NATIONAL BENCHMARKING SERVICE: MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF SPORTS FACILITIES

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Brief history of UK sports facilities

- 19th Century: establishment of voluntary sector clubs and governing bodies
  - still a 'bedrock' of provision: about 100,000 clubs, less than 20% own facilities
- 1970s+: transformation of local authority provision
  - indoor sports centres and swimming pools
- 1990s+: transformation of commercial sector provision
 - fitness centres

Management of UK local authority sports facilities

National Benchmarking Service (NBS) clients are typically from local authority facilities, but these are managed by one of three ways:

- by local authorities - in-house (about 60% of facilities)
- by independent, non-profit trusts (>25% of facilities)
- by commercial contract companies (<15% of facilities)

Political Context

- Public expenditure cuts
  - Need to reduce or justify subsidies
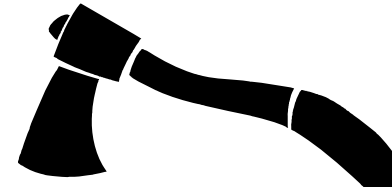
Management Context

- Accountability – value for money
- Reporting to stakeholders
- Continuous improvement

Performance management

- **Objectives**
- **Performance indicators**
- **Targets**
- **Actions**
- **Performance measurement**
- **Benchmarking**
- **Review**

What NBS achieves for performance management

- Performance indicators: pre-determined

- Performance measurement: consistent protocol
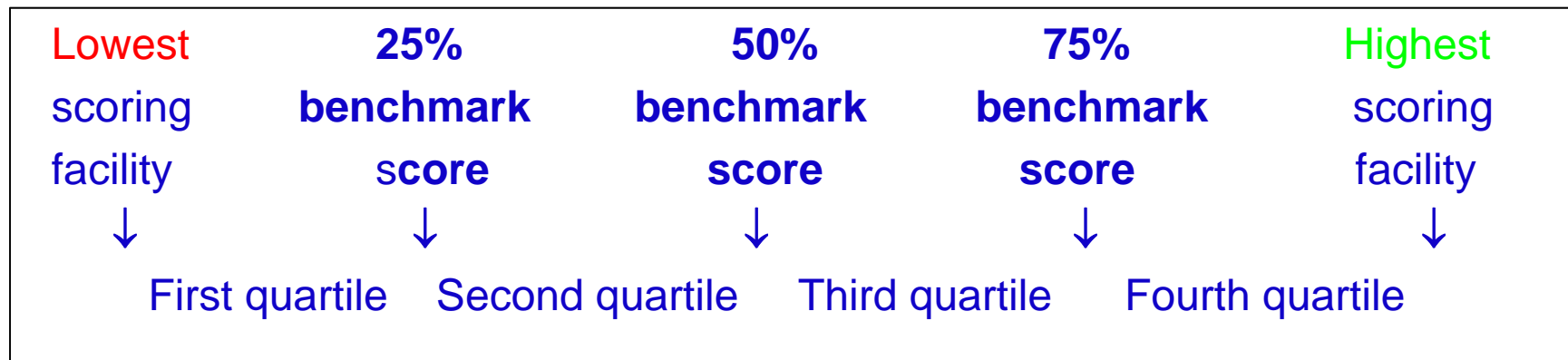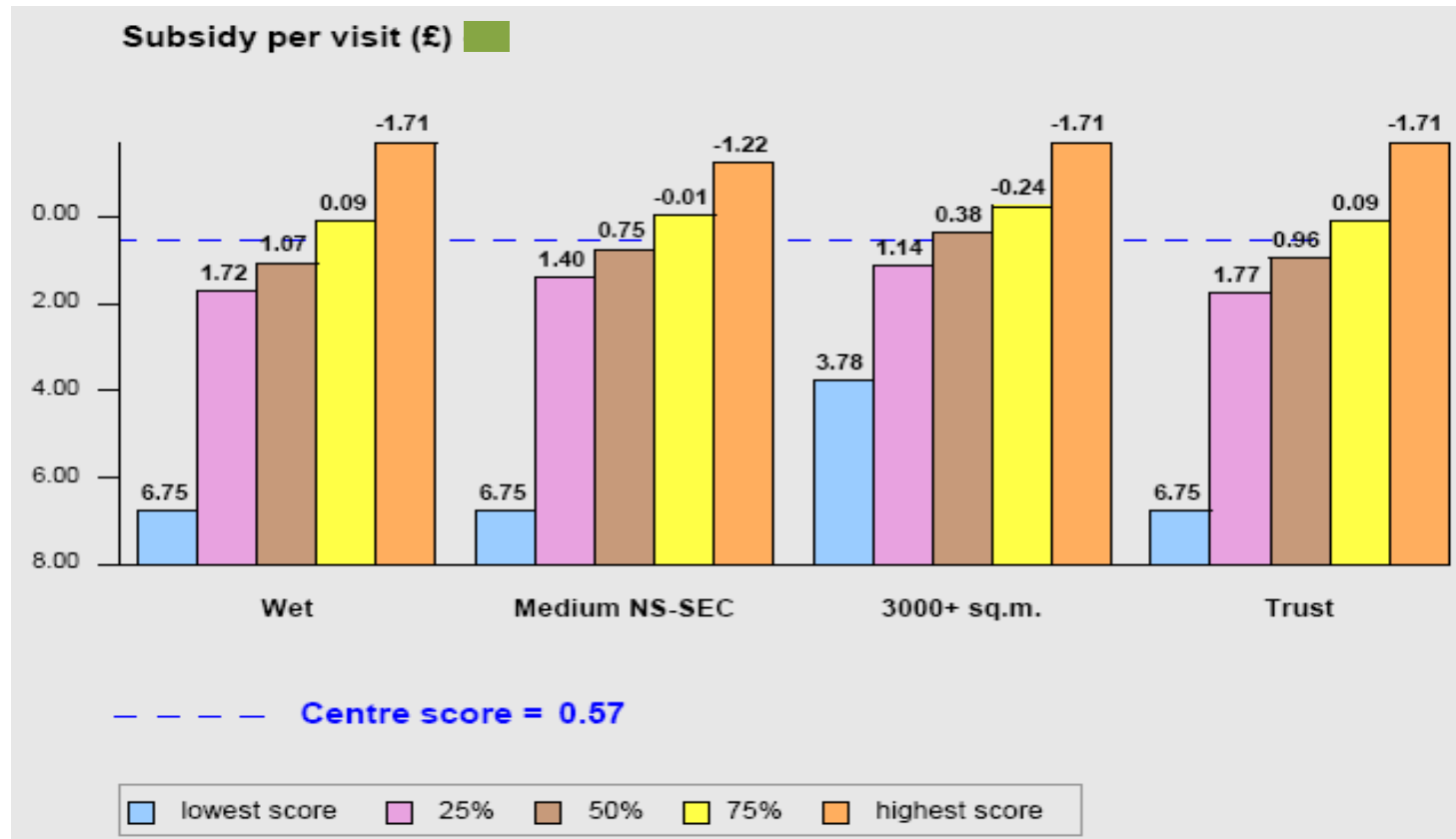- Benchmarking: for the most recent year

NBS inputs

- **User survey (n = 350)**
- **Financial/management return**
- **Census data (for catchment area population)**

NBS structure

- ## Performance indicators:
  - ~ 12 access (use by target groups);
  - ~ 16 financial (subsidy, income, expenditure)
  - ~ 4 utilisation (throughput)
  - ~ 21 service attributes scored by customers for satisfaction and importance (accessibility, quality, cleanliness, staff, value for money)

- ## Comparison 'families':
  - ~ 4 types of centre
  - ~ 3 socioeconomics of the centres' locations
  - ~ 4 sizes of centre
  - ~ 3 types of management

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Benchmarks - for access, finance and utilisation

Lowest	25%	50%	75%	Highest
scoring	**benchmark**	**benchmark**	**benchmark**	scoring
facility	s**core**	**score**	**score**	facility
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
First quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Fourth quartile	

Subsidy per visit (£)

	lowest score	25%	50%	75%	highest score
Wet	6.75	1.72	1.07	0.09	-1.71
Medium NS-SEC	6.75	1.40	0.75	-0.01	-1.22
3000+ sq.m.	3.78	1.14	0.38	-0.24	-1.71
Trust	6.75	1.77	0.96	0.09	-1.71

Centre score = 0.57

Customer satisfaction and importance

For 19 customer service attributes:

- gaps between importance and satisfaction mean scores/ranks

- grid analysis of importance and satisfaction mean scores

- mean satisfaction scores compared with industry means

- % of customers dissatisfied

- **Plus the Net Promoter Score**

Satisfaction and importance: gap analysis – an example

Attribute	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap: Importance minus Satisfaction
	Ranks out of 19 attributes		
Cleanliness of the changing areas	1	15	-14
Water quality in the pool	2	10	-8
Quality of lighting in the sports hall	12	17	-5
Value for money of activities	9	11	-2
Quality of food and drink	19	18	1
Standard of coaching/instruction	3	1	2
Helpfulness of reception staff	7	3	4

Satisfaction and importance: grid analysis

S A T I S F A C T I O N ↑	**HIGH SATISFACTION AND LOW IMPORTANCE:** possible over-resourcing? check for efficiency gains	**HIGH SATISFACTION AND HIGH IMPORTANCE:** good correlation; maintain this performance
	LOW SATISFACTION AND LOW IMPORTANCE: no need for action unless satisfaction is particularly low or there are other implications (e.g. financial)	**LOW SATISFACTION AND HIGH IMPORTANCE:** in most urgent need of action to increase satisfaction
	→ **IMPORTANCE**	

Grid analysis: an example
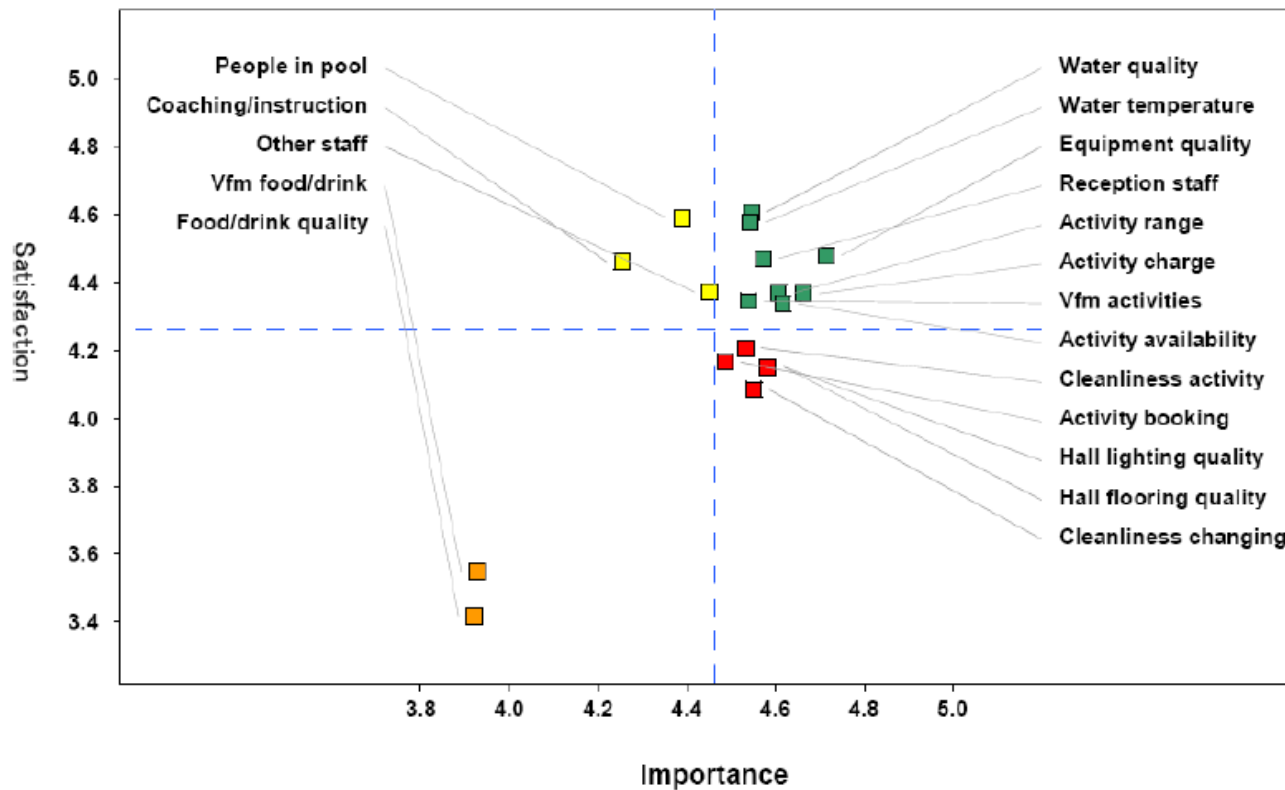
Note: the quadrants are separated by the centre's average importance and satisfaction scores across all attributes.

Plus other user survey responses

Frequency distributions of responses to all the user survey questions, including:

- **Visit characteristics (e.g. activity, frequency, travel mode and distance)**
- **Profile of visitor (e.g. age, gender, disability, postcode)**

Clients' reasons for using NBS

- **Provides comparative industry performance information**
- **Independent identification of strengths and weaknesses**
- **Informs the performance review process**
- **Informs operational decisions**
- **Sets terms and targets for externalisation**
- **Answers internal and external questions**
- **Facilitates service improvement**

Advantages of performance measurement and management

- Awareness of exactly what the current position is

- Re-appraisal of strategic and operational priorities and delivery methods

- Realistic performance expectations/targets

- Identification of further research/ monitoring needs

- Platform for process benchmarking

- Puts managers in control of managing performance

How does the industry in England excel and how does it struggle?
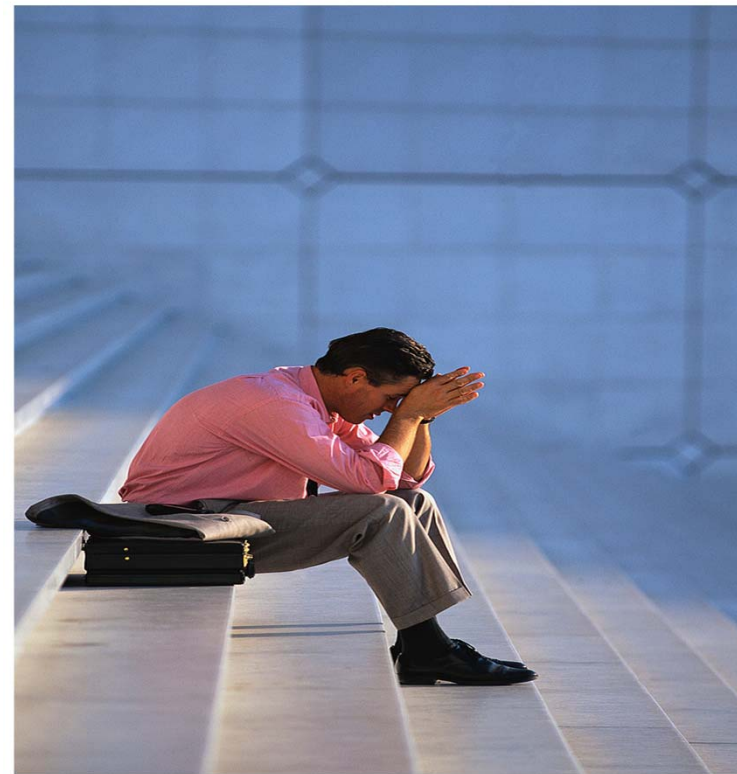
Industry strengths

Ethnic minorities - median score 1.28

20-59 years - median score 1.2

Females - median score 1.08

Staff, NB coaching and instruction - mean score 4.56 to 4.68 out of 5

Activity availability - mean score 4.43 to 4.64 out of 5

Overall satisfaction - mean score 4.37 to 4.54 out of 5

Industry weaknesses

11-19 year olds - median score 0.54

Lowest socioeconomic classes - median score 0.7

60+ years - median score 0.64

Disabled under and over 60 years - median scores 0.52 and 0.27

Food and drink (quality and value for money) - mean scores 3.47 to 3.81 out of 5

Cleanliness of changing areas - mean score 3.89 to 4.22 out of 5

Industry strengths or weaknesses?

- **% of visits which were first visits -** median score 5% (range 1% to 22%);

- **% of visits using a discount card -** median score 54% (range 12% to 85%)

- **% of visits using a 'disadvantage' discount card -** median score 18% (range 4% to 57%)

- **Cost recovery -** median score 89% (range 32% to 186%)

- **Annual visits per square metre -** median score 89 visits (range 15 to 305 visits)

- **Market penetration (weekly number of people visiting, as % of catchment population) -** median score 10% (range 1 - 47%)

Longer term changes in industry standards in England, 2001-2012

- **Improvement in 60+, lowest socioeconomic classes, use of discount cards (especially disadvantaged), disabled over 60 years, unemployed, cost recovery, subsidy PIs, direct income PIs, annual visits per square metre, casual visits, market penetration, and most satisfaction scores**

- **deterioration in 11-19 year olds, disabled under 60 years, operating cost PIs, secondary income and a minority of satisfaction scores**

Conclusions

- A service like NBS can help individual facility managers improve their performance and it provides reliable evidence of how the sector is performing.

- Defending subsidies needs convincing and improving evidence for access, utilisation and customer satisfaction.

- Reducing subsidies is happening but whilst top quartile centres typically make operating surpluses, bottom quartile centres still have subsidies equivalent to 32% or more of operating costs.

www.questnbs.org

Thank you
Any questions?

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