

Local Government Act 1972

A Meeting of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington Human Resources Committee will be held in the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters on Tuesday 21 November 2023 at 10.00 am to consider the following business:-

PART A

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the previous meeting - 5 September 2023 (Pages 3 - 6)
3. Sickness Absence Performance Quarter Two 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 (Pages 7 - 14)
4. Health and Safety Performance Quarter Two 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 (Pages 15 - 22)
5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Pages 23 - 26)
6. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration
7. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of exempt information

PART B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

8. Employee Relations Update (Pages 27 - 30)
9. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

PURSUANT to the provisions of the above named Act, **I HEREBY SUMMON YOU** to attend the said meeting

Helen Bradley
Clerk to the Combined Fire Authority
for County Durham and Darlington

County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL

**TO: The Members of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham
and Darlington Human Resources Committee**

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors C Marshall, A Batey, J Cairns, J Quinn and C Martin

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillors D Ray

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

Minutes of a meeting of the **Human Resources Committee** held at Fire HQ on **Tuesday 6 September 2023** at **1430 hours**.

Present: Cllr C Martin in the Chair

Durham County Council: A Batey, C Marshall, J Quinn

Darlington Borough Council: D Ray

Officers: K Metcalfe
C Williams

Part A

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr J Cairns.

2 Minutes of previous meeting – 16 May 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3 Sickness Absence Performance Quarter One 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

K Metcalfe introduced the report which provided an update on sickness performance for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023.

K Metcalfe noted the addition of age related data as agreed at the last meeting.

Cllr J Quinn queried the reasons for MSK absence in the 26-30 bracket. K Metcalfe confirmed that the majority were not work related.

Cllr D Ray requested clarification around the management system for sickness absence. K Metcalfe explained that there were three stages in the formal process; after three occasions of sickness or six cumulative days or more staff would be entered into stage one of the formal process, from there if staff have any further sickness absence within twelve month they would progress to the next stage.

Cllr J Quinn queried whether there was a link between sickness absence figures and a positive culture within the service. K Metcalfe stated that it would be difficult to evidence, however noted that the service did not have high levels of mental health absence for work related stress and there were not high levels of grievances.

The Committee **noted** the report.

4 **Health and Safety Report Quarter One 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023**

C Williams introduced the report which provided Members with a summary of the Service's health and safety performance for the end of the first quarter of the 2023/24 reporting period.

Cllr J Quinn questioned whether there was a duty to test all systems with near miss reports around BA set failure. C Williams stated that it would depend on the failure type. If it was a provider issue then Draeger would carry out further inspection.

Cllr A Batey commented on the vehicle accident figures and ongoing issues with parked cars. C Williams confirmed that incidents were not happening at the same location each time.

Cllr D Ray queried whether the Service incurred the costs of vehicle accidents or whether they were covered by insurance. C Williams confirmed that there was a high excess in place so small accidents were paid for by the Service, the majority of work was done in house via workshops.

ACTION: C Williams to provide excess details for vehicle and personal insurance to the next meeting.

Cllr C Martin questioned whether appliances have cameras to assist with accident investigations and claims. C Williams confirmed they do.

The Committee **noted** the report.

5 **Removal of A Roles from the Establishment**

K Metcalfe introduced the report which advised the committee of a change in the Service establishment whereby Watch Manager and Station Manager A roles across the Service have been removed and replaced with that of B level.

Cllr A Batey questioned whether this would impact staff progression routes. K Metcalfe stated that it would create more progression opportunity and a better system for moves and transfers.

The Committee **noted** the report.

6 **Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services Spotlight Report Action Plan Update**

K Metcalfe introduced the report which updated the committee on the progress made towards completion of the action plan relating to HMICFRS Values and Culture Report and the recommendations made.

Cllr J Quinn questioned whether any issues had been highlighted from the DBS work. K Metcalfe confirmed that there would be national guidance around the procedure for standard checks and a further paper would be prepared for a future CFA meeting.

The Committee **noted** the report.

7. **Additional Workforce Healthcare Benefit**

K Metcalfe introduced the report which proposed an enhanced wellbeing offering in the form of a trial of an additional workforce healthcare benefit that is complimentary to NHS provision and our existing Occupational Health Service.

Cllr C Martin commented that he felt it was a proactive step to reduce sickness absence and would be interested to receive updates from the trial.

Cllr J Quinn queried whether staff feedback had been received from other services with the benefit in place. K Metcalfe confirmed that positive feedback had been received and many other services were discussing options around workforce healthcare benefit.

Cllr D Ray questioned the process to refer someone to Benenden. K Metcalfe confirmed that the individual would need to make their own referral.

Cllr A Batey noted that although she agreed with the principle of the proposal she felt conflicted as a NHS advocate and questioned whether diagnosis would be accepted by the NHS if the individual needed to be referred on for further treatment. K Metcalfe stated that Benenden had confirmed they work with the NHS and they would carry out treatment in a lot of cases.

Cllr C Marshall commented on NHS resourcing and wait times, noting that the position was unlikely to change in the near future.

ACTION: K Metcalfe to present information around all available staff support options.

ACTION: K Metcalfe to arrange a presentation from Benenden for a future HR Committee.

Resolved:

- a) The Committee **approved** the proposed trial for an 18 month period
- b) The Committee **agreed** to review the trial at 18 months with a view to adopting as a permanent employee benefit.

Part B

8. **Flexible Retirement Application**

K Metcalfe introduced the report which sought approval of a flexible retirement application from a control Watch Manager.

Following discussion and debate the Committee agreed to approve the flexible retirement application.

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Human Resources Committee

21 November 2023

Sickness Absence Performance

Quarter Two 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023

Report of Director of People and Organisational Development

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on sickness absence performance for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.

Background

2. The effective management of absence is a key performance issue for any organisation. This is particularly important when operating in a climate of reduced financial and human resources.
3. The Service places significant emphasis on the effective management and reporting of sickness absence and Members have an important role to play in providing an overview of the arrangements that are in place and the performance that is achieved.

Summary of Sickness Statistics

4. The sickness statistics for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 are calculated as average shifts/days lost per person.
5. The Service compares sickness levels to the targets that have been set for the year and to previous year's performance to provide a rounded view of sickness performance, and to help to identify any trends in particular areas.
6. For the purposes of the performance indicators, all covid-19 related absence is included.
7. Table 1 sets out the sickness statistics against three key performance indicators. These indicators were measures previously used to measure performance within the best value framework and the Service continues to use these measures to enable national comparisons to be undertaken at year end.

Table 1 Key Sickness Statistics by Best Value Indicators

Performance Indicator	Apr 23 to Sept 23	Apr 23 To Sept 23 Target	Variance	Apr 22 to Sept 22 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
Working shifts / days lost for all staff .	4.69	3.5	+1.19	4.74	Down
Working shifts / days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime, Control and Non- Uniformed	4.05	3.5	+0.55	4.14	Down
Working shifts / days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime and Control	4.43	3.5	+0.93	4.24	Up

8. All KPIs for sickness are above target at this point in the year however performance has improved in comparison with last year in two indicators. Compared to the same reporting quarter last year, sickness shifts lost overall has decreased by 1%. Mental Health concerns and MSK are a large contributor to absence levels with 41% and 24% respectively. Mental Health has overtaken MSK as the main reason for absence this quarter and increases are seen over all categories.
9. WT Riders, and FDO/DD, have seen an increase since this quarter last year with Control and Corporate seeing a decrease and remaining under target for this point in the year. Control has significantly increased since quarter 1 and is predicted to rise further during the next quarter. Almost 80% of all absence is due to long term sickness and all staff groups demonstrate that in their figures.
10. Table 2 below shows a further breakdown over the specific staff groups that are employed by the Service.

Table 2 Sickness by Staff Group

Performance Indicator	Apr 23 to Sept 23	Apr 23 To Sept 23 Target	Variance	Apr 22 to Sept 22 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
WT Riders	4.19	3.5	+0.69	4.13	Up
FDO / DD	6.52	2.25	+4.27	4.07	Up
Control	2.41	4.5	-2.09	5.84	Down
RDS	6.76	4.5	+2.26	6.77	Down
Non-uniformed	2.35	3.5	-1.15	3.80	Down

Wholetime Station Based Firefighters (Riders)

11. The detailed sickness information relating to WT riders is summarised below.

Description	Days/cost	%/£ change from Q2 2022-23
Total shifts lost to 30/9/2023	1029	-5%
Long term sickness	737 (72%)	+6.96%
Short term sickness	292 (28%)	-25.9%
Approximate cost of sickness	£194,481	+1.7%

11. The WT rider category has seen a 5% decrease in shifts lost when compared with the same reporting period in 2022/23. Absence levels are predominantly due to long-term absence with 22 cases spanning across this quarter and 9 currently still absent which is higher than normal for this time of year.

12. Mental Health currently accounts for over 43% of total absence and work-related stress accounts for 30% of all mental health absence. Those concerned continue to receive support via the POD Team, line managers, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and occupational health. Mental Health has overtaken MSK as the reason for sickness this year so far.

13. MSK accounts for over 36% of all absence so far this year which is a slight drop on this time last year. The absences cover the spectrum of MSK issues however lower limb accounts for over 46% of all MSK absences with 5 long term cases spanning across the quarter accounting for most of this. There is no specific trend / reason identified to investigate further at this moment in time as 4 of these long-term cases have returned to work and 1 has left on ill health retirement. The Service continue to promote the physiotherapy provision and support individuals back to work at the earliest opportunity. Those waiting for operations, however, are likely to have lengthy absences.

14. Reduction in short term absence can be seen which is positive however covid related absence has started to increase recently and will be monitored over the winter period.

15. This category is currently over target at this point in the reporting year.

Flexible Duty Officers and Day Duty

16. The detailed sickness information relating to FDO and DD staff is summarised below.

FDO

Description	Days/cost	%/£ change from Q2 2022-23
Total shifts lost to 30/09/2023	128	+75%
Long term sickness	114	+90%
Short term sickness	14	+7.7%
Approximate cost of sickness	£34,415	+101%

Day Duty

Description	Days/cost	%/£ change from Q1 2022-23
Total shifts lost to 30/09/2023	172	+69%
Long term sickness	154	+235%
Short term sickness	18	-67%
Approximate cost of sickness	£40,309	+92%

17. The FDO category and the DD category have both seen high levels of absence this quarter predominantly linked to long term absence for mental health related issues and long covid. Short term absence in both categories is very low which is positive. Most of these cases have been resolved and individuals have returned to work however, one will continue into the next reporting quarter.

18. This category is over target at this point in the reporting year.

Control

19. The detailed sickness information relating to Control staff is summarised below.

Description	Days/cost	%/£ change from Q1 2022-23
Total shifts lost to 30/09/2023	44	-66%
Long term sickness	0	-100%
Short term sickness	44	-38%
Approximate cost of sickness	£7904	-63%

20. The Control category of staff has lost 44 shifts so far this year and is currently under target at this point in the reporting year this may however change going forward due to potential long-term absence. In comparison with last year's figures, there has been a significant improvement within this category.

21. This category is below target at this point in the reporting year,

Non- Uniformed

22. The detailed sickness information relating to non-uniformed staff is summarised below.

Description	Days/cost	%/£ change from Q1 2022-23
Total shifts lost to 30/09/2023	238	-33%
Long term sickness	168 (71%)	-24%
Short term sickness	70 (29%)	-47%
Approximate cost of sickness	£22,669	-33%

23. This category has seen a decrease of 33% in shifts lost when compared with the same reporting period in 2022/23. There have been 4 cases of long-term sickness for various reasons spanning across both quarters however only 1 is currently still absent. Overall sickness shifts have improved in this area and should continue to going forward. Other reason currently accounts for the most shifts lost with 49% of all current non-uniformed sickness.

24. This category is currently under target at this point in the reporting year.

Retained Duty System

25. The detailed sickness information relating to RDS staff is summarised below.

Description	Days/cost	%/£ change from Q1 2022-23
Total shifts lost to 30/09/2023	842.43	+1%
Long term sickness	757.36 (90%)	+16%
Short term sickness	85.07 (10%)	-52%
Approximate cost of sickness	£79,609	+8%

26. The RDS category has seen an increase of 1% in shifts lost when compared with the same reporting period in 2022/23. Like WT, a rise in long term absence has been seen 6 cases related to MSK, mental health and cancer spanning both quarters however 5 of these have now returned to work. There is one case which is being progressed for ill health retirement. Short term sickness on a positive note has decreased by 52%, like WT there has been a slight increase in covid related absence so far this year.

27. This category is over target for the reporting year.

Action Taken

28. Sickness levels will continue to be monitored closely with regular analysis for any trends and patterns and instigation of the attendance management triggers where appropriate. Monthly meetings have been put in place to discuss case management with the People and Organisational Development (POD) Business Partners and the Director of POD to ensure action can be taken quickly where appropriate and identify any longer-term risks. This allows a closer scrutiny of our case management.

29. Plans have been coordinated for the winter flu campaign with Occupational Health with an offer to staff for a free vaccine. This has been promoted around the service with all staff encouraged to take up the offer. This is primarily to protect our front-line workers but also to ease the burden on NHS services over the winter period. 53 staff have taken up the offer to date.

30. The Service are implementing a 18 month trial of an additional health care benefit. Staff have been consulted on their interest in such a scheme. A project has been set up to work through the consultation and implementation stages with a view to start on the 1 January 2024. Similar scheme are offered in other FRS's.

31. The Services Trauma Support Team has recruited 5 new members who will be trained in partnership with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service within the next quarter. This should strengthen the Services offer around mental health and peer support.

National Fire Service Data Comparison

32. This data is supplied via the National OH Performance Report which is compiled by Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB). All fire and rescue services (FRS) are asked to supply data for the main categories of employees; WT, Control, RDS and Non-uniformed.

33. There is a set calculation which all FRS supplying information must adhere to, to ensure the data can be used to give an accurate comparison, however this varies to our own reporting. The data helps our Service benchmark against other FRS in terms of sickness absence rates. The data range is for April to June 2023 (Quarter 1).

34. It should be noted that due to recording mechanisms and sickness absence policies within the various FRS' Covid 19 Sickness for some FRS' has not been included. This must therefore be borne in mind when comparing sickness levels.

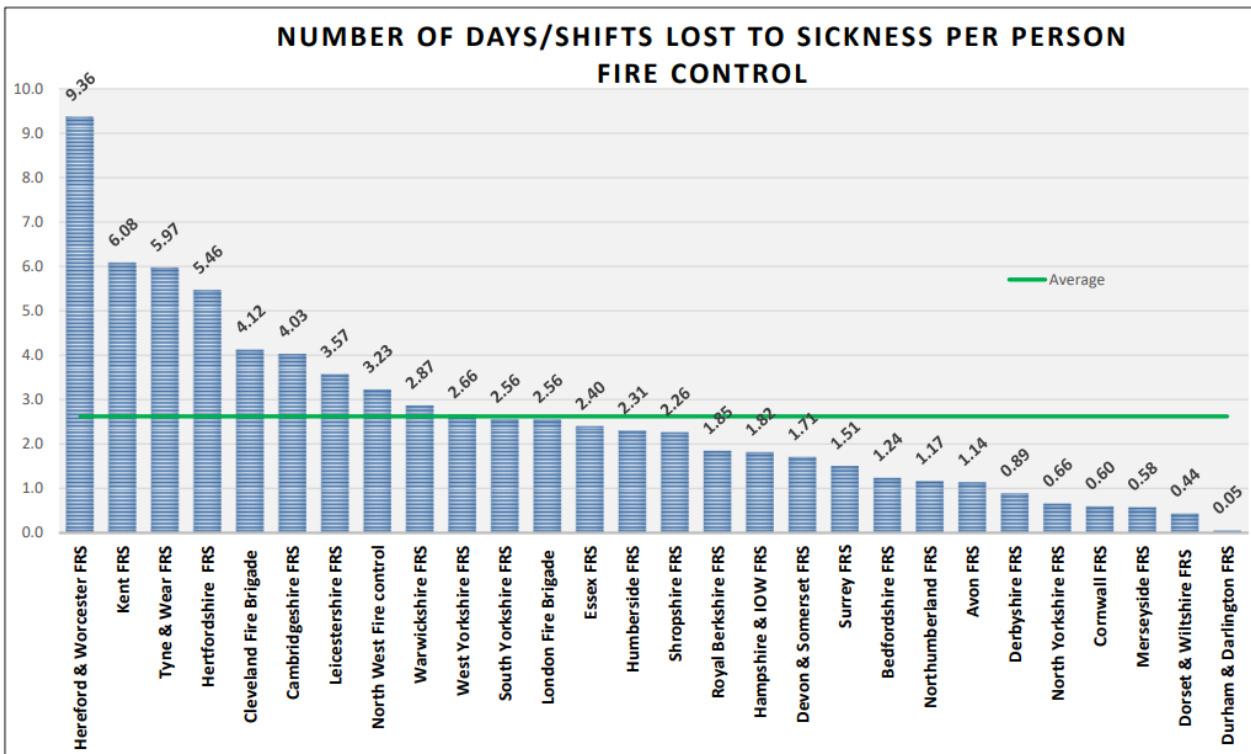
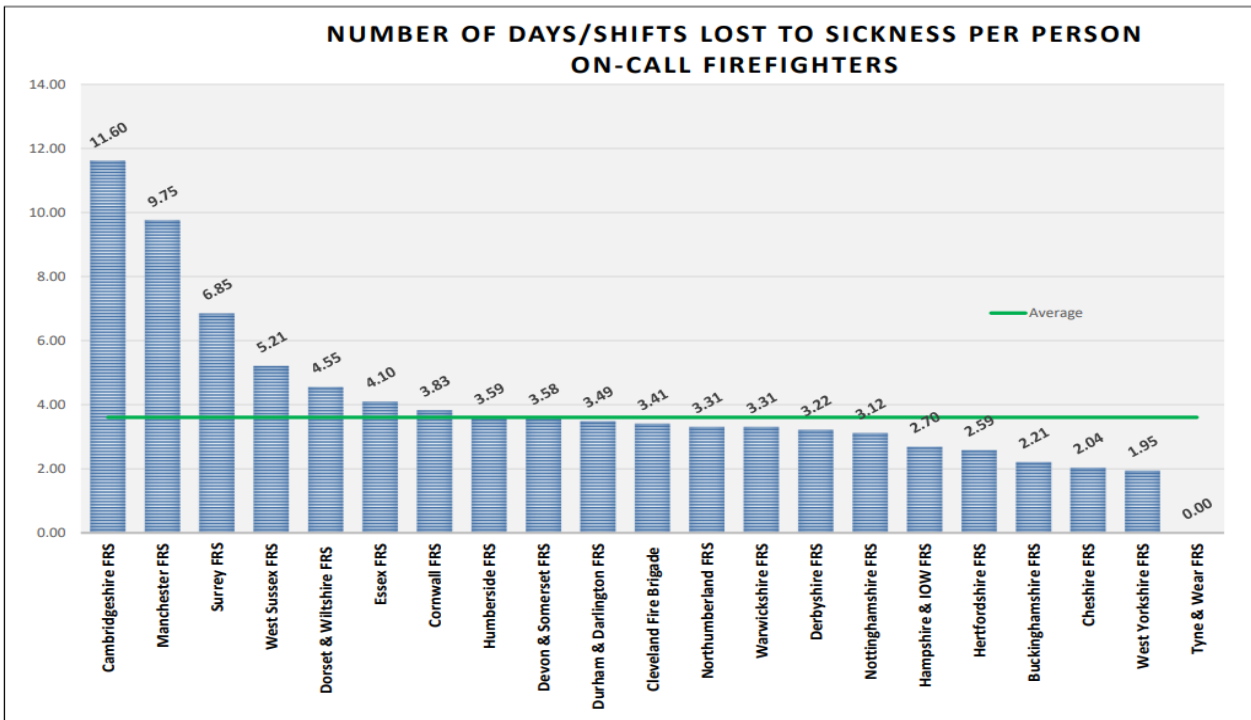
35. Performance across indicators (Appendix A) is below the national average which is positive in comparison with other FRS's.

36. Thirty-five FRS' submitted data for the period April – June 2023. During this period, from the Fire Services who submitted data, there have been 84,854 shifts lost to sickness absence arising from 8,558 separate occurrences for all staff groups equating to 2.63 shifts per

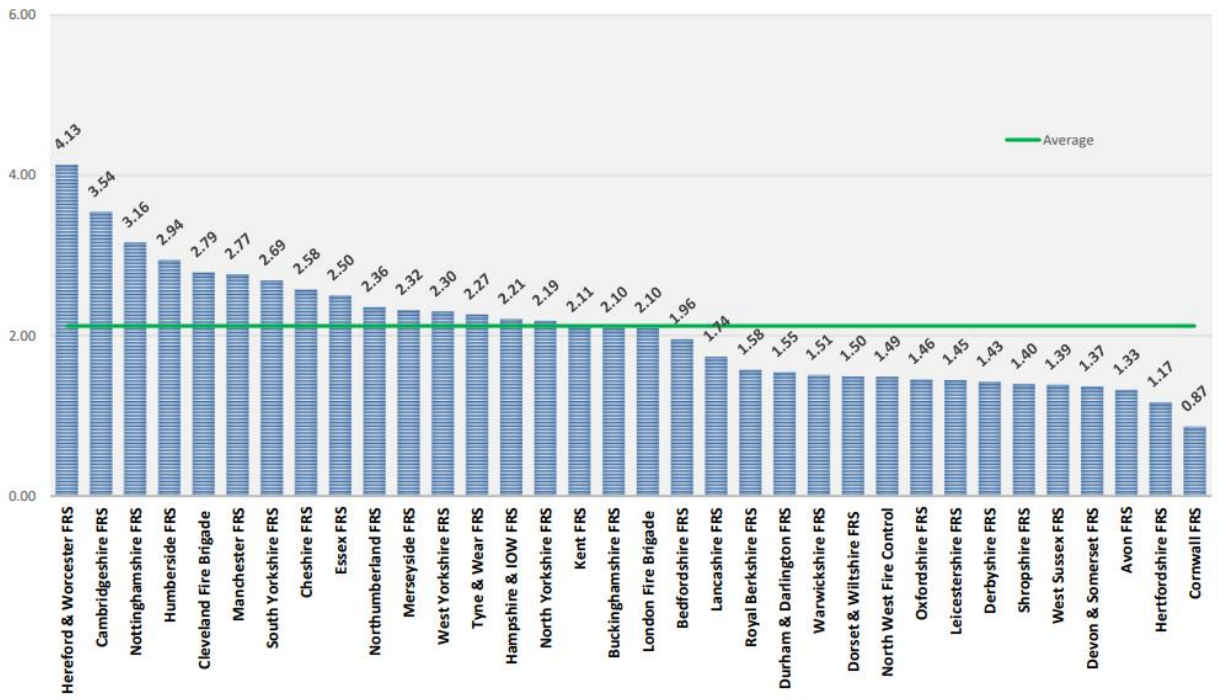
member of staff. The main causes of sickness absence for all staff groups are Musculo-Skeletal (28,673 shifts) accounting for 34% of all sickness absence followed by Mental Health (22,446 shifts) which accounts for 26% of sickness absence. The third main cause of sickness absence during Quarter One 2023/24 was Gastro-Intestinal reasons with 4,620 shifts lost, 5.4% of sickness absence, closely followed by Respiratory reasons with 4,525 shifts lost, 5.3% of sickness absence. Respiratory reasons historically has been the third main cause. It can also be noted that if the three 'Not Specified' reporting categories are combined these have a total duty days lost of 7,730, representing 9% of sickness absence.

Recommendation

37. Members are asked to note and comment on the contents of this report.



NUMBER OF DAYS/SHIFTS LOST TO SICKNESS PER PERSON GREEN BOOK STAFF





Human Resources Committee

21 November 2023

Health and Safety Performance

Quarter Two 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023

Report of Health and Safety Manager

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the Service's health and safety performance to the end of the second quarter of the 2023/24 reporting period.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Health and Safety Team are positioned and work in Emergency Response and are responsible for health and safety within County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS). The Health and Safety Team's performance is measured through four performance indicators (PI) which are outlined below:

- PI69 number of accidents to personnel
- PI71 number of vehicle accidents classified as CDDFRS driver's fault
- PI73 number of local health and safety investigations incomplete after 28 days
- PI74 number of health and safety investigation actions overdue their specified completion date.

- 2.2 A summary of performance for indicators PI69 and PI71 for quarter two for the previous five years is outlined below. PI73 and PI74 are monthly indicators introduced in 20/21 and are not designed to be comparable year by year.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
PI 69 Number of Accidents to Personnel	16	14	13	9	2
PI 71 Number of Vehicle Accidents (CDDFRS Fault)	21	18	18	24	12

Table. 1 Health and safety performance for the previous 5 years

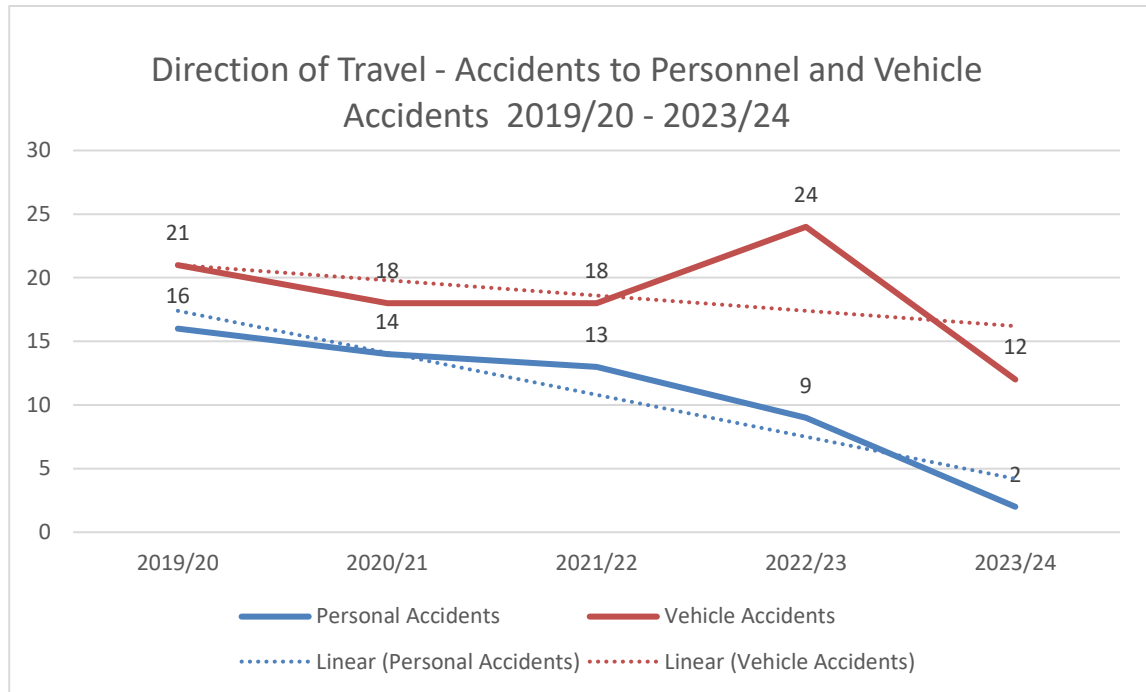


Figure. 1 Direction of travel for accidents to personnel and vehicle accidents 2nd quarter totals 2019/20 – 2023/24.

3. Current Performance

3.1. The current performance year to date (YTD) is as follows:

2023/24	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
PI 69 Number of Accidents to Personnel	0	1	0	0	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PI 71 Number of Vehicle Accidents (CDDFRS Driver's Fault)	0	4	2	0	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PI 73 Number of local Health and Safety Investigations Incomplete after 28 days	0	0	2	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PI 74 Number of Health and Safety Actions Overdue Their Specified Date	2	1	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table. 2. Year to date performance (*note PI73 and PI74 are not cumulative indicators)

PI 69 Number of Accidents to Personnel

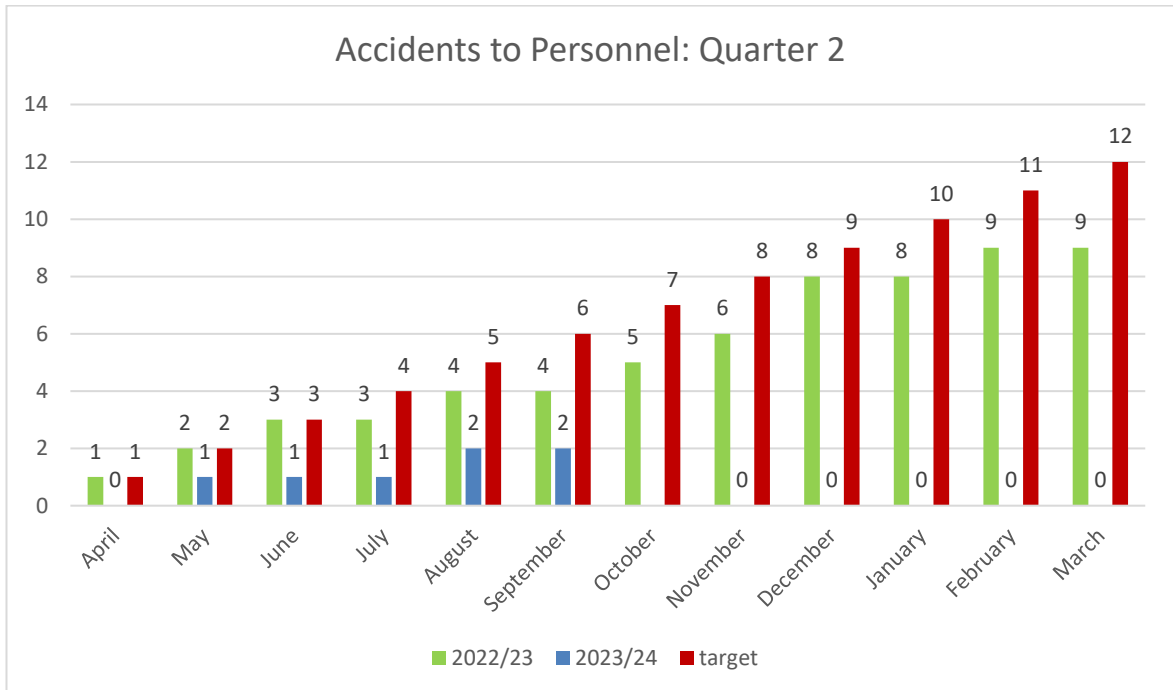


Figure. 2 Number of accidents to personnel (running total) for the current year (blue) and the target (red) previous year (green)

3.2. One accident to personnel has been reported during the quarter two reporting period. This is aligned to the set Service target for accidents to personnel and at this stage of reporting performance is below last year's figures.

3.3. This incident was recorded as:

- a) Injury to a corporate member of the training team, this was a finger being caught in the retractable seating when housing, causing minor injury, ice pack was used to reduce swelling, no time off work.

As a result, detailed instructions on how to use the seating have been produced with laminated copies kept in the lecture room and all staff responsible for its use have been trained on the new procedure.

PI 71 Number of Vehicle Accidents (CDDFRS Driver Fault)

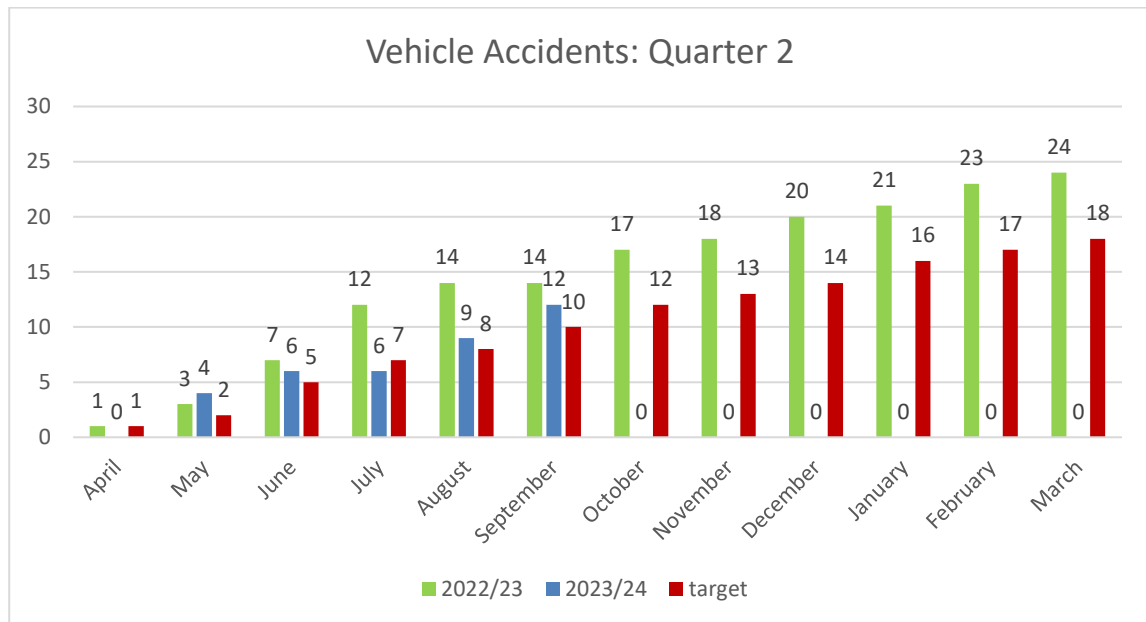


Figure. 3 Number of vehicle accidents (running total) for the current year (blue) and the target (red) previous year (green).

- 3.4. Six vehicle accidents have been reported during the quarter two reporting period. This is the set target but five below last year's total for quarter two, as a result there is ongoing proactive joint working between Health and Safety and Driver Training sections.
- 3.5. These incidents were recorded as:
- The rear corner of an appliance made contact with a wall turning into an entrance whilst responding to an incident.
 - An appliance caused minor damage to a 3rd party vehicle while responding to a persons reported trapped house fire at night, it was a narrow street and cars were double parked.
 - A crew noticed minor damage to a rear light fitting when cleaning at the end of a shift. The driver admitted that it could have been there at the start of the shift as the lights were checked by another crew member whilst they operated the controls in the cab. This raised questions as to when or how this damage had occurred and may had been there for some time. Crews were reminded of the importance of vigilance when checking vehicles as if noticed earlier it could have been crucial to identifying the cause.
 - While carrying out an appliance change over the driver misjudged the tail swing resulting in contact with the appliance room door and rear locker whilst driving through the appliance room.

- e) An appliance made contact with a protruding hinge on a 3rd party vehicle whilst attending an operational incident, this was at night in a street with double parked cars.
- f) An appliance attending a home fire safety visit was dragged off the side of the road on to the embankment when a section of the carriageway crumbled due to earlier heavy rainfall. No injuries to the crew and the appliance needed to be recovered.

3.6. The Health and Safety Team take vehicle accidents seriously and together with the Driver Training Team and FBU Health and Safety Representative look to identify solutions to the evidenced trend that the majority of vehicle incidents are slow speed manoeuvring. Current working streams include:

- a) Reintroduction of Driving Standard Panels.
- b) Incident management groups.
- c) Learn Pro reminders for vehicle manoeuvring.

PI 73 Local Investigations Incomplete after 28 days

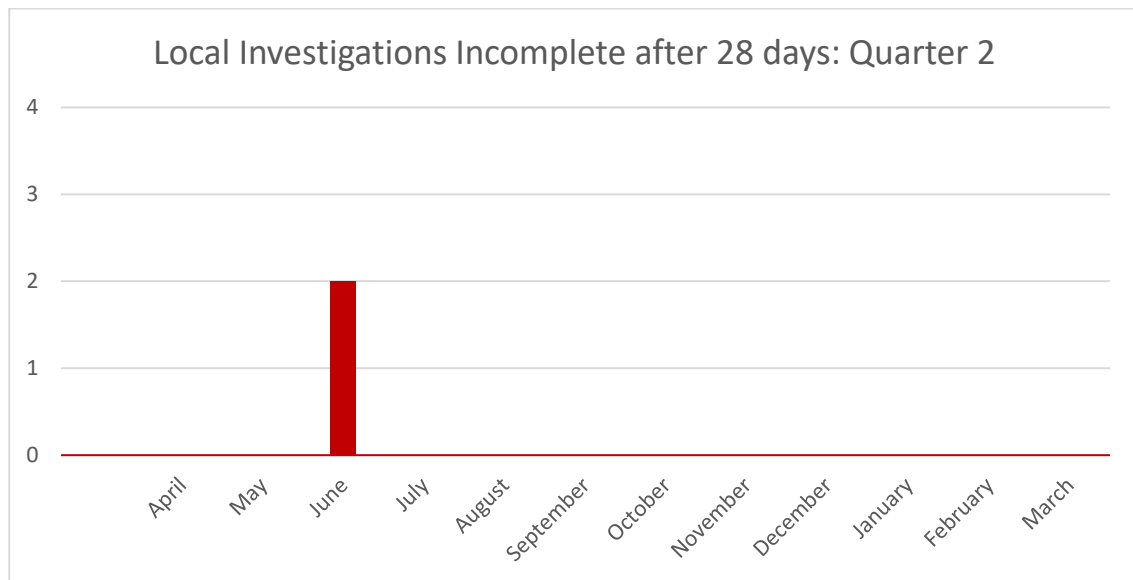


Figure. 4 Number of investigations incomplete after 28 days.

3.7. A total of 25 investigations have been carried out during this reporting year to date. 15 investigations have been conducted in this quarter.

- Q1 - 10
- Q2 - 15

3.8. The Health and Safety Team support officers in completion of local investigations within the 28 days, and as a result of this all investigations in quarter two were completed within the agreed timeframe.

PI 74 Number of Health and Safety Actions Overdue their Specific Date

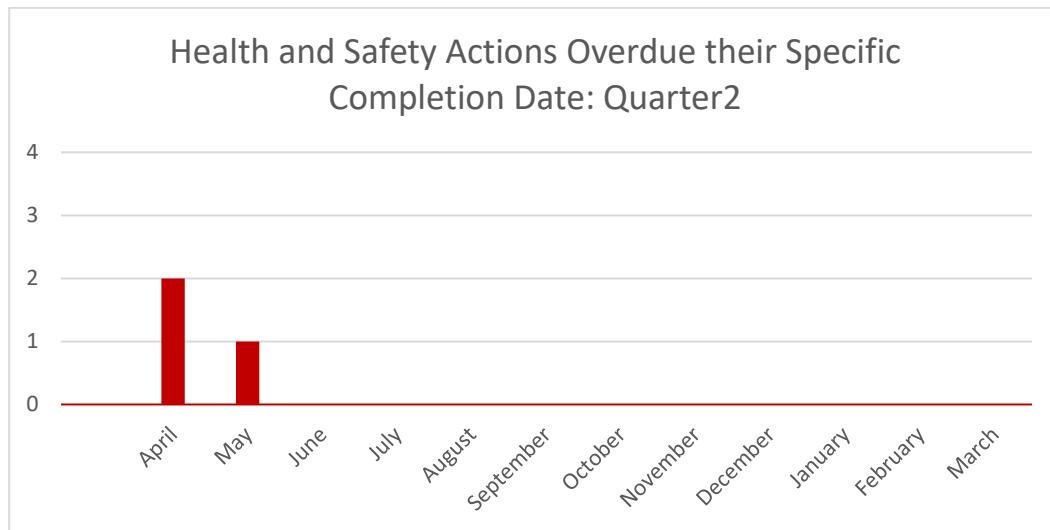


Figure. 5 Health and Safety actions overdue their specific completion date.

3.9. There are no outstanding actions at the end of the quarter.

Near Misses Incidents: Quarter 2

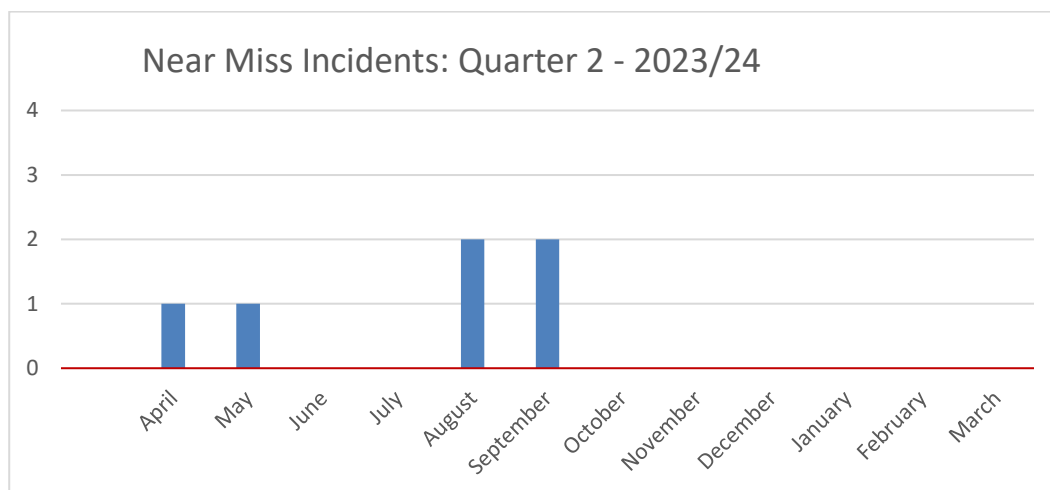


Figure. 6 Reported near misses in each month.

3.10. A total of six near miss incidents have been reported in this period to date. We had five near miss incidents in quarter two.

- Q1 – 2
- Q2 – 4

- a) A Breathing Apparatus (BA) set failure in a live training exercise. We have reviewed our set washing procedures in line with the manufacturer Draeger and are in the process of implementing a new agreed method and training on how to use the washing machines, with guides to be placed in washing facility.
- b) Wheel nuts on an appliance became loose. Investigated by the Workshops Manager and found we use two different types of wheel nuts on the appliances, the offending wheels nuts are being removed from all appliances.
- c) A treadmill whilst in use suffered a mechanical failure resulting in the running tread to jam. Gym equipment maintenance provider investigated and found a snapped tensioner bolt. They stated that they had never seen this malfunction before and moving forward that item will form part of the annual service.
- d) At an operational incident whilst internally fighting a fire in a roof from the loft hatch, a firefighter was struck on the head by falling roof tile. Incident commander at the time has been given advice and further training around completion of full scene survey, briefing of crews and offensive and defensive firefighting.

Cause for Concern Incidents

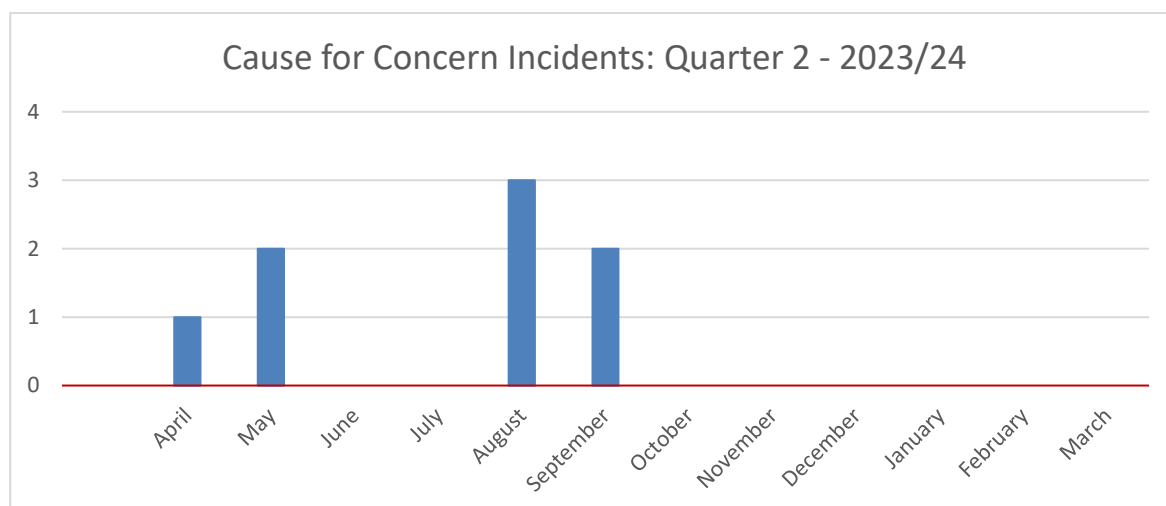


Figure. 7 Reported cause for concerns in each month

3.11 A total of eight cause for concern incidents have been reported in this year to date. There have been five cause for concerns reported in quarter two:

- Q1 – 3
- Q2 – 5

- a) Submission regarding the gas tight suits being all the same size and were unsuitable for some smaller operational staff. This was investigated and as a result different size suits are to be purchased and a review into removal from all appliances and moving a store or different sizes onto the Hazardous Materials and Environmental Protection Unit and breathing Incident Logistics Support Unit as an option.

- b) Submission by an officer in Control regarding staffing arrangements to cover sickness. This was investigated and a review into current arrangements undertaken, options were considered, six and we are developing additional staff to provide resilience in Control.
- c) Submission regarding no mobile data terminal on the Water Rescue Unit. iPad was issued which holds all relevant information, hazard apps and mapping.
- d) Submission regarding the automatic braking safety system on the appliance operating without cause. This was investigated by the Health and Safety Team, but when viewing the CCTV footage the actuation of the brakes was not apparent. This was discussed with the watch who submitted the cause for concern and the footage was viewed by themselves, as a result they concurred that there was no evidence to suggest the system operated without cause and agreed to monitor it.
- e) Submission regarding an operational incident which required Mod 3 swift water rescue technicians. Due to the Targeted Response Vehicle being utilised to assist in maintaining retained duty system stations availability and Bishop Auckland's Special Rescue Unit doing the same they only had two trained personnel on arrival at the incident, when Bishop Auckland arrived, they also had two making a total of four for a time critical incident. Investigation ongoing.

4. Summary

- 4.1. The culture within the Service and overall performance comparable to the sector is of a good standard and following completion of our annual proactive visits the general health and safety within CDDFRS will continue to evolve and continuously improve.
- 4.2. Performance in some areas is notably not where we would like it to be, however new ways of internal team working should assist with monitoring and identifying performance and areas where support is required earlier to prevent underperformance in areas of the team's influence.
- 4.3. Cause for concern recording is increasing which shows a positive culture and supports the Health and Safety message delivered during annual visits.
- 4.4. The annual health and safety visits are key to employee engagement and raising health and safety awareness. The reporting process for adverse events including near misses and cause for concerns demonstrate the proactive attitude our staff have.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. Members are asked to **note** and **comment** on the contents of this report.

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Service



Safest People, Safest Places

Human Resources Committee

21 November 2023

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Report of Director of Emergency Response

Purpose of Report

1. To update members on the work carried out by the Service's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG).

Background

2. As part of the approach to developing services and improving engagement with stakeholders, the Authority has sought to 'champion' particular areas of work through the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) Member Champion roles.
3. The Member Champion roles provide the Service with an opportunity to work closely with individual members to help develop the services provided and to engage with local communities, staff, councillors and other stakeholders through a closely aligned officer and member relationship.
4. Since appointment to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Member Champion role, Councillor Batey has been supported by the Director of Emergency Response in her capacity as strategic lead for the development of EDI across the organisation. Since the last update provided to members, Councillor S Quinn has replaced Councillor Batey as the EDI Member Champion.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group Update

5. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) has an EDI Strategy and action plan. The EDIG monitors progress against the action plan.
6. At the Authority meeting in June 2023, the Director of People and Organisation Development presented a paper on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) spotlight report on "Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services" and the internal review of CDDFRS practices against the

recommendations made. As reported, there were no urgent actions identified however as the Service strives to continuously improve, key actions identified will be captured in the People Strategy and cross mapped with the EDI Strategy and action plan. An update on progress of the action plan was presented to the Authority at the October meeting. A presentation was delivered to the EDIG in June.

7. The staff survey was hosted during September and October to support the Service to continue to seek the views of our staff on key areas of work anonymously without fear of reprisal. The findings of the survey were fed back to the Leadership Forums in November. The outcomes from the survey feed into the overall People Strategy action plan so our achievements and areas of focus are transparent. It is also an area which is explored by HMICFRS during their inspection process. A presentation was delivered to the EDIG in June.
8. The project named 'Understanding our Communities' has been rebranded as 'CONNECT' and will continue to be embedded across the organisation. The aim of *CONNECT* is to create a central database of key contacts / networks for the whole of County Durham and Darlington, this is so that as a Service we have a greater understanding of individuals and groups within our communities to help inform Service delivery, community engagement and recruitment strategies.
9. In May, the EDIG took part in a workshop led by our National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Implementation Manager to conduct an assessment of the Service against the EDI Maturity Model. The maturity model allows the FRS to assess current practice, by using a self-assessment tool enabling an unbiased and balanced view in order to build a better picture of the Service at this current time. The outcomes from the workshop have formulated an action plan which will feed into the EDI Strategy Action Plan to drive improvement with progress monitored by the EDIG.
10. The Service attended both Durham Pride in May and Darlington Pride in August. On duty staff, volunteers and the Fire Fighters Charity attended the events along with the Pride fire appliance to promote our support to the LGBT community. The Chief Fire Officer delivered a speech of support at Durham Pride and we were supported by our colleagues from Cleveland Fire Brigade. We further demonstrated support to our regional colleagues and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, attending Northern Pride in Newcastle.
11. Internally, the Service supported 'Pride' month with Service crested flags flown at Service premises throughout the month of June. The Comms Team developed Pride themed backgrounds for Microsoft Teams which staff adopted for both internal and external meetings, the Service Vision was adapted for the month to 'Safest People, Safest Places....With Pride' and the EDIG also designed rainbow lanyards to demonstrate and promote our visible support as allies and as an inclusive employer to our LGBT staff and communities.
12. The Equality Champion for Gender has established a Gender Network which has been branded as 'IGNITE'. Members of IGNITE organised and hosted an interactive session with Miss Menopause. The session was attended by a cross section of staff with the aim to raise awareness of menopause and provide education to enable staff to support

their colleagues, partners, friends and family. The Equality Champion for Gender is also a member of the National Menopause Action Group to gather best practice to inform our Service interventions to help support and educate our staff.

13. To demonstrate the Service as an inclusive and supportive organisation and employer, the EDIG has developed an EDI Communication Plan to promote awareness of key dates and events across the strands of equality with information and activities some of which included Firefighter Memorial Day, International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHoBiT), SANDS Awareness Month, Suicide Prevention Week, Dyslexia Week, Black History Month, Ramadan and International Pronouns Day.
14. To increase staff knowledge and awareness of our diverse communities, the EDIG has produced a suite of information sheets hosted on the Service Intranet which cover the nine strands of equality in addition to topics including sheltered housing, hoarding, deprivation/child poverty, domestic abuse, homelessness, lone parents, safeguarding, mental health, asylum seekers/refugees, gypsy/traveller communities, new arrived communities, students, anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol and hate/mate crime.
15. Cohort 7 of Firefighter (FF) Apprentices commenced their career in the Service on 7 August 2023 and will complete their initial training with a Pass Out Parade on 17 May 2024, the cohort has 36% female representation. A positive action programme commenced in February 2023 to assist the Service in encouraging people from groups that are currently underrepresented in the sector to apply. HMICFRS identified the Service's apprenticeship programme as an innovative practice.

Conclusion

16. A significant amount of work has been undertaken by the EDIG and from staff across the Service which has contributed to a positive direction of travel and the achievement of a 'Good' grading in the People Pillar in our last inspection by HMICFRS.

Recommendation

17. Members are requested to:
 - a) **Note** the content of the report.

Sarah Nattrass, Director of Emergency Response, 0191 375 5587

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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