

5 National Indicators

5.1 Introduction and summary

From 2008/09 two new national performance indicators for Housing Benefit (HB)/ Council Tax Benefit (CTB) were introduced which link to DWP's three year strategic objective to pay customers the right benefit at the right time. They form part of the suite of 198 national indicators for local government in England and are also included in the relevant indicator sets for Scotland and Wales.

Local authorities (LAs) are not required to set targets against these indicators (unless they are included in a Local Area Agreement in England). In this section, DWP was interested in finding out the extent to which LAs are actually setting targets against these two new national performance indicators 180 (Right Benefit) and 181 (Right Time). The information provided will help DWP to forecast how far national performance on processing times and reducing fraud and error might improve in the future, and will help DWP assess progress against its own strategic objectives. The information obtained may also be valuable to LAs to help them benchmark any targets they have set for themselves against groups of similar LAs and national trends.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings which include charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Seven in ten LAs (71 per cent) had set targets for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit), however, most of these LAs (73 per cent) had only set targets for one year (seven per cent had set targets for two years and 19 per cent had set targets for three or more years). Half of LAs that had set targets for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit) said that they did not have interim targets within each year – 47 per cent did have such targets.

LAs were also asked a series of questions about their target per 1,000 caseload. During fieldwork it came to our attention that, because claimants can have more than one change of circumstance in a year, the target for some LAs was higher than a 1,000. The web version of the questionnaire was, therefore, amended to allow answers over 1,000.

Of those LAs that had set a target for the 2008/09 National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit), 62 per cent said that they were on track to achieve their target. When asked about their target per 1,000 caseload, one in five LAs were unable to provide an answer. However, among those that did, the average was 712 per 1,000 caseload. Over a third of LAs that had set targets for 2008/09 had also set them for 2009/10. Once again, when asked about their target per 1,000 caseload for 2009/10, one in five LAs were unable to provide an answer. However, among those that did, the average was similar to 2008/09 – 709 per 1,000 caseload. Over half of LAs that had set targets for 2009/10 had also set them for 2010/11. Among the 34 LAs answering this question the average target was similar to the previous years – 703 per 1,000 caseload.

Moving on now to the National Indicator 181 (Right Time) for which three-quarters of LAs (77 per cent) had set targets. Again, most of these (66 per cent) had only set targets for one year. Ten per cent had set targets for two years and 23 per cent had set targets for three or more years. When asked whether or not their LA had interim targets within each year for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time), 48 per cent said 'yes' and 49 per cent said 'no'.

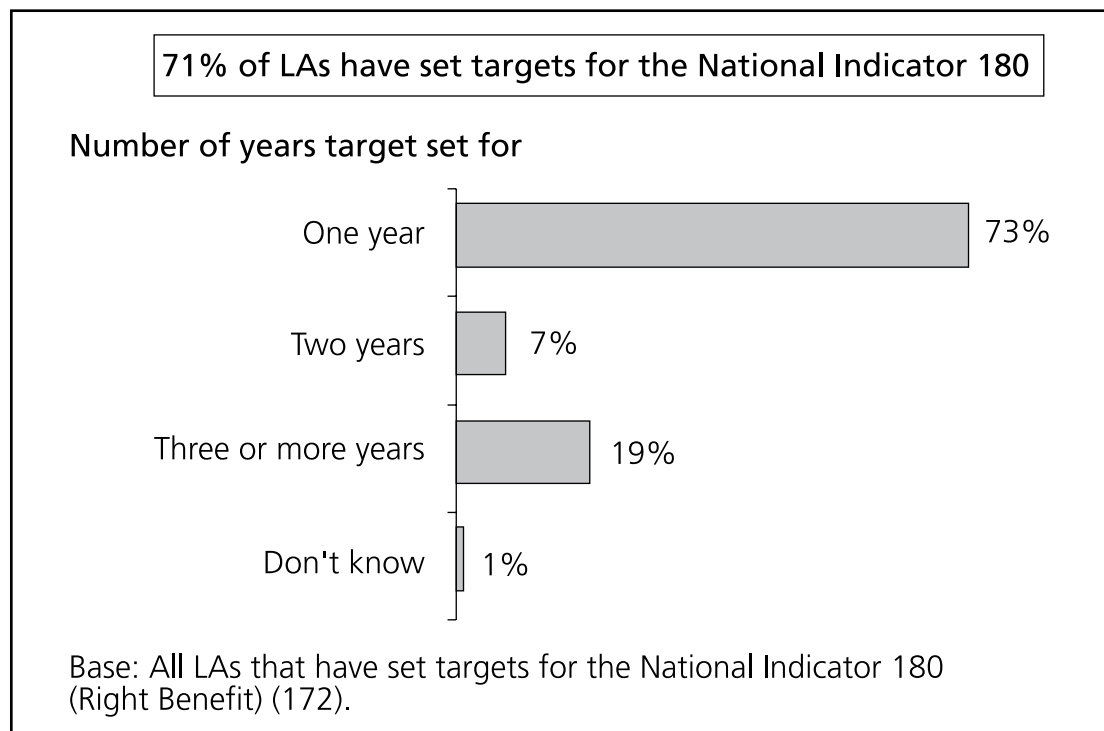
Looking firstly at the 2008/09 National Indicator 181 (Right Time) and those LAs that said that they were setting targets for it, 73 per cent said that they were on track to achieve their target. When asked about their target number of days the average overall was 16. Forty-five per cent of LAs that had set targets for the 2008/09 National Indicator had also set them for 2009/10. When asked about their target number of days, two in three (65 per cent) said that it was between 11 and 15 days and 20 per cent said that it was between 16 and 20 days. The average target number of days was 15. More than half of LAs (54 per cent) that had set targets for the 2009/10 National Indicator had also set them for 2010/11. Among these 46 LAs, the average target number of days was 14 (two days less than for the 2008/09 National Indicator).

5.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

5.2.1 National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit) and Scotland and Wales equivalents

Figure 5.1 Is the target for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit) for one, two, three or more years?

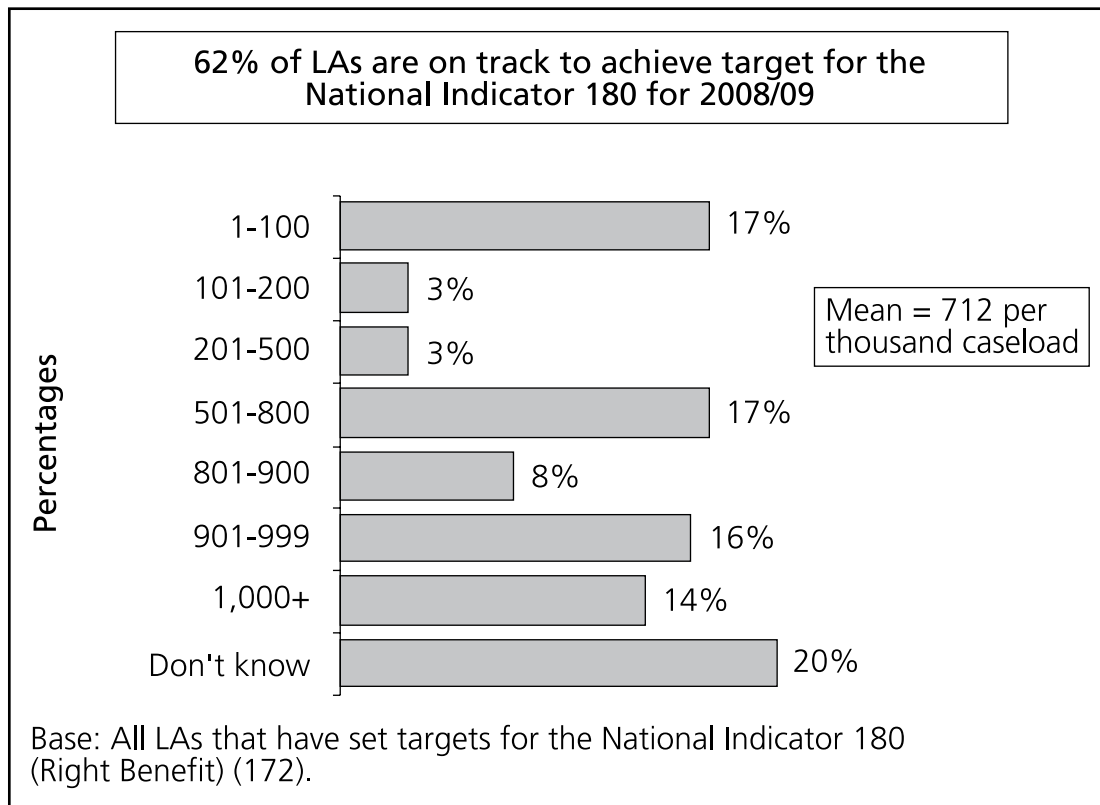


As the figure above shows, seven in ten LAs (71 per cent) had set targets for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit), however, most of these LAs (73 per cent) had only set targets for one year (seven per cent had set targets for two years and 19 per cent had set targets for three or more years).

Looking at the findings by LA type shows a significantly higher proportion of London boroughs (100 per cent) saying that they had set targets and a significantly high proportion of Scottish authorities saying that they had not (55 per cent). In addition, high caseload authorities were significantly more likely to have set targets than medium and low caseload authorities (80 per cent, 68 per cent and 62 per cent respectively).

There were no real differences in how long the targets have been set for, with the exception of the North East where a significantly higher proportion of LAs said that they had set targets for three years or more (67 per cent).

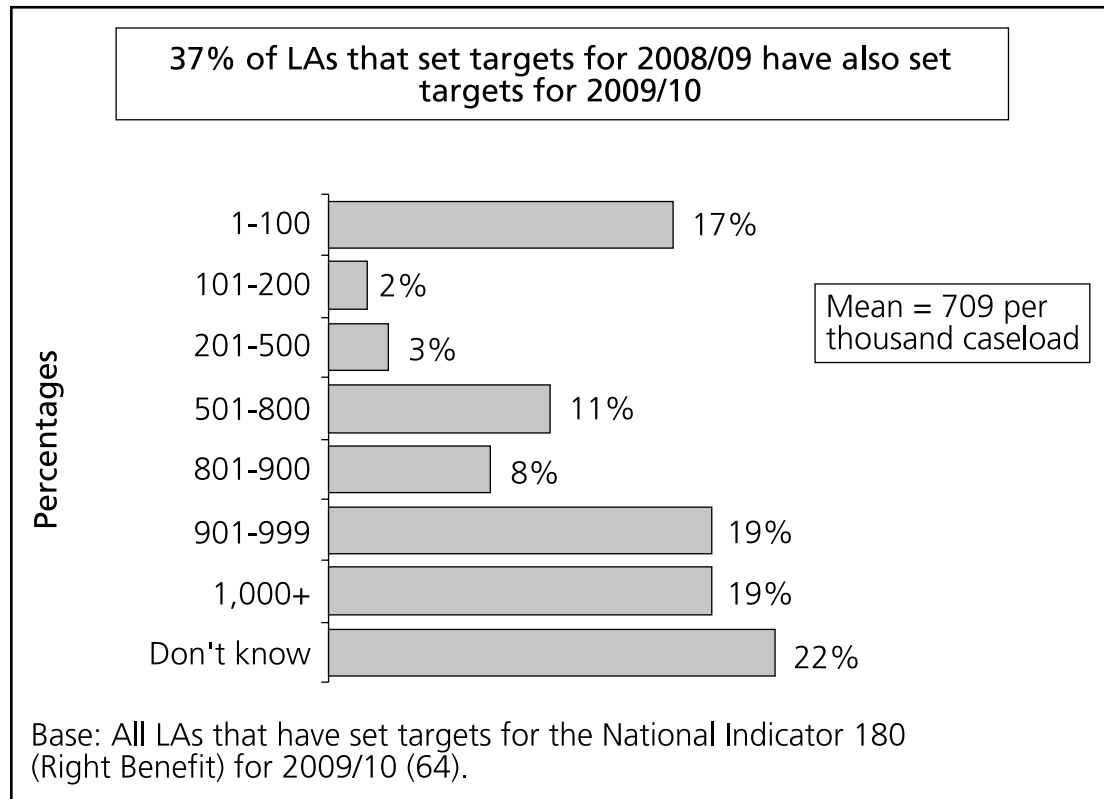
Figure 5.2 What is your LA's target per thousand caseload for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit) for 2008/09?



More than three in five LAs (62 per cent) said that they were on track to achieve their target. However, it would seem that Scottish authorities, and to a lesser extent Welsh authorities, were less likely than other LAs to be on target (60 per cent and 50 per cent respectively said that they were not on target).

When asked about their target per 1,000 caseload, one in five LAs were unable to provide an answer. However, among those that did, the average was 712 per thousand caseload. Not surprisingly, this average varied according to size of caseload with high caseload authorities more likely to have had a higher average target per 1,000 caseload (804 versus 684 for medium caseload LAs and 602 for low caseload LAs). London boroughs and LAs in Yorkshire and Humberside were also particularly likely to have high average targets per 1,000 caseload – 988 and 853 respectively.

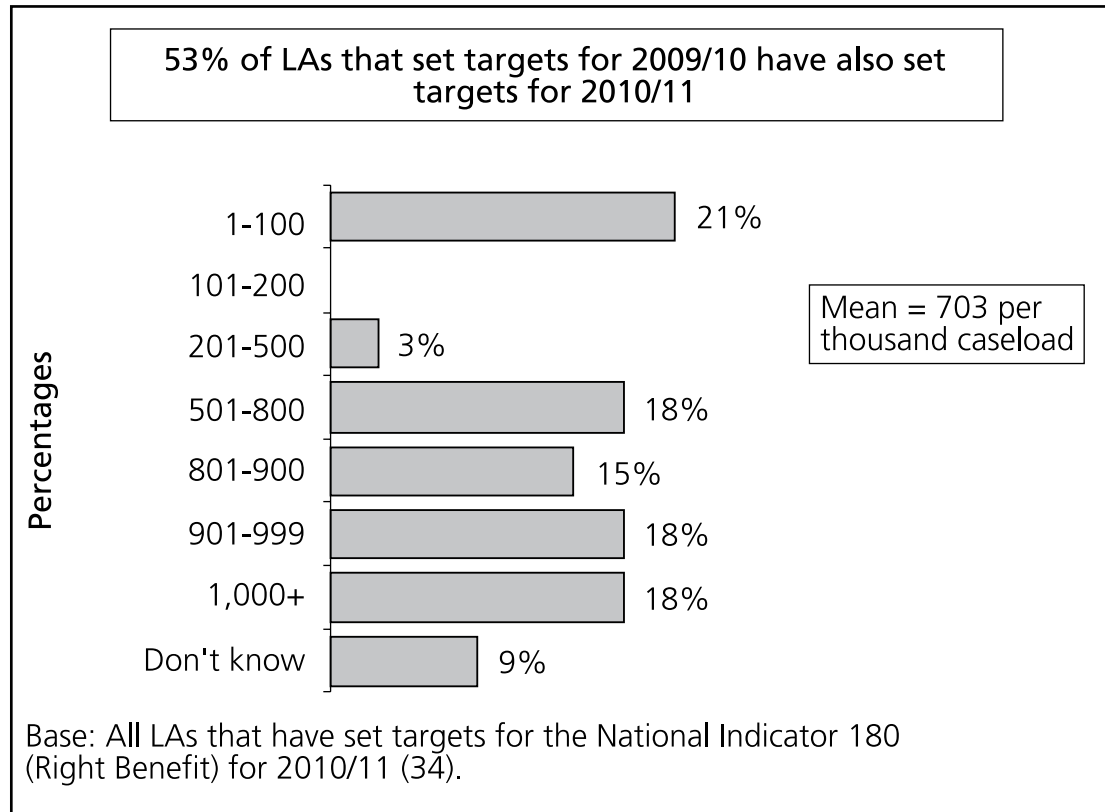
Figure 5.3 What is the target per thousand caseload for 2009/10 for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit)?



Over a third of LAs that set targets for 2008/09 had also set them for 2009/10. Once again, when asked about their target per 1,000 caseload for 2009/10, one in five LAs were unable to provide an answer. However, among those that did, the average was similar to 2008/09 – 709 per 1,000 caseload.

There were no significant differences across any of the sub-groups.

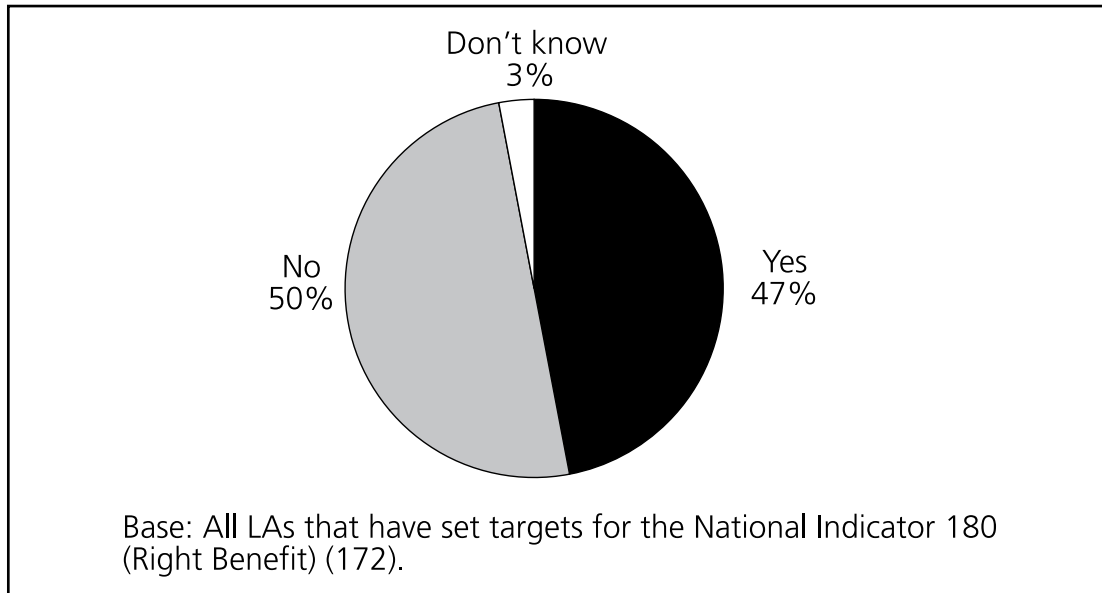
Figure 5.4 What is the target per thousand caseload for 2010/11 for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit)?



Over half of LAs that set targets for 2009/10 had also set them for 2010/11. This increased to 100 per cent of English metropolitan districts (seven out of seven), while neither of the Scottish authorities that set them in 2009/10 had done so in 2010/11.

Among the 34 LAs that had set targets for 2010/11 the average target was similar to the previous years – 703 per 1,000 caseload. There were no significant differences in the findings by any sub-groups.

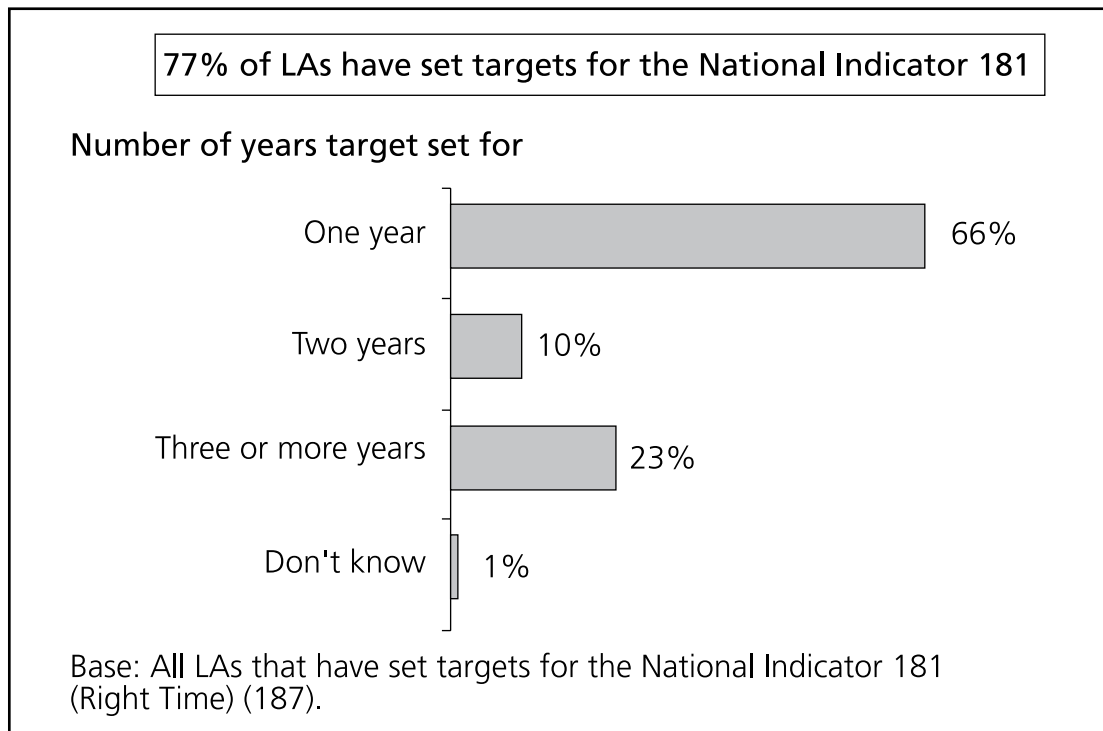
Figure 5.5 Does your LA have interim (ie milestones) targets within each year for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit)?



Half of LAs that had set targets for the National Indicator 180 (Right Benefit) said that they did not have interim targets within each year – 47 per cent do have targets. There were no significant differences in the findings by any sub-groups.

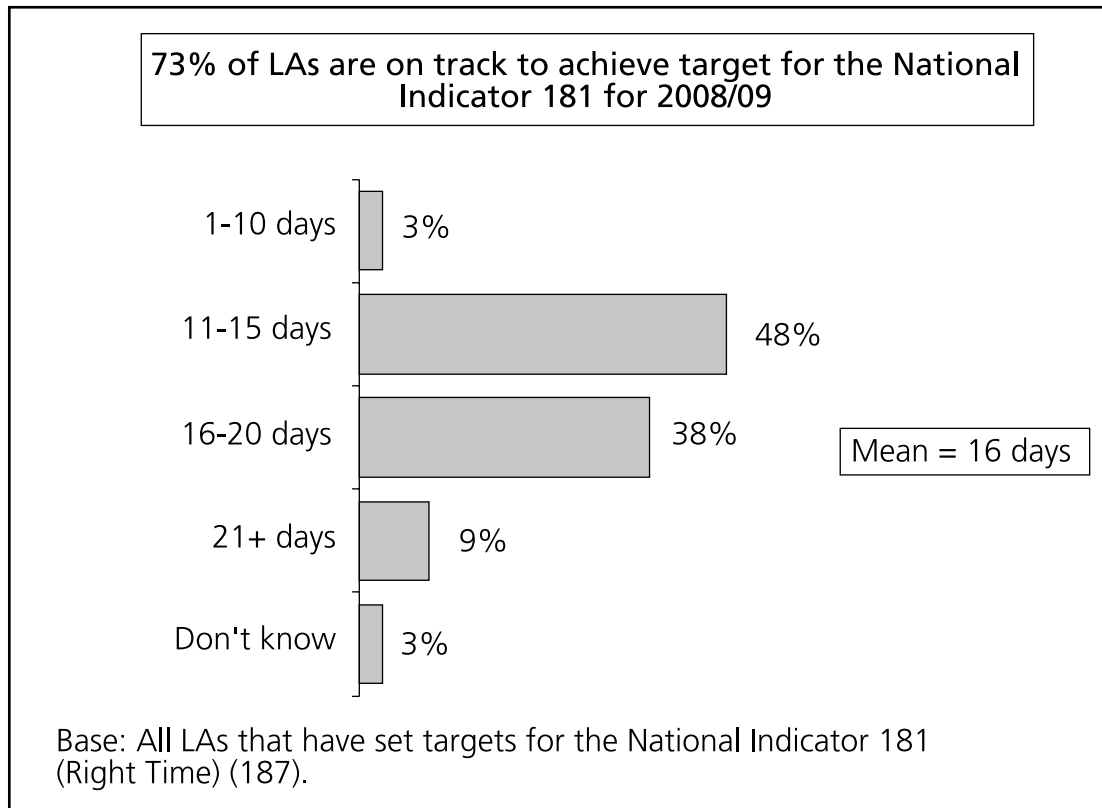
5.2.2 National Indicator 181 (Right Time) and Scotland and Wales equivalents

Figure 5.6 Is the target for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time) for one, two, three or more years?



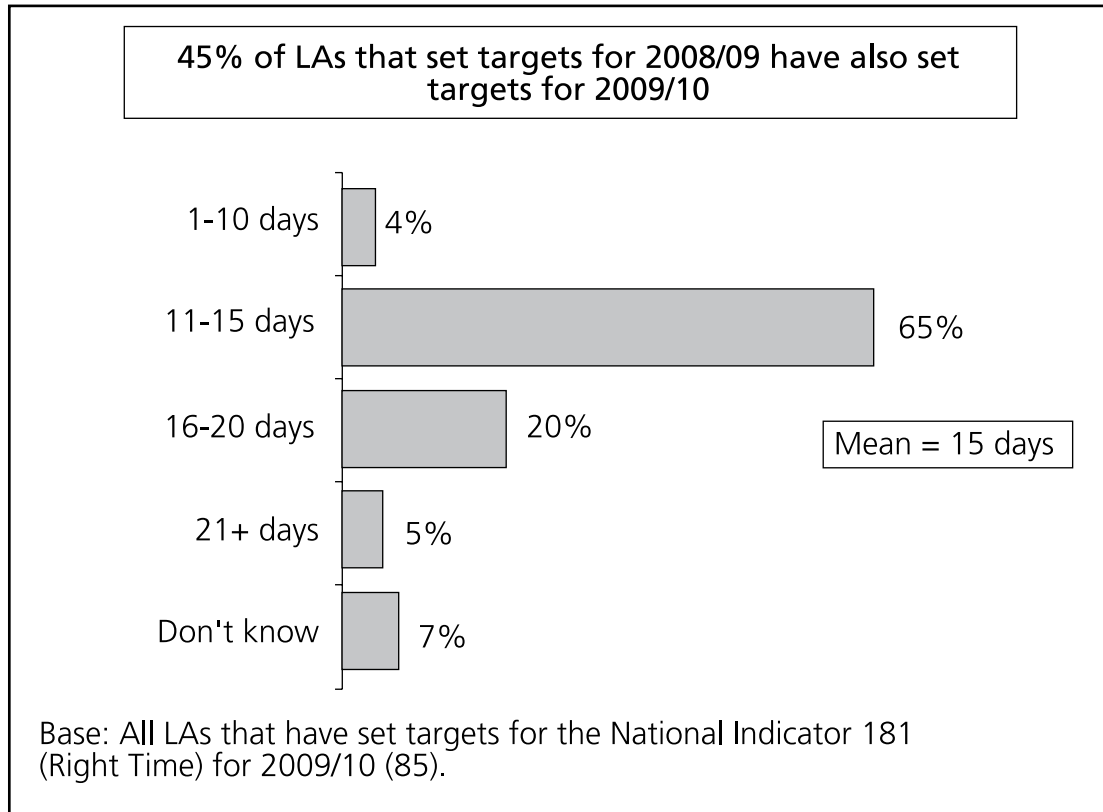
Three-quarters of LAs (77 per cent) had set targets for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time) with this going down to 55 per cent of Scottish authorities. Again, most of these (66 per cent) had only set targets for one year with this increasing significantly to 92 per cent of Scottish authorities. Ten per cent had set targets for two years and 23 per cent had set targets for three or more years.

Figure 5.7 What is your target in days for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time) for 2008/09



Nearly three-quarters of LAs (73 percent) said that they had set targets for the 2008/09 National Indicator 181 (Right Time). When asked about their target number of days the average overall was 16, although this increased to 17 days for LAs with a high caseload.

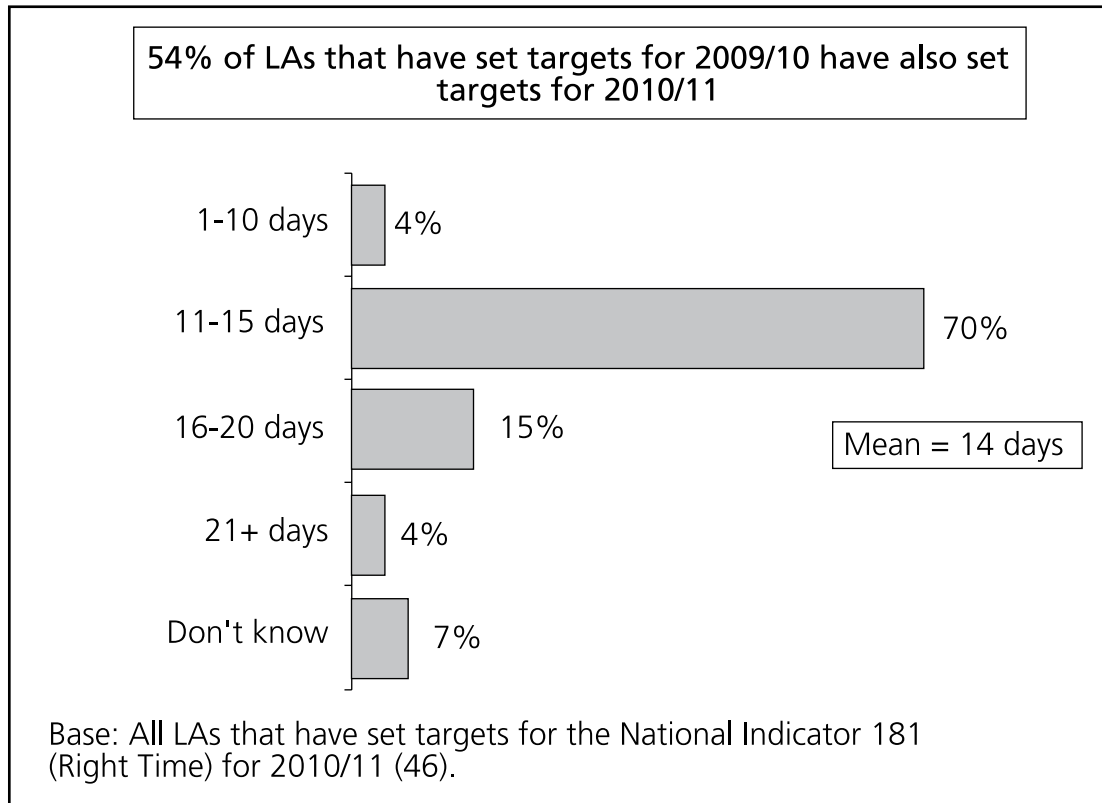
Figure 5.8 What is the target in days for 2009/10 for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time)?



Forty-five per cent of LAs that had set targets for the 2008/09 National Indicator had also set them for 2009/10. London boroughs were significantly more likely than other LA types to have set targets for 2009/10 (79 per cent of those that set them for 2008/09).

When asked about their target number of days, two in three (65 per cent) said that it was between 11 and 15 days and 20 per cent said that it was between 16 and 20 days. The average target number of days was 15 with this rising to 19 days among Scottish authorities.

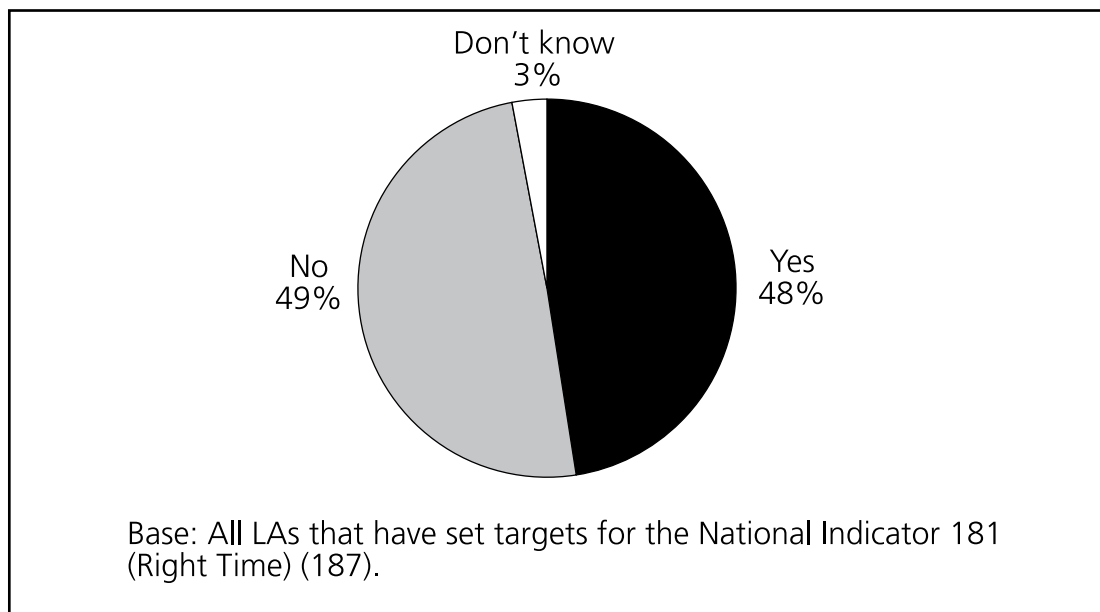
Figure 5.9 What is the target in days for 2010/11 for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time)?



More than half of LAs (54 per cent) that had set targets for the 2009/10 National Indicator had also set them for 2010/11. However, it is worth mentioning that no Scottish authorities that had set targets for 2009/10 had also set them for 2010/11.

The average target number of days was 14 (two days less than for the 2008/09 National Indicator). There were no significant differences in the findings across any sub-groups.

Figure 5.10 Does your LA have interim (ie milestones) targets within each year for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time)?



When asked whether or not their LA had interim targets within each year for the National Indicator 181 (Right Time), 48 per cent said 'yes' and 49 per cent said 'no'. The findings were similar across all sub-groups.