



# **Performance Committee**

**2 March 2020**

**Sickness Absence Performance**

**01 April 2019 – 31 December 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 first 9 months of the 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 2019 to 31 December 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. 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 19 to Dec 19	Apr 19 to Dec 19 Target	Variance	Apr 18 to Dec 18	Direction of Travel
Working shifts/days lost for <b>all staff</b>	6.03	4.5	+1.53	6.63	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all <b>Wholetime, Control and Non- Uniformed</b>	5.30	4.5	+0.8	4.59	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all <b>Wholetime and Control</b>	5.64	4.5	+1.14	4.65	

7. All KPIs for sickness are above target at this point in the year and performance has regressed in comparison with last year for two of the indicators. 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 further breakdown over the specific staff groups that are employed by the Service.

**Table 2 Sickness by Staff Group**

Performance Indicator	Apr 19 to Dec 19	Apr 19 to Dec 19 Target	Variance	Apr 18 to Dec 18	Direction of Travel
Wholetime Riders (WT)	4.18	3.75	+0.43	5.70	
Flexi Duty (FDO) / Day Duty (DD) Officers	8.20	3.37	+4.83	2.84	
Control	4.41	6	-1.59	1.94	
Retained Duty System (RDS)	9.03	6.75	+2.28	13.05	
Non-uniformed	4.08	3.75	+0.33	4.88	

9. Absence within the FDO and DD category of staff has seen a huge increase in absence this year when compared to last year. This is due to a number of officers having been absent for a significant amount of the reporting year and it is expected

to continue into Q4. It is pleasing to see however that within the wholetime rider category of staff, although absence is currently just above target there has been a reduction in shifts lost when compared to the same reporting period of last year. The RDS category of staff again, are above target although sick shifts lost have reduced significantly when compared to the same reporting period last year.

## Breakdown of Sickness Statistics

### Whole time Station Based Firefighters (Riders)

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/12/19	1333
Long term sickness	946 (71%)
Short term sickness	386 (29%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£245,493

11. For the period 1 April to 31 December 2019 the WT rider category has lost approximately the same number of shifts when compared to the same reporting period in 2018-19 with a slight reduction of 0.74%. 71% of this absence is long term predominately relating to musculoskeletal (MSK) issues relating to the knee, shoulder and hip. Other long-term absence is relating to mental health and neurological concerns. Some personnel who have been long term absent throughout the reporting period are expected to return to modified duties within quarter 4 with a view to returning to full operational duties.

12. Short term absence saw an increase throughout the reporting period of approximately 22% when compared with the same period in 2018-19. Reasons for short term absence are relating to gastrointestinal, cold, and flu issues. All personnel have now returned to full operational duties. All WT stations have experienced absence within this reporting period.

### Flexible Duty Officers and Day Duty Staff

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

#### FDO

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/12/19	273
Long term sickness	269 (100%)
Short term sickness	0 (0%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£38,300

#### Day Duty

Description	Days/cost
-------------	-----------

Total shifts lost to 31/12/19	104
Long term sickness	0 (0%)
Short term sickness	40 (100%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£19,870

14. Sickness within both the FDO and DD categories are significantly higher than the same reporting period of 2018-19. This remains predominantly due to long term absence relating to MSK, neurological and mental health issues. Within the DD category there has been one case of long-term absence with this person undertaking a phased return to duty throughout June to September, they are now performing full day duties. Although fully carrying out their day duty they are still unable to undertake operational duties. One member of the FDO category of staff remains long term absent, having been absent throughout this full reporting period. One further individual who has been long term absent and on modified duties throughout quarter 3 is expected to return to full operational duties within quarter 4. A further member of this category of staff will be retiring from the service on ill health in the coming quarter. This category of staff is above target.

## Control Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/12/19	75
Long term sickness	13 (17%)
Short term sickness	62 (82%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£14,268

16. Control absence has seen a significant increase when compared to the same period in 2018-19, although levels remain below target. Absence throughout April to June of the reporting period was primarily due to 2 members of staff absent due to bereavement; both have now returned to full duties. The remainder of shifts lost were short term. Absence throughout July and August was all short term relating to dermatological, gastrointestinal and cold related issues. Absence throughout September to December has been predominately short term due to gastrointestinal; MSK as well as cold and flu issues. There is no planned absence going into quarter 4.

## Non-Uniformed Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/12/19	385.05
Long term sickness	286 (74%)
Short term sickness	99.05 (26%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£30,640

18. Non-uniformed absence levels have remained approximately the same in comparison with the reporting period in 2018-19. At the end of quarter 3, 74% of absence is relating to long term issues. Predominately relating to complex MSK issues as well as mental health and 'other' reasons. It is expected that some personnel who have been absent throughout this reporting period will return to work on phased duties with a view to returning to full duties within quarter 4 of 2019-20. All personnel who were absent due to short term issues have returned to full duties. This category of staff is currently above target and can be expected to remain above target at the end of quarter 4.

## Retained Duty System Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 31/12/19	1440.24
Long term sickness	1328 (92%)
Short term sickness	112.4 (8%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£29,117

20. RDS absence had been reducing throughout quarter 1 and 2. Quarter 3 has seen a significant increase in absence although it is approximately 20% lower than the same reporting period in 2018-19. The majority of absence is long term, predominately MSK related along with neurological and 'other' reasons. A low percentage of absence relating to short term is linked to dermatological and urological issues. It can be expected absence within this category of staff will continue to be above target going into quarter 4.

## Action Taken

21. 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.
22. 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.

## National Fire Service Data Comparison

23. This data is supplied via the National Occupational Health Performance Report which is compiled by Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB). All fire and rescue service's (FRS) are asked to supply data for the main categories of employees; WT, Control, RDS and non-uniformed.
24. There is a set calculation which all FRS's 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's in terms of sickness absence rates.

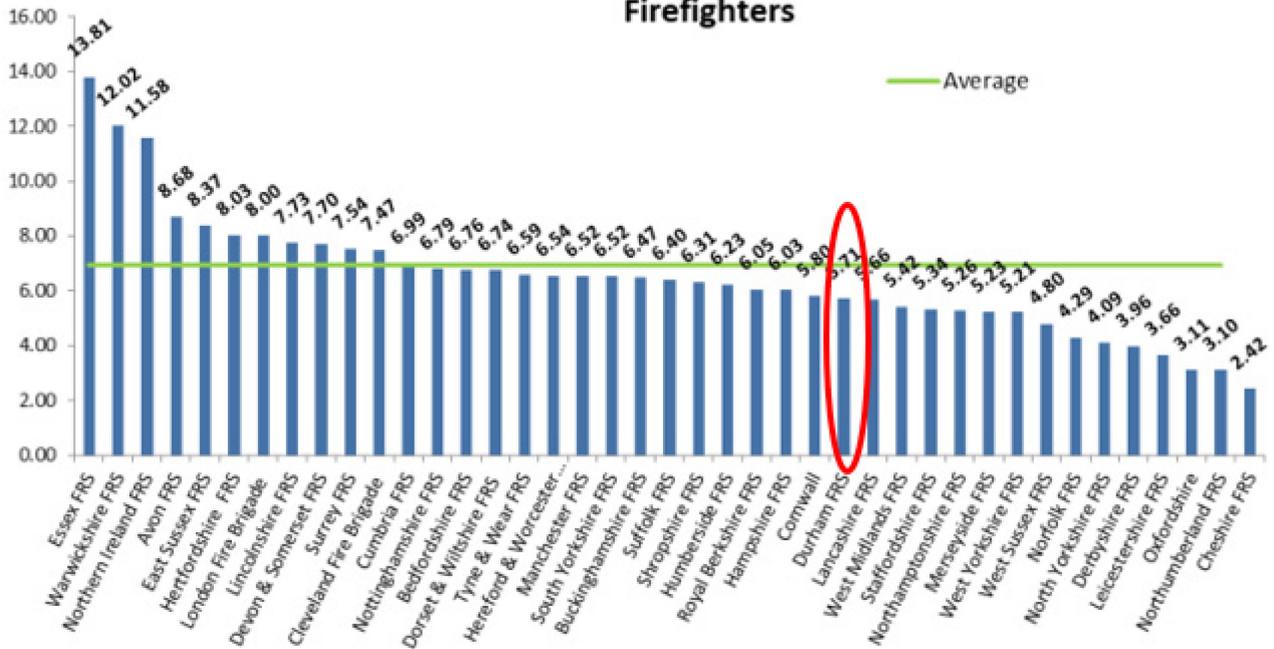
25. Data relating to April to December 19 can be found at Appendix 1. This is currently the outcome from the draft report received from CFB, however, it can be expected to remain as is currently reported in the final version.

## **Recommendation**

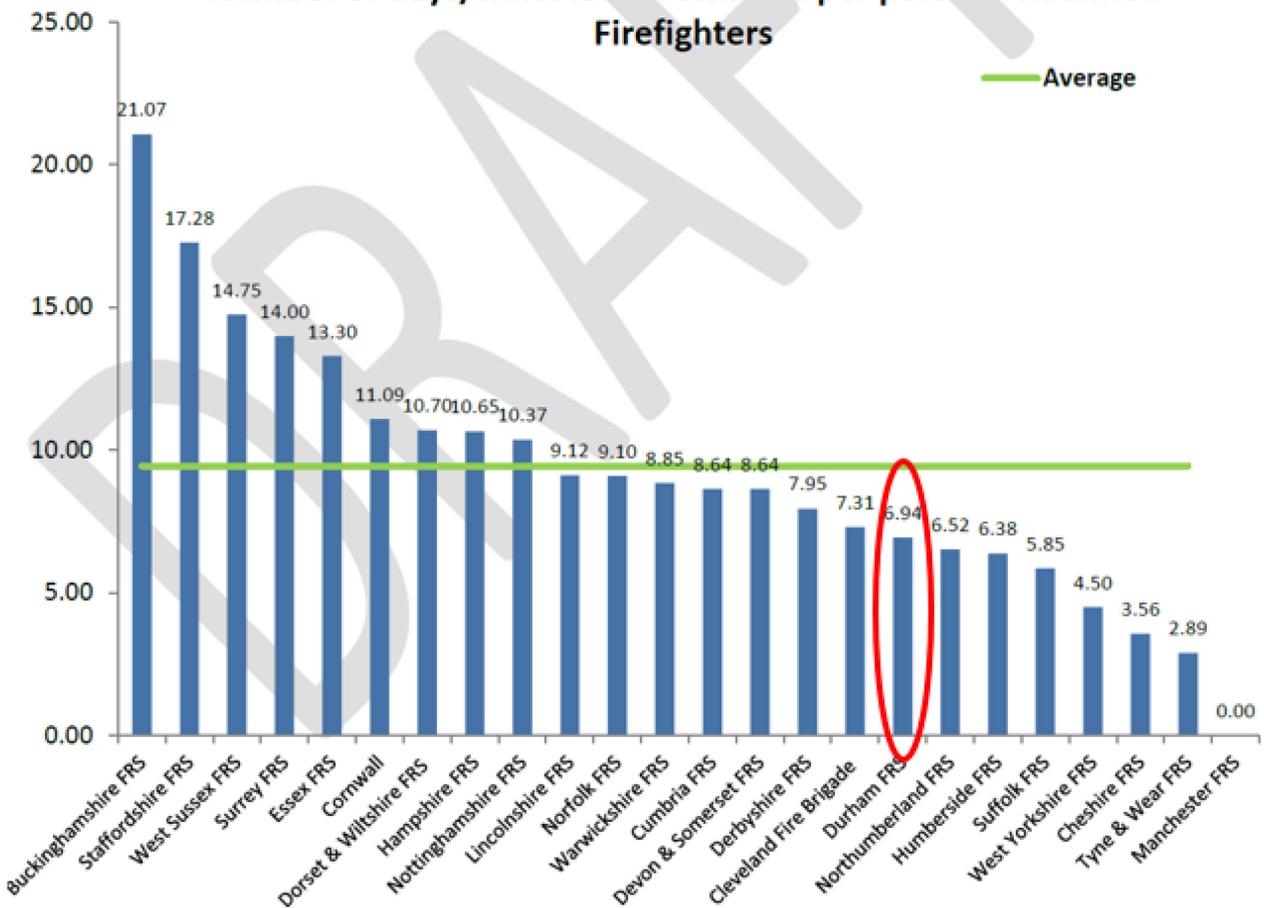
26. Members are asked to **note** and **comment** on the contents of this report.

Appendix 1

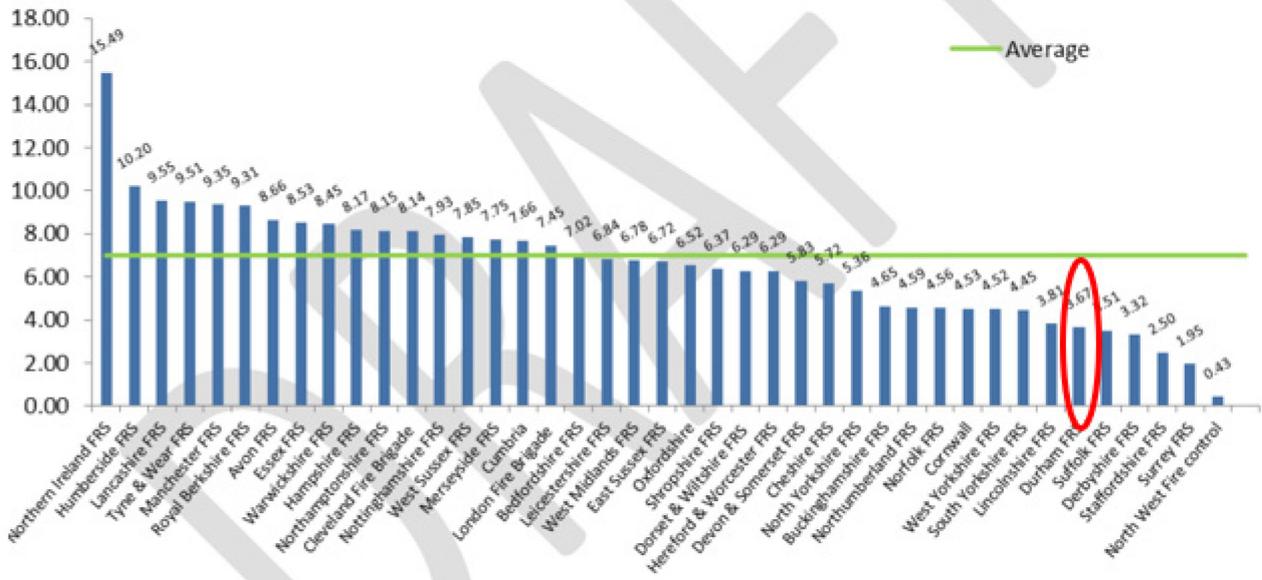
**Number of days/shifts lost to sickness per person - Wholetime Firefighters**



**Number of days/shifts lost to sickness per person - Retained Firefighters**



### Number of days/shifts lost to sickness per person Green Book staff



### Number of days/shifts lost to sickness per person - Fire Control

