



Austerity bites: local authority pest control services

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Introduction

Now in its sixth year of research, BPCA's National Survey is the only comprehensive national report known to investigate the state of local authority (LA) pest control services across the UK. For the first time we have directly compared the Associations referral tool against National LA call out activity.

Materials & Methods

Freedom of Information Act 2000 requests (FOIs) were sent to all 390 LAs operating across the UK, of which 364 (93%) returned their FOIs for analysis. Only activity (call-outs) of in-house pest control teams is reported, and not those who contract out services. Some local authorities declined to report budget information.

Analysis was carried out using total, average and relative proportion calculations, with linear forecasting models employed in some areas.

References

British Pest Control Association, (2017). *National Survey 2016*. Available at: www.bpca.org.uk/nationalsurvey (accessed 6 June 2017)

Results & Discussion

Services

In addition to a declining number of LAs offering pest control services (decrease of 14% since 2011/12), only 219 (75%) are delivered in house. It is forecasted that by 2020, only 225 (58%) local authorities will offer 'in house' pest control services.

Staff

On average, the UK employed 3.19 FTE general staff across the LAs operating a pest control service (292 out of 364) during 2015/16; representing a 5% decrease compared to the previous year (from 3.37 to 3.19) and an 11% decrease since 2011/12 (from 3.59 to 3.19).

Call outs

The total number of pest call-outs across the UK for LAs operating a pest control service (292 out of 364) during 2015/16 was 418,463, representing a 22% decrease compared to the previous year and a 33% decrease since 2011/12 (figure 1 and 2).

Since BPCA introduced its member referral tool to its website and telecommunications in 2013, the service has endured an average increase of 15,149 (25%) referrals each year. However, there still remains a shortfall in the declining call out and referral numbers (figure 3).

Figure 1; Total LA call outs and BPCA referrals

| Source | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17* |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| LA Call outs | 669,314 | 625,461 | 490,377 | 501,580 | 539,237 | 418,463 | 442,893 |
| BPCA Referrals | 0 | 0 | 7,573 | 43,102 | 58,728 | 77,778 | 83,316 |
| Total | 669,314 | 625,461 | 497,950 | 544,682 | 597,965 | 496,241 | 526,209 |

Figure 2; % Change in LA Call outs vs BPCA Referrals

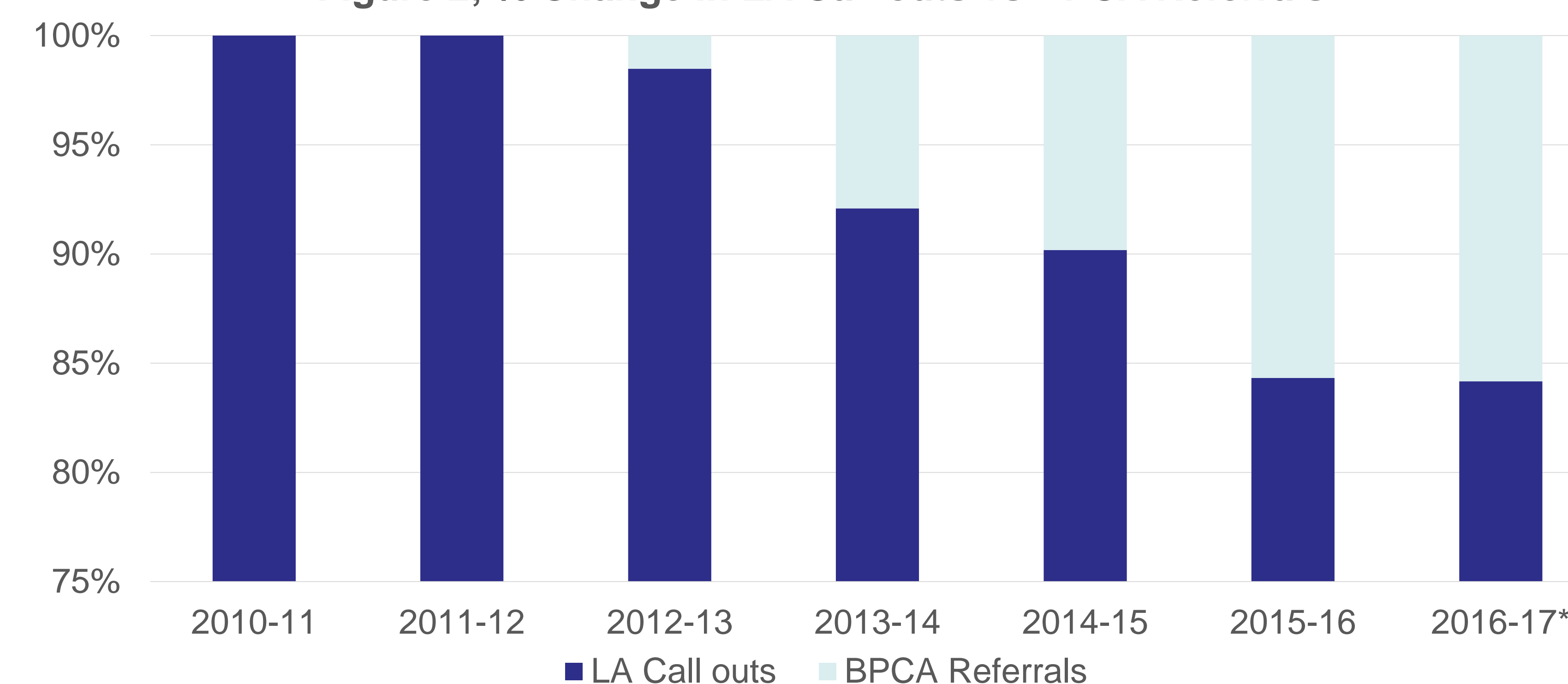
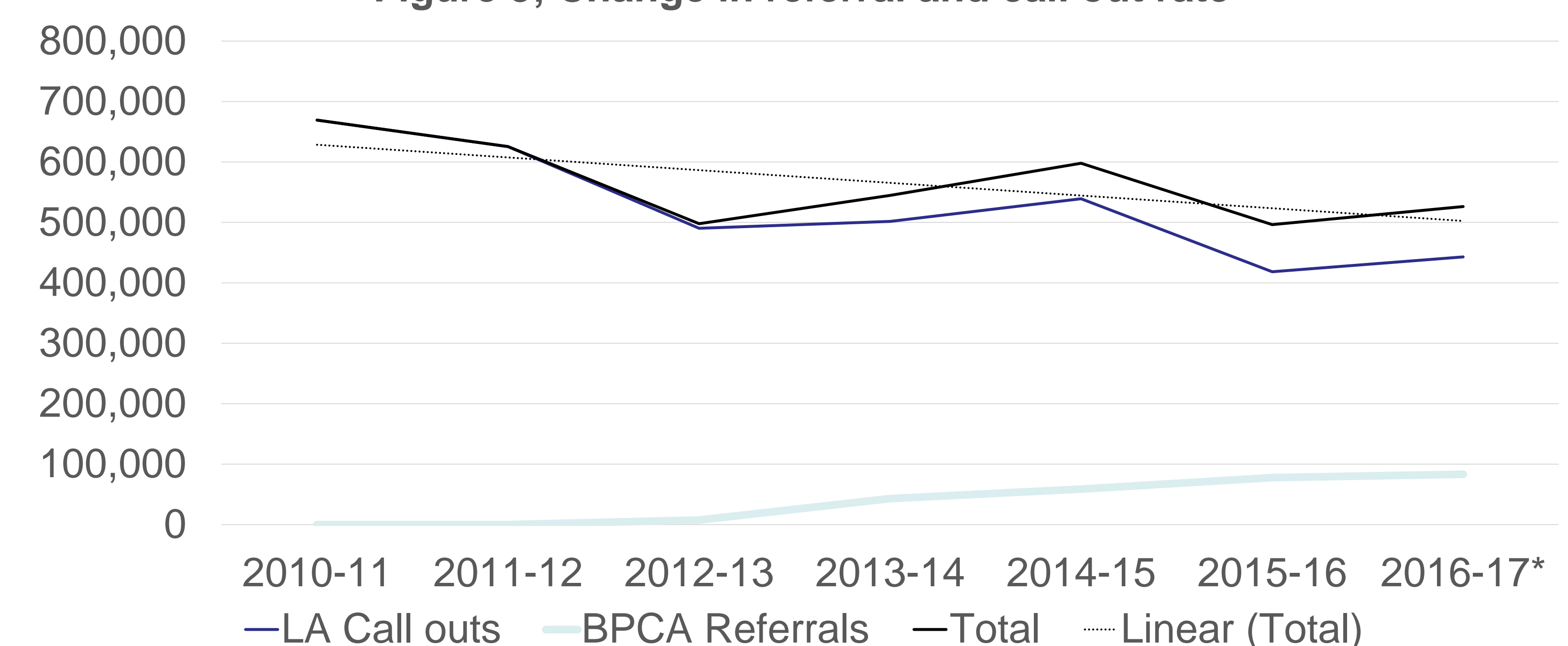


Figure 3; Change in referral and call out rate



Conclusions

In summary, this report demonstrates the majority of UK local authorities are continuing to offer professional pest services to their constituencies.

However, activity is decreasing alongside reductions in staff numbers. Researchers believe the key impact for the declining LA activity is budget reductions due to austerity measures.

Despite BPCA's continued increase in referrals, some activity remains untracked. This maybe through alternative referral services, but could also be due to the increasing numbers of public self treating pest issues, raising concerns for public health.

Further research

Further research is recommended to incorporate more referral sources, as well as an anticipated rise in sales of pest control products to the end user, amateur market.



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