

Appendix C: Missed Collections: Deep Dive

Rationale for the deep dive

In December's performance report to the board we identified that the only two performance indicators where performance was not as expected related to missed refuse collections and repeat missed collections. As this is an area which the public and board members have consistently flagged concerns, and given the importance of maintaining service quality in the run-up to early expiry it was felt appropriate to investigate missed collections further.

Purpose of the deep dive

This deep dive should be seen in the light of the run in to rolling out Recycle More. Our kerbside sort system delivers high environmental quality, but we ask a lot of the public to achieve this. Part of the 'contract' with our customers should be that our customer service must become market leading. This report therefore focuses on:

- What is a missed collection and what causes them?
- How well are we performing and what level of performance should we reasonably expect?
- Have the actions taken to address areas of poor performance had the desired impact?
- What more should we do to improve performance and customer satisfaction?

Summary

- SWP (and our collection contractor, Kier) get it right first 99.91% of the time on average. Because we undertake around 26 million kerbside collections each year this means, however that 23,648 household's collections are missed each year, which causes understandable customer dissatisfaction. SWP's performance appears to be broadly around average compared to other collection authorities, but reliable comparisons are difficult to identify. The issues identified at the last board meeting have been addressed.
- Missed collections occur for various reasons, and looking at average data for all services across the whole county can mask where we do have some performance issues. Management actions taken by Kier have been prompt and effective to date, and we have full confidence in their ability to achieve improvements and their commitment to maintaining service quality. Given our ageing fleet, lack of in-cab technology and the level of historical performance we do, however, need to be realistic about what level of performance we can reasonably expect.
- The deep dive has resulted in further action from Kier to address areas of particular concern, and identified areas where SWP can improve its processes and monitoring. However, the deep dive has revealed that there are a number of areas where performance remains at an unacceptable level (in relation to assisted collections, the speed with which missed collections are rectified, and garden waste collections). SWP have informed Kier that performance in these areas must improve by the end of the financial year (April 2018) otherwise the full range of performance deductions that our contract with Kier allows (c£20 – 40k over a 3 month period). Such performance deductions are not significant in the context of our overall contract, but do send a clear signal to Kier of the importance of our collection service quality in the final years of our contract with them.

What is a missed collection?

A **missed collection** is any collection (refuse, recycling, food, garden, clinical or bulky) that is reported by a customer as missed over the phone or online. Both online and over the phone we can seek to weed out those where a collection hasn't actually been missed (e.g. containers not actually put out on the kerbside or put out on the wrong day), and support customer with advice and excess waste stickers if needed. Kier can 'unjustify' a missed collection however SWP will only allow Kier to not rectify a reported missed collection if sufficient data (including a photo) is made available to SWP – but given the lack of in-cab technology this evidence is rarely provided. The system fundamentally relies on customers honestly reporting missed collections.

If a missed collection isn't reported by a customer then we have no record of it having been missed, and we only record each log as one missed collection (even if a customer states that the whole street has been missed – as experience suggests such reports are often inaccurate). We also do not record incomplete collection rounds as a missed collection as a block – instead we liaise daily with Kier to ensure that incomplete rounds are completed quickly, and any customers that do contact us are logged as missed collections. People are less likely to report a missed collection when they see that their neighbours have also been missed.

So it is likely that there are more missed collections than we report, but that some of the missed collections we do report are not actually missed. What we are actually monitoring is 'reported missed collections'.

SWP measure **repeat missed collections** as any property that has had any previous report of a missed collection of any type in the last 12 weeks. Contractually a repeat missed collection is a collection of the same type which has been missed consecutively.

A **missed collection not rectified** is where a missed collection is not corrected within 48 hours. Whilst our contract requires a missed collection to be rectified the same day if it is reported before midday and within 24 hours if reported later, this contractual condition has not been implemented. However when we imposed penalties against the contract in the Autumn of 2014 these were based on the contractual requirements. Our contract only stipulates specific performance deductions if a missed collection is not rectified within this contracted time period or if it is a repeated missed or a repeat missed not rectified. Other deductions can be made for 'service failure' or 'service breakdown' but these are open to interpretation and could be subject to lengthy and costly dispute. This has been recognised as a weakness within the contract and the new contract will be much stronger in this area. This may of course have been partly due to originally having a community interest partner but this relationship has changed over the years due to acquisition and the nature of our contract partner has changed significantly over the last ten years.

How well are we performing overall and compared to others?

SWP (and our collection contractor, Kier) get it right first 99.91% of the time on average. However, given that we undertake around 26 million individual collections each year, this still means that there are around 23,648 customers who do not experience the level of service they expect.

Our contract does not stipulate any level of missed collections that is acceptable – i.e. assumes that there should be zero missed collections, and that performance deductions can be applied if they are not rectified within the contractually agreed time limit. However, SWP – like other waste collection authorities - have long accepted that in reality it is not practical to have no missed collections, given the nature of the service provided day in day out on Somerset’s roads. Since ECT provided services back in 2007, SWP have measured performance against a target of 0.5 missed collections per 1000 collections. Kier also recognise this as their internal performance target across all their contracts.

Looking at our performance over time (figure 1 below) shows that our average performance over the last 3 years has been 99.91% – almost twice our target. It also shows that there is a seasonal trend (worse in Summer and after Christmas), that there are significant spikes in performance caused by one-off issues that are normally rectified promptly

A review of other waste collection authorities has shown that there is no standard way of measuring or reporting missed collections (many don’t publicly report on this at all), and little best practice was identified. Whilst we cannot be certain that we are comparing like with like, other authorities missed reports ranged from 14 to 487 per 100,000 – an average of 79 per 100,000 when extremes are removed. This compares to Somerset’s average of 91 per 100,000 collections – meaning that our performance is just above average.

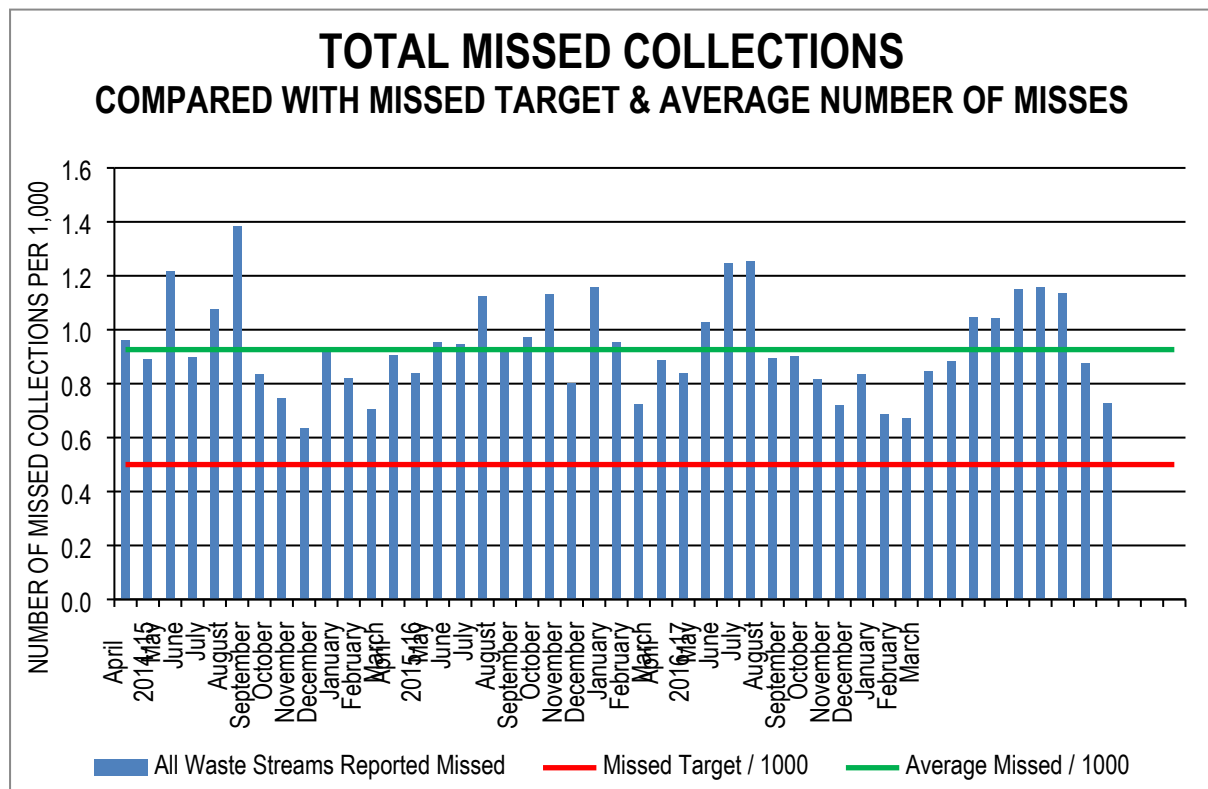


Figure 1: Total missed collections (all services county-wide) against our target and average.

What causes missed collections and how are they managed?

Table 1 shows the key reasons that cause a single property or a number of properties to be missed, providing a narrative for some of the key trends in figure 2 - trends in missed collections over the last three years broken down by type of service (refuse, recycling, garden).

Reason for a missed	When this led to spikes in missed collections (fig 2)
Seasonal spikes in demand	Clearly the post-Christmas boom in recycling and refuse and other major events (Halloween pumpkins and food waste) create particular pressures on the service, and these significant increases in demand are generally well planned for and well coped with (as this Christmas was). However, it does lead to higher levels of missed collections. It is also evident that missed collections are much higher in the summer on our garden waste service (when demand is highest). Performance issues on garden waste have to an extent been masked by how we monitor and report the figures, and these issues are discussed in more detail later in the report.
Recycling vehicle compartment(s) full (i.e. increased demand)	Our ageing fleet was procured before the boom in on-line shopping and the significant reduction in reading of newspapers, and does not effectively match the amounts of waste generated. This can lead to some compartments being filled up whilst others have capacity, which can occasionally result in missed collections.
Accident/parked car blocking access	Unfortunately as we are all aware our roads and streets are becoming busier and more congested with a corresponding rise in access problems due to parked cars and road closures for our collection crews.
Vehicle breakdown	For example the summer 2017 spike in garden waste was in part driven by a sequence of vehicle breakdowns in South Somerset -
Staff shortages	Refuse performance in the current year has shown some concerning spikes (particularly at Lufton and Evercreech) driven by staff shortages. Recycling services in Taunton Deane this summer were affected by similar issues. These have been addressed by Kier improving agency recruitment and the ratio of full time to agency staff.
Inexperienced crew on a round	We do try and have at least one regular crew on a round but this is not always possible, information is paper based and wind, wet, gloves etc. all make this difficult to manage and things can get missed. Local knowledge 'that bin is always tucked just inside the hedge' etc. can get lost
Changes to a round	Evercreech (our largest depot) has consistently performed less well than other depots in certain areas and performance in Mendip in particular was worsening – peaking at 153 missed collections a week in October. This deterioration in performance required a restructure of rounds to tackle it, and whilst this led to a short term blip in performance as crews got used to the new rounds, by mid-December this had reduced to 35 missed collections per week.
Lack of in-cab technology	Garden waste and assisted collections would probably benefit most from in cab and other tech advances and a paper based

	system is a significant weakness in these areas but also more generally in delivering a service of this scale. Most of our current on the street operation uses technology more than a decade old.
Crew behaviour	Instances of crews deliberately not following instructions are very rare, but this did occur on the garden waste service in Spring in Bridgwater - robust management action was taken to address these performance issues.
Depot culture	Organisational culture can impact on service and there have been persistent differences in performance by depot, some of which we believe is due to culture. Kier are working hard to change some of the drivers of this behaviour – for example through implementing pay parity across depots and functions.
Role of Supervisor	Supervisors are a vital component in smooth and efficient operations. As with other positions we have churn in this area and it does take new supervisors time to get up to speed. When staff pressures lead to a shortage of drivers this often results in supervisors having to drive, and this does have a noticeable impact on service quality.

Figure 2: key drivers for missed collections

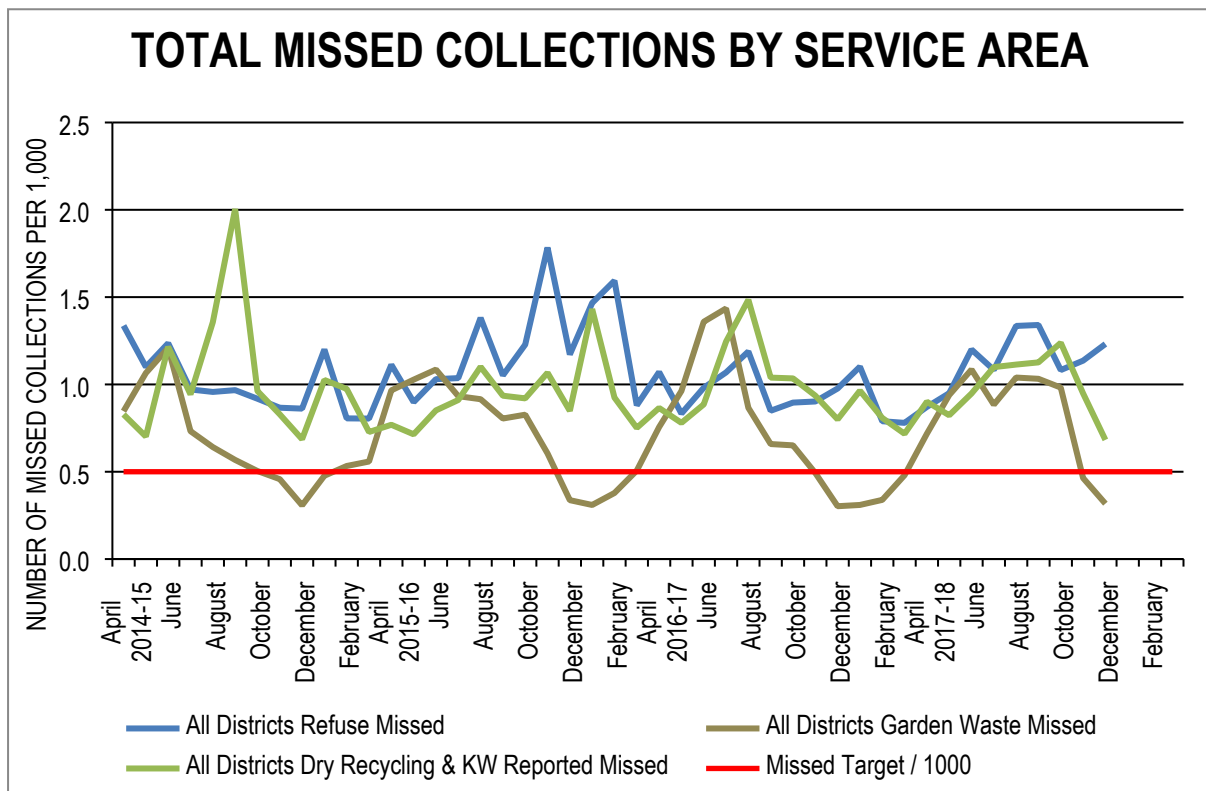


Figure 3: Missed collections over the last three years by type of service (refuse, recycling, garden)

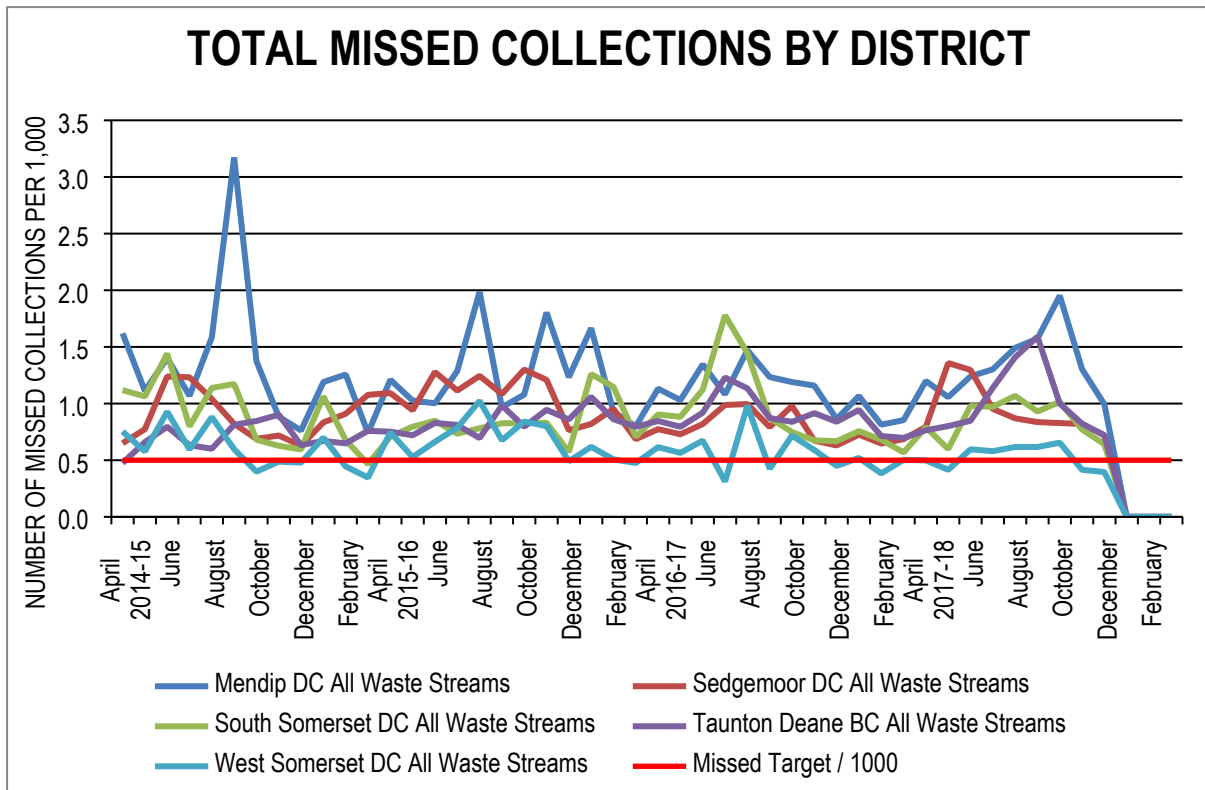


Figure 4: Missed collections over the last three years by District

Deeper dive into areas of particular concern

Garden Waste:

We have historically reported missed collections on garden waste compared to the total number of households. However, there are around 47,000 garden waste subscribers as opposed to over 250,000 households. When we look at garden waste missed collections as a proportion of garden waste collections the level of missed collections is significantly higher (0.41% as opposed to 0.08%). As one might expect with a seasonal service the highest amount of missed collections happen at the highest time of demand with 47% of missed collections happening between May and August. Whilst this isn't out of kilter with our wider performance, as this is a paid for service by customers this level of performance requires improvement, especially as most service issues happen when customers need it most (in the peak growing season). This is the service where a paper based system (as opposed to effectively using technology to ensure that routes pass all customers) has the greatest impact on service quality. Whilst exceptional, one customers experience was as follows:

A customer recently joined the service and is the only person on this road who has joined the service. They have received a missed collection when they first presented the bin as the crew were clearly not used to going down this road. Despite rectifying the missed collection this continued to happen and has required intervention by a board member and SWP to resolve.

Assisted Collections:

People in receipt of assisted collections tend to be the most vulnerable in our community, and hence our tolerance for service failure for these customers should be significantly lower than other customers. The table below shows the numbers of missed collections for those in receipt of missed collections. As one would expect this mirrors our wider services highs and lows in performance (i.e. if there is a problem more generally with recycling collections from a particular depot then it will also affect those on assisted collections). However, the proportion of assisted waste customers who have a missed collection is 8 times higher than it is for other customers. Given the vulnerability of many of those receiving this service this level of performance is totally unacceptable and we will be concentrating our efforts on turning this service around. Kier have been informed that we expect the performance of the assisted collection service must improve by the end of this financial year or contractual performance deductions will be applied.

District	Month No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Month Ending	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-17
Mendip	Refuse	20	23	19	21	20	23	23	26	21	14
	Kerbside	34	38	46	47	42	39	81	49	17	42
	Garden	6	10	13	12	9	10	15	10	4	6
Sedgemoor	Refuse	11	17	18	15	9	16	22	21	16	18
	Kerbside	17	45	27	31	34	29	30	25	18	42
	Garden	12	13	30	21	12	17	8	10	2	1
South Somerset	Refuse	16	6	15	10	17	26	21	20	11	41
	Kerbside	40	18	35	42	28	34	35	34	16	47
	Garden	15	9	17	19	34	19	22	9	4	10
Taunton Deane	Refuse	15	12	22	14	24	12	13	18	10	12
	Kerbside	32	39	42	67	73	80	54	50	26	53
	Garden	12	11	15	7	5	20	13	7	3	2
West Somerset	Refuse	4	0	3	8	4	4	11	4	3	7
	Kerbside	3	2	11	11	16	15	34	6	7	7
	Garden	3	0	1	8	4	4	1	1	1	1
Assisted Collections - All Districts & All Service Areas		240	243	314	333	331	348	383	290	159	303
Assisted Collections - All Districts & All Service Areas per 1000		7.449	6.856	8.474	9.843	9.339	9.819	10.806	8.182	4.700	8.177

Figure 5: Number of missed assisted collections by district and service

Clinical and bulky waste collections:

A review of performance of these services has not highlighted any particular issues – only 1 bulky collection has been missed so far this financial year, and clinical missed waste collections average around 1-2 per month.

Repeat missed:

Whilst customers might understand that things like vehicle breakdowns might affect their service, they quite rightly will not accept preventable errors happening over and over again. We have been working with Kier to reduce the number of repeat problems and have highlighted the role of supervisors and adequate de-briefs at the end of the day. Our operations officers have also been sharing and assisting Kier staff to analyse the data available to identify repeat issues. This is ongoing (and appear to have addressed the particular problems in Mendip). Whilst the overall trend continues to improve, this is an area where most mistakes are preventable and we have an extremely low tolerance for failure. Kier have been informed that we expect the improvement in performance (i.e. elimination of preventable repeat missed collections) must continue or contractual performance deductions will be applied.

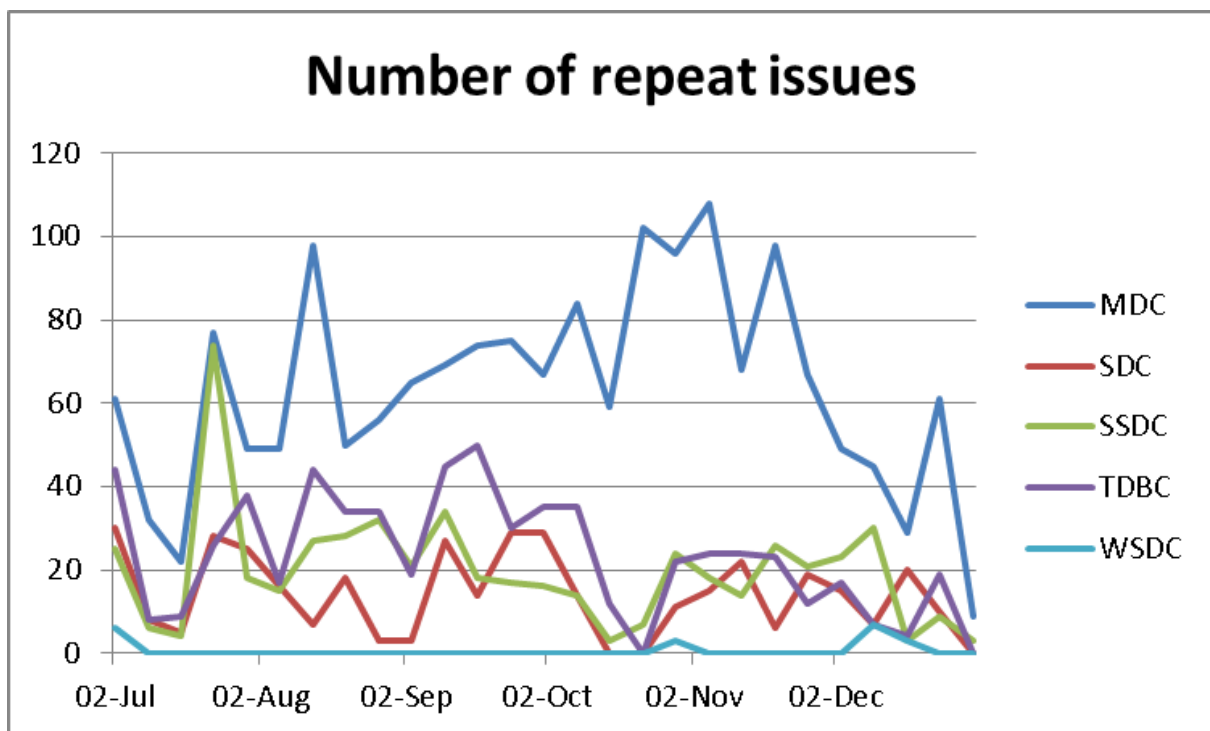


Figure 6: Repeat missed collections

Speed of rectification of missed collection

The customer expectation (based on what call centres/website informs them) is that all missed collections will be rectified within 48 hours. This allows Kier more time to rectify missed collections than is contractually required, but it is not recommended to change this at this stage in the contract and given other higher priority areas of service that need improving. Figure 7 below shows that some depots in some months have rectified less than 50% of collections in line with customer

expectations, and many average below 70%. Whilst issues here may be because the collection is not recorded on Kier's systems promptly, it does appear to show performance far below what is acceptable (other than in West Somerset, which achieves this standard over 90% of the time). SWP have informed Kier that over 90% of missed collections must be rectified with 48 hours by the end of the financial year, or contractual performance deductions will be applied.

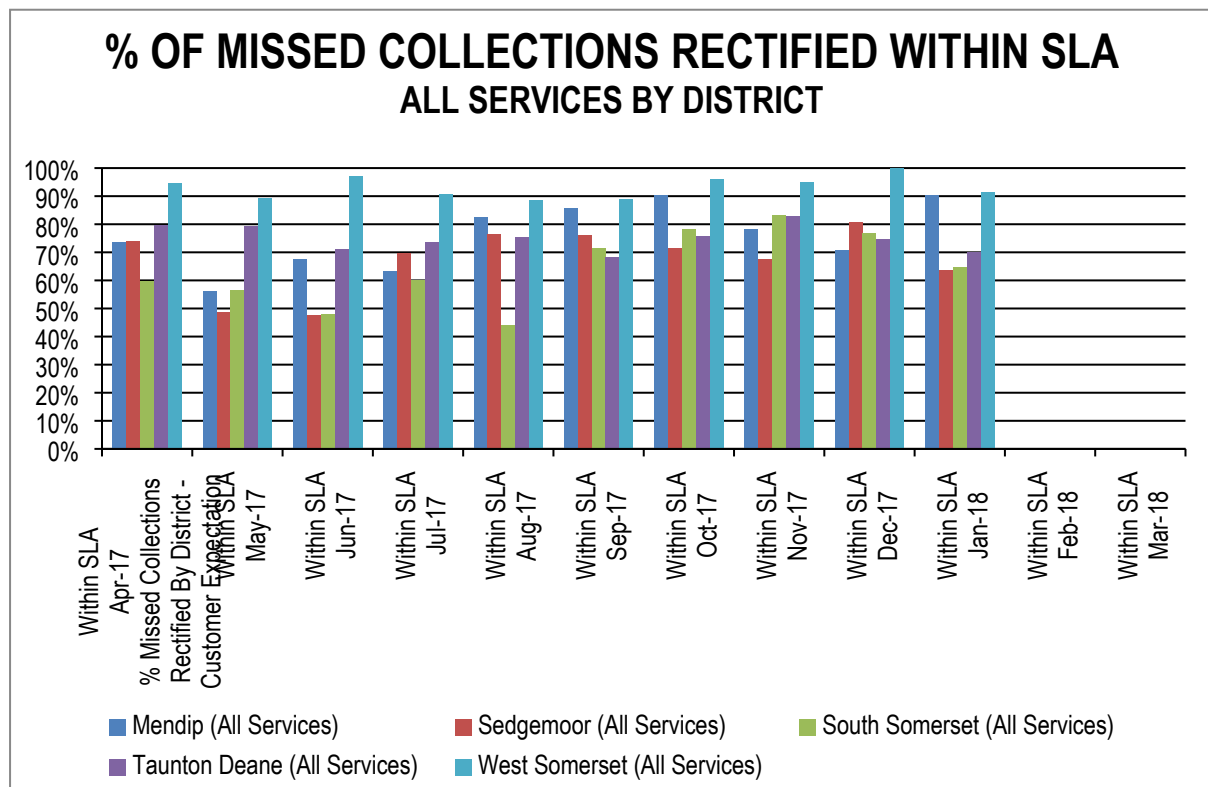


Figure 7: Missed collections collected within 48 hours

Actions taken to date

Actions
Kier and SWP have been engaged in resolving the issue of attracting staff and reducing the reliance on agency cover. We have jointly promoted the employment opportunities and will be taking part in further employment fairs and promotional events with three in Taunton, Burnham and Bridgwater already booked in over the next few weeks. We have increased the reliability and ability to engage agency staff by expanding those companies who can provide to Kier and through promotional events. However on average Kier are still operating at an average of 27% agency cover across depots (excluding Lufton) which they are continue to try and reduce.
An Assisted Collection Review is contracted to take place every 3 years and the SWP sends out letters to all households on the service with a freepost return envelope as well as online options for the customer to confirm it is still required . The most recent review took place this year and cleared approx. 2000 people off the list unfortunately about 400 of those who still required the service did not respond and then report a missed collection impacting on the statistics. This readjustment took place in the 3 rd quarter of this year.
Since July 2017 SWP have introduced a greater detailed analysis of all missed assisted collections and Operations Officers use this list to work with their respective depots and supervisors to investigate causes in order to introduce long term solutions rather than continually repeating the same errors.
Again in July a similar process was introduced for repeat missed collections to achieve the same results- deeper analysis and engagement with the crews and public in order to find more effective solutions.
In the past significant round changes have been implemented by Kier without adequate input from SWP staff. This meant that on the ground local knowledge from SWP staff (and local Kier staff) was missed which could identify potential issues which may not be obvious to a round planning engineer based at the head office. This element of the planning of any changes has now been given greater importance and is now embedded in the process.
Resource problems and imbalances in rounds can lead to the same areas being vulnerable to problems if they are always done in the same way (i.e. repeated issues at the end of the round). Where resource issues or problems are identified early in the process Kier will reroute collections to try and ensure if there is a problem it is not the same properties who continually suffer.

Actions to be taken as a result of this deep dive

Planned Actions
Kier have undertaken to improve the data provided to SWP which is being trialled over the next few months to refine and enable us to effectively interrogate missed collection data better.
Rather than using a separate resource to complete missed collections Kier where possible use the same crews who missed a property to return and correct which is hoped will identify any issues which need further investigation or ingrain the need to collect in those responsible for ensuring it is done in the first place.
SWP have informed Kier that performance is unacceptable on certain services (assisted collections, the speed with which missed collections are rectified, and garden waste collections). SWP have informed Kier that a plan to improve these aspects of the service must be instigated and the performance in these areas must improve by the end of the financial year (April 2018) otherwise the full range of performance deductions that our contract with Kier allows will be introduced until improvement is seen
There are missed collections that are not the result of failure by Kier or the SWP. A clear and accurate recording of these 'reported' missed collections will prevent a need to divert resources to rectify. Alternative options can be provided to the household – use of HWRC's and excess stickers for example. It will also identify to SWP households who could benefit from more targeted advice and intervention.

We will be more proactive in using social media and ward and parish councils as well as our partners to distribute information on known issues where they arise .Although doesn't resolve the issue it can provide reassurance to customers that problems are known and will be addressed.

SWP and Kier are reviewing the content of toolbox talks and the induction process for new staff to seek improvement in the messages and effectiveness of the operations.