest control services to protect public health and well-being.

Pounding the pavements to bring you results

Research was carried out in order to gauge an understanding of public health perception of pest control and pest control services.

Visits were made to the 10 local authorities within Greater Manchester and to Birmingham and Bristol.

The table shows an even distribution between the sample areas.

Location	Number of Sample
Birmingham	66
Bristol	64
Bolton	50
Tameside	50
Stockport	50
Manchester	50
Wigan	44
Rochdale	44
Oldham	41
Bury	39
Trafford	39
Salford	37
Total	574

Research was carried out in order to gauge an understanding of the public's perception of pest control and pest control services in their communities.

As explained in the World Health Organisations; Public health significance of urban pests, book:

“Public health and pest management organisations use a science based, outcome driven, decision making process to identify and reduce pests”

“The most up to date technologies and practices should be available so that public health practitioners and pest control professionals are able to respond to and control pests in an ever changing environment”

For this reason the decision was made to pound the pavements, and find out what the public think. This would then provide local authorities with the science based evidence needed to drive their outcome-based decision making processes.

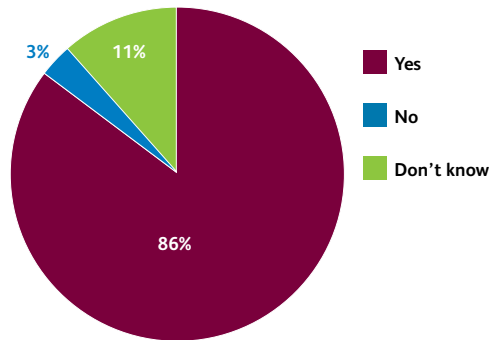
The first steps towards the future of public health protection: You make the difference!

- 86 % of respondents believe their pest control department is an important part of public health protection in their area.
- 64 % of respondents put the responsibility of a pest free environment on their local authority
- **44% of respondents believe it to be their local authority that should pay for an infestation to be dealt with.**
- 50 % of respondents would look to their council first for information on rodents
- 51 % of respondents would look to their council first for information on insects

Shock statistics

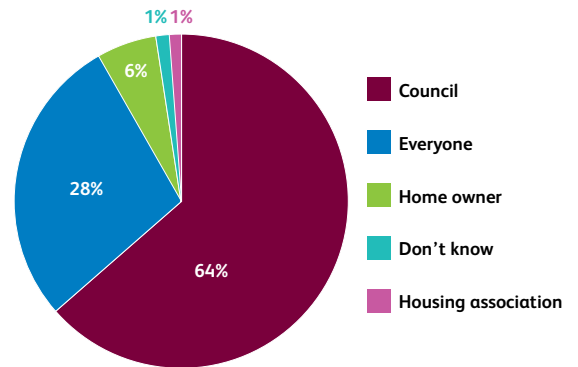
The role of local authority pest control services are fundamental in monitoring emerging issues and ensuring that control measures are in place to protect public health. However, the actions necessary to protect public health from pests will not happen if authorities no longer provide a pest control service.

Do you believe the pest control department of your Local Authority is an important part of public health protection in your area?



86% of the sample believes that their pest control department is an important part of public health protection in their area.

Who do you think is responsible for making sure we don't have pests?



64% of the sample put the responsibility of a pest-free environment on their local authorities.

Supporting the WHO statement:

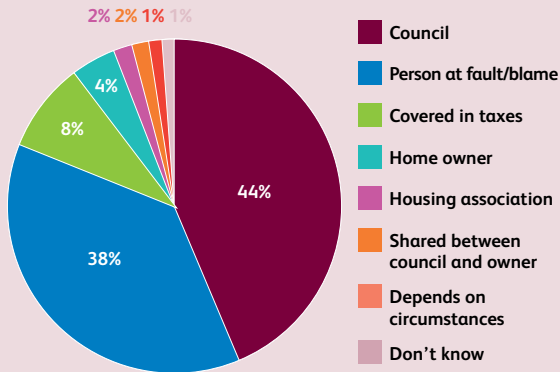
“Pest infestations have no receptor of boundaries, control of pests need a sustainable approach which is based not only on a professional level of expertise, but on good working knowledge of a problem in our towns and cities.”

As part of the PDPA 1949 this is to a certain extent an accurate assumption.

However, services that were once seen to be pro-active have shifted towards being more re-active, resulting in the potential, that pest populations could increase.

So who pays?

Who do you think should pay for an infestation to be dealt with?

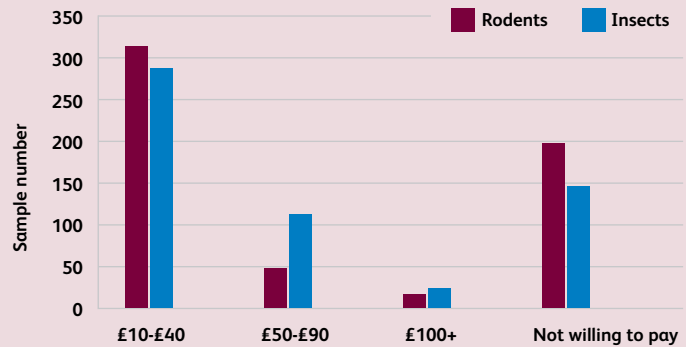


44% believe the council should pay for the infestation to be dealt with.

38% stated, "The person at fault or to blame" should be responsible for the treatment being carried out.

The threats from pests will accelerate unless there are strategies in place to deal with their impact.

What would be the maximum they would be willing to pay for rodent and insect treatments?



34% of the sample was NOT willing to pay for the treatment of rodents, with 25% of the sample NOT willing to pay for insects.

55% (316 people questioned) owned their own homes, with 45% (258 people questioned) privately renting or renting from an authority or housing association.

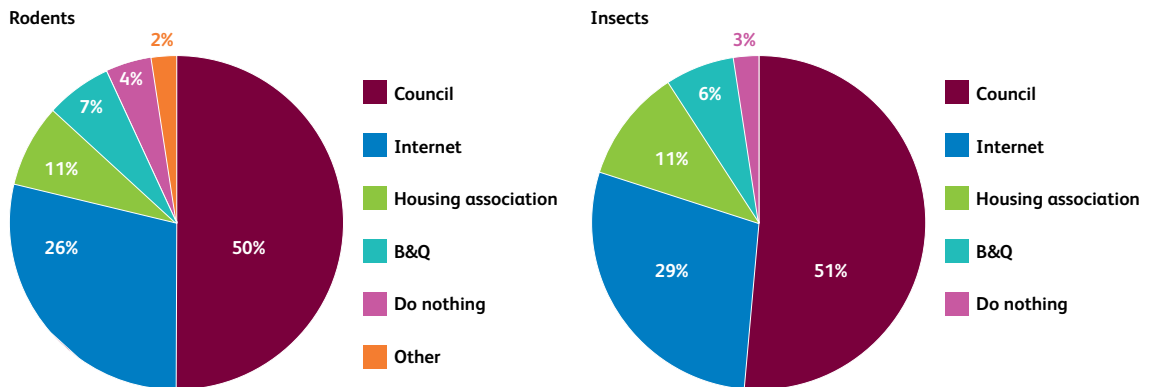
Charging for a service may not be the big issue that needs to be dealt with but more the fact that a pest control service is expected to be provided by their local authority.

Improving outcomes and supporting transparency (public health framework 2013-2016)

- There are many factors that influence public health over the course of a lifetime. They all need to be understood and acted upon. Integrating public health into local government will allow that to happen – services will be planned and delivered in the context of the broader social determinants of health
- Public Health England has been established as an integrated public health delivery body aiming to Streamline public health that is currently distributed across a wide range of health organisations and prioritising public health within central government
- Local authorities are ideally placed to maximise these opportunities and develop holistic approaches to improve health and wellbeing, embracing the full range of local services for which they are responsible.

What would they do first?

If you discovered an infestation of rodents/insects in your property, where would you look to find out more information on them?



The public perception questionnaire found that:

The local authorities remain the primary source of expertise for finding out how to deal with pests.

- 50% of the sample stated they would contact their council for information on rodents
- 51% advised they would contact their council before the internet for information on insects
These results alone fundamentally support the need for a pest control service to be retained in-house, providing the public with vital knowledge, information and service they expect, and keeping their communities pest-free.

Why Environmental health is important:

Maintaining a healthy environment is central to increasing quality of life and years of healthy life. Globally, nearly 25 percent of all deaths and the total disease burden can be attributed to environmental factors. Environmental factors are diverse and far reaching. Including:

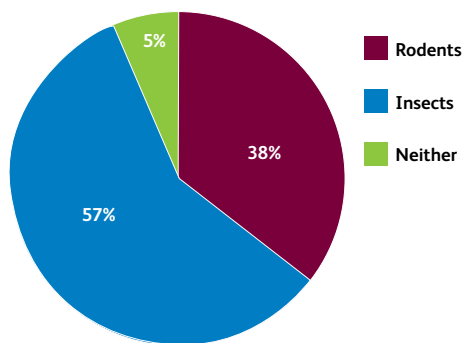
- Exposure to hazardous substances in the air, water, soil, and food
- Natural and technological disasters
- Physical hazards
- Nutritional deficiencies

Poor environmental quality has its greatest impact on people whose health status is already at risk. Therefore, **environmental health must address the societal and environmental factors that increase the likelihood of exposure and disease.**

The choice is yours!

Which would you...

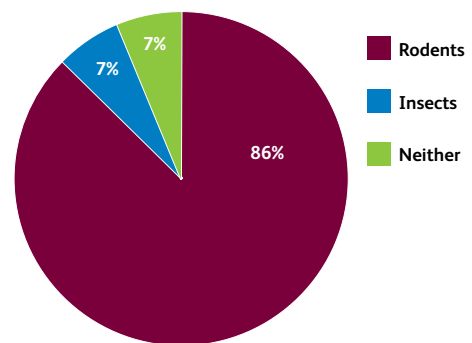
...least like to have in your home?



57% of respondents would least like to have Insects in their home

38% of respondents would least like to have rodents.

...be prepared to put up with in your home?



86% of respondents stated they would be prepared to put up with rodents.

It may appear surprising that 86% of the sample said they would be prepared to put up with rodents in their homes. However this probably indicates that when respondents are faced with having to pay for a charged service, either from their local authority or a commercial company, they may instead decide to continue living with the rodent infestation. This would significantly increase their risk of being exposed to poor health and wellbeing.

Historically, the relationship between rodents and ill health goes hand in hand. It is believed that "fear and loathing of commensal rodents is embedded in many cultures" primarily for rats, in relation to their association with the plague. These results indicate a possible shift in the culture previously recognised.

The question is...Should this be a decision that they have to make?

No-one should have to make this choice!

Health For All:

It should be a matter of policy and principle that everybody be entitled to enjoy a healthy and satisfying life in a pest-free environment.

If present and future generations are to enjoy a healthy life, we need to identify the range of problems which face us and address them before they become unmanageable. One of these problems is the health impact of urban pests.

We need to ensure the highest possible standards in the work and training of environmental health practitioners and the relationship and communication they have with their in-house pest controllers and private company.

and need to recognise that reducing health inequalities needs continual prevention to overcome pests in the environment.



Acknowledgement:

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