

## **AUSTERITY BITES: LOCAL AUTHORITY PEST CONTROL SERVICES**

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**Abstract** The landscape of public health pest control is changing. Budgets are being cut across the country, with most local authorities (LAs) still being the main source of dealing with public health pest problems as they did before, but with significant reductions in resourcing. Through analysing the UK pest control call-out data of LAs and comparing them to commercial (private) pest control companies, it is apparent that under-resourcing public councils places significant pressure on the public to self-finance public health pest control. Data indicated that UK LAs have been gradually contracting out their pest control services within the last five years. For the financial year 2011-2012, 17.9% of LAs contracted out their pest control services. This has risen significantly, emphasising the notion that LAs are no longer financing public health pest control, and suggesting that pest control services at LAs are under-resourced due to the government austerity measures within their local districts. Many services are under threat from future cutbacks, and in most cases these cuts have already had an impact on pest control staffing levels and services. This highlights a worrying trend; that UK LAs can no longer provide pest control services to the public due to the current measures and changes to LA financial models, thus leading members of the public and private pest control companies to solve the public health pest control needs of the nation. The majority of the general public perceives that the first call for pest-related problems is their local council. However many will discover their calls being rejected from councils that no longer offer these services, and therefore will rely on DIY treatments and commercial pest control providers. It's thought that analysis of BPCA referral data demonstrates that areas where cutbacks are prominent, there are resultant increases in demand for commercial pest control activity. This exposes the vulnerable to unscrupulous and potentially unqualified pest operators. The British Pest Control Association believes these data highlights the need for greater cooperation between LAs and the private sector to guarantee an affordable and safe pest control for the public.

