



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE

01 APRIL 2018 – 31 MARCH 2019

REPORT OF HEAD OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on sickness absence performance for the full reporting year.




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 2018 to 31 March 2019 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. Table 1 overleaf sets out the sickness statistics against three key performance indicators (KPI). These indicators were 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 18 to Mar 19	Apr 18 to Mar 19 Target	Variance	Apr 17 to Mar 18 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
Working shifts/days lost for all staff	8.27	6	+ 2.27	7.02	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime, Control and Non- Uniformed	6.2	6	+ 0.2	5.11	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime and Control	6.52	6	+ 0.52	5.37	

7. All the KPIs for sickness are above target and performance has regressed in comparison with last year. These performance indicators can be further broken down in relation to the individual staff groups within the Service. This breakdown can assist in identifying trends.
8. Table 2 below shows a breakdown over the specific staff groups that are employed by the Service. The data is further analysed in the Trend Analysis Report which is attached as Appendix A.

Table 2 Sickness by Staff Group

Performance Indicator	Apr 18 to Mar 19	Apr 18 to Mar 19 Target	Variance	Apr 17 to Mar 18 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
Wholetime Riders (WT)	7.70	5	+ 2.70	5.43	
Flexi Duty (FDO) / Day Duty Officers	4.50	4.5	0	3.26	
Control	5.29	8	- 2.71	8.85	
Retained Duty System (RDS)	15.33	9	+ 6.33	12.15	
Non-Uniformed	5.62	5	+ 0.62	4.02	

Breakdown of Sickness Statistics

Wholetime Station Based Firefighters (Riders)

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2019	1813
Long term sickness	1314 (73%)
Short term sickness	499 (27%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£307,351

10. The WT rider category has seen a 28% rise in shifts lost this reporting quarter in comparison with results of last year. In the previous year's report, it was highlighted that sickness levels were likely to be high at the start of the reporting year due to the nature of long-term absence continuing from quarter 4 as well as notice from WT personnel of impending operations. There are no specific patterns which can be identified in terms of days of the week or day/night shift for absence. Musculoskeletal absence remains the main cause of absence accounting for 57% of overall shifts lost.

Flexible Duty Officers and Day Duty Staff

11. The detailed sickness information relating to FDO and day duty staff is summarised below.

FDO

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2019	56
Long term sickness	23 (41%)
Short term sickness	33 (59%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£16,187

Day Duty

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2019	150
Long term sickness	135 (90%)
Short term sickness	15 (10%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£23,817

12. The FDO category has seen a reduction in absence levels in comparison with last year. The shifts lost have predominantly been short term although a number of these cases have been certified absence with one recent case of longer-term absence which will continue into the new reporting year. On the other hand, after such low sickness last year, the day duty category has increased significantly. However, unlike the FDO category, the majority of absence has been long term with few shifts lost for short term absence.

Control Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2019	90
Long term sickness	51 (57%)
Short term sickness	39 (43%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£15, 844

14. The Control category has seen a 45% reduction in absence levels in comparison with previous years continuing the downward trend. There has been only one case of long-term absence due to mental health related issues, the remainder has been short term with a mixture of certified and non-certified absence.

Non- Uniformed Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/03/2019	443
Long term sickness	301 (68%)
Short term sickness	142 (32%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£52,219

16. This category has seen a 40% rise in shifts lost in comparison with last year. Most shifts lost were in quarter 2 and 3 where levels of long term absence were high. Unlike the operational categories, mental health is the main reason for absence in the non-uniformed category attributing to 57% of shifts lost and all absence for this reason was long term. Short term absence within this category has also been high this year.

Retained Duty System Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/03/2019	2129
Long term sickness	1947 (91%)
Short term sickness	182 (9%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£44,013

18. The RDS category has seen a further 20% increase in shifts lost in comparison with last year and continues the upward trend. Most of the rise in absence levels is due to long term absence, on a positive note short term absence has decreased in comparison with levels reported last year. Much like the other operational categories, 65% of shifts lost were due to muscular skeletal issues.

Action Taken

19. Sickness levels continue to be monitored closely with regular analysis to identify any trends and patterns with the instigation of the attendance management triggers where appropriate.
20. The HR team continue to liaise with line managers to support personnel to return to work as soon as possible through regular welfare visits, occupational health advice, additional support such as physiotherapy or counselling and encouraging discussions around the potential of modified duties once a return to work date is in sight.
21. The HR team are progressing a number of potential ill health cases to enable some of the more prolonged lengthy absences to be resolved.

National Fire Service Data Comparison

22. This data is supplied via the National Occupational Health Performance Report which is collated by Cleveland FRS. The data range is from April 18 – March 19. Good performance in comparison with other Services can be seen within the WT, Control and non-uniformed categories. Unfortunately, absence levels within the RDS are high however, the comparative data for this category is not wholly accurate with significant differences within the number of RDS employees within each Service. Further details can be found in Appendix A.

Recommendation

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