



Safest People, Safest Places

FINANCE COMMITTEE

23 OCTOBER 2018

SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE

01 APRIL 2017 – 31 MARCH 2018

REPORT OF HEAD OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the committee with an update on sickness absence performance at the end of reporting year 2017-18.

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 statistics given below are calculated as average shifts/days lost per person. Throughout the reporting year there have been difficulties obtaining sickness absence data, however, the Service believes the statistics provided are accurate using the reporting tools available.
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.

Key Sickness Statistics by Best Value Indicators

7. These performance indicators can be further broken down in relation to the individual staff groups within the Service (see Table 1 below). This breakdown can assist in identifying trends in particular areas.






Table 1

Performance Indicator	Apr 17 to Mar 18	Annual Target	Variance	Apr 16 to Mar 17	Direction of Travel
Working shifts/days lost for all staff	7.02	6	+1.02	7.83	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime, Control and Non Uniformed	5.11	6	-0.89	7.27	
Working shifts/days Lost due to sickness for all Wholetime and Control	5.37	6	-0.63	6.68	

Sickness by Staff Group

8. Table 2 below shows a further breakdown over the specific staff groups that are employed by the Service.

Table 2

Performance Indicator	Apr 17 to Mar 18	Annual Target	Variance	Apr 16 to Mar 17	Direction of Travel
Wholetime Riders	5.43	5	+0.43	7.22	
Flexi / Day Duty Officers	3.26	4.5	-1.24	3.13	
Control	8.85	8	+0.85	9.85	
Retained Duty System (RDS)	12.15	9	+3.15	9.46	
Non-Uniformed	4.02	5	-0.98	10.16	

9. Sickness across all categories has greatly improved this reporting year with a 11% reduction in shifts lost in comparison with last year. Improvements can be seen across all three of the key performance indicators (Table 1), with reductions in shifts lost in the wholetime and non-uniformed categories impacting the most significantly. Unfortunately, sickness levels within the RDS have increased this year which impacts negatively on the all staff indicator.

Breakdown of Sickness Statistics

Wholetime Station Based Firefighters (Riders)

10. The detailed sickness information relating to wholetime (WT) station-based firefighters (FF) is summarised below.

Description	Days/cost	Posts
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2018	1411	
Long term sickness	905 (64%)	
Short term sickness	506 (36%)	
Approximate cost of sickness	£287,844	9.6 FF posts

11. The WT station-based FF category has seen a 60% rise in shifts lost this reporting quarter in comparison with quarter 3, however, overall there has been a 26% decrease in absence levels compared with last year's performance. Quarter 4 has seen a significant rise in both long and short-term absence. The main reason for absence in this category remains Musculoskeletal (MSK). Performance at High Handenhold, Seaham, Peterlee, Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor are all still under target for the year. Moving into the new reporting year, due to the nature of long term absence as well as notice from wholetime personnel of impending operations, it can be expected that absence levels will remain high.

Flexible Duty Officer and Day Duty Staff

12. The detailed sickness information relating to flexible duty officer (FDO) and day duty staff is summarised below.

FDO

Description	Days/cost	Posts
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2018	175	
Long term sickness	155 (88%)	
Short term sickness	20 (12%)	
Approximate cost of sickness	£35,700	1.19 FF roles

Day Duty

Description	Days/cost	Posts
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2018	2	
Long term sickness	0	
Short term sickness	2 (100%)	
Approximate cost of sickness	£408	0.01 FF roles

13. Sickness within the FDO category throughout the year is predominantly due to long term absence with 4 personnel being absent, all of who have now returned to work or retired from the service. Quarter 4 saw a small amount of short term absence reported. In the day duty category only 2 shifts were lost to sickness throughout the year.

Control

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

Control

Description	Days/cost	Posts
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2018	166	
Long term sickness	146 (88%)	
Short term sickness	20 (12%)	
Approximate cost of sickness	£35,569	1.20 FCOP

15. Control sickness has seen a decrease of around 17% in comparison with absence levels in the same period last year. Short term absence has remained low in quarter 4 with only 6 shifts lost this quarter. However, long term absence in this quarter has impacted significantly on performance in this category. Two personnel have been absent long term, both of who have now returned to full operational duties.

Non-Uniformed

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

Non-Uniformed

Description	Days/cost	Posts
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2018	316.9	
Long term sickness	178.4 (56%)	
Short term sickness	138.5 (44%)	
Approximate cost of sickness	£38,619	1.54 G7 roles

17. Non-uniformed absence levels have decreased by almost 55% in comparison with the same period last year which is positive to see. Most absence this year has been due to two long term cases which are now resolved, and the employees have returned to work. There has been very little absence within this category in quarter 4, all of which is short term. End of year figures for this indicator are below target.

Retained Duty System

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

RDS

Description	Days/cost	Posts
Total shifts lost to 31/3/2018	1760.3	
Long term sickness	1493 (85%)	
Short term sickness	267.3 (15%)	
Approximate cost of sickness	£45,778	1.52 FF roles

19. Absence within the RDS category unfortunately has seen a rise in the last reporting quarter with shifts lost being 29% higher than last year. Long term sickness remains high attributing to 85% of all absence within this category. These cases are being managed by the Human

Resources team in liaison with managers and due to the nature of these cases a number are likely to continue into the next reporting year. On a positive note short term sickness remains low, 3 out of 13 RDS stations have reported no sickness absence this reporting year and 6 are below target.

Recommendation

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