

Safest People, Safest Places

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

10 DECEMBER 2018

SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE

01 APRIL 2018 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2018

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 6 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 2018 to 30 September 2018 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 18 to Sep 18	Apr 18 to Sep 18 Target	Variance	Apr 17 to Sep 17 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
Working shifts/days lost for all staff	4.63	3	+1.63	2.84	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime, Control and Non- Uniformed	3.07	3	+0.07	2.08	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime and Control	3.36	3	+0.36	2.16	

7. All the KPIs for sickness are above target at the half way point in the year 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 further breakdown over the specific staff groups that are employed by the Service.

Table 2 Sickness by Staff Group

Performance Indicator	Apr 18 to Sep 18	Apr 18 to Sep 18 Target	Variance	Apr 17 to Sep 17 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
Wholetime Riders (WT)	4.19	2.5	+ 1.69	2.08	
Flexi Duty (FDO) / Day Duty Officers	1.8	2.25	- 0.45	1.74	
Control	0.59	4	- 3.41	5.49	
Retained Duty System (RDS)	9.12	4.5	+ 4.62	5.08	
Non-Uniformed	2.04	2.5	- 0.46	1.67	

9. Overall, sickness has risen this reporting year with a 61% increase in shifts lost in comparison with the same recording period last year. Significant increase in absence levels can be seen in the WT and RDS categories. The rise in sickness within both these categories has been predominantly due to long term sickness with staff requiring operations with lengthy waiting times and recovery periods. There was also a spike in short term absence within the WT category, predominantly due to muscular skeletal (MSK) and gastroenteritis issues and further long-term absence in the RDS category over the summer period. Its pleasing to see that over September and the latest data available for October, that sickness levels in both categories has started to decline with a 35% reduction in short term absence and 15% reduction in long term for WT staff throughout September. This has further improved throughout October and is expected to continue into quarter 3.

Breakdown of Sickness Statistics

Wholetime Station Based Firefighters (Riders)

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/9/2018	988
Long term sickness	760 (77%)
Short term sickness	228 (23%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£170,450

11. The WT rider category has seen a 80% rise in shifts lost this reporting period in comparison with this time last year. All WT stations' absence levels are currently above target for the year. 77% of absence is MSK related, primarily due to upper and lower limb operations followed by a long recovery period. We have recently seen the return to full operational duty of some personnel which will be reflected in Q3 performance figures. 23% of absence has been short term due to a variety of gastro, cold and flu issues.

Flexible Duty Officers and Day Duty Staff

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

FDO

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/9/2018	60
Long term sickness	57 (95%)
Short term sickness	3 (5%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£8,114

Day Duty

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/9/2018	46
Long term sickness	40 (87%)
Short term sickness	6 (13%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£6,563

13. Sickness within this category is predominantly due to long term absence. Within the DD category there have been 2 cases of long-term sickness, one of which has returned to full operational duties the other is currently undertaking modified duties with a view to returning to full operational duty early 2019. These were both down to MSK, 1 being a break, the other requiring an operation. On a positive note, short term absence is very low with only 6 shifts lost in the day duty group. There has been 1 person absent within the FDO category who has now returned to full operational duties. There have been only 3 shifts lost to short term absence within the FDO category of staff.

Control Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/9/2018	23
Long term sickness	8 (35%)
Short term sickness	15 (65%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£4,114

15. Control have continued with the downward trend of absence carrying on from a reduction last year, this year has seen a further 77% reduction in absence this period. 8 shifts have been lost to long term sickness by 1 person who returned to full duties following an operation. 15 shifts have been lost to short term absence due to various reasons. Control absence is well below target.

Non- Uniformed Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/9/2018	184
Long term sickness	142 (77%)
Short term sickness	42 (23%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£28,266

17. Non-uniformed absence levels have increased by 44% in comparison with the same period last year. Absence this year has been a combination of both short term and long term sickness. 2 personnel who have had long term absence have both returned to duty. Short term absence has been due to a variety of reasons. Projected figures for the year are slightly below target.

Retained Duty System Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/9/201	1306
Long term sickness	1210 (92%)
Short term sickness	96 (8%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£32,555

19. Absence within the RDS category has seen a large increase this reporting period with shifts lost to absence increasing by more than 80% of those lost in the same reporting period of 2017. Long term sickness remains high attributing to 92% of all absence within this category. These cases are being managed by the HR team in liaison with managers and are primarily due to MSK related issues. On a positive note short term sickness remains low. Wheatley Hill, Newton Aycliffe and Durham are the only stations still below target at this point in the year, all other stations have been impacted by long term absence. Projected figures for the year are above target.

Action Taken

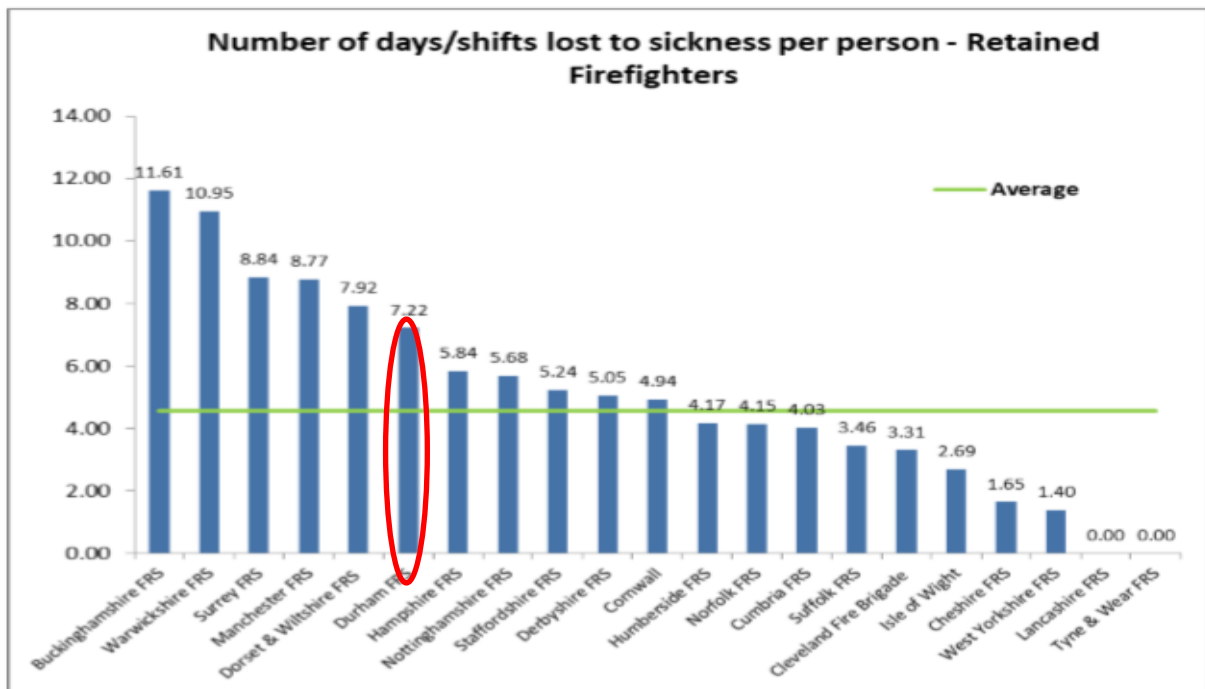
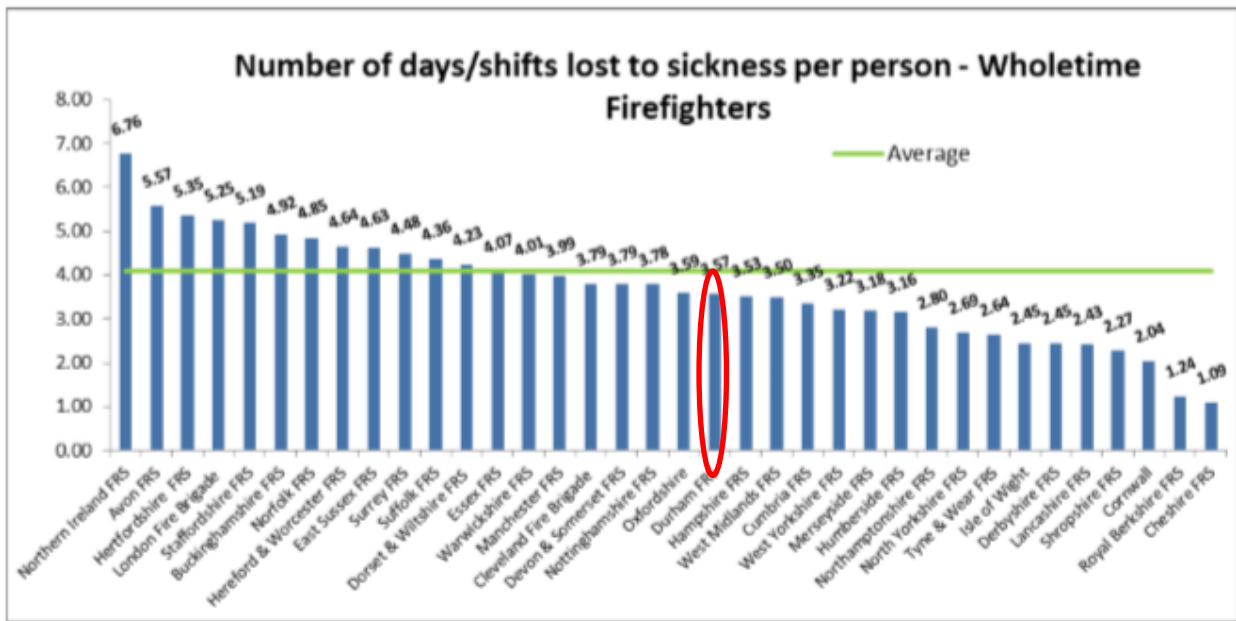
20. Sickness levels will continue to be monitored closely with regular analysis for any trends and patterns and instigation of the attendance management triggers where appropriate.
21. The HR team continue to liaise with line managers to support personnel to return to work as soon as possible through 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.
22. There are also several improvements being made following an internal audit of sickness procedures around the recording of absence, fit notes, ensuring return to work discussions are undertaken and any patterns of absence are identified at an early stage, which the HR team are following up on a regular basis. The action plan from this audit is being monitored and signed off at the Performance and Programme Board (PPB).

National Fire Service Data Comparison (Appendix 1)

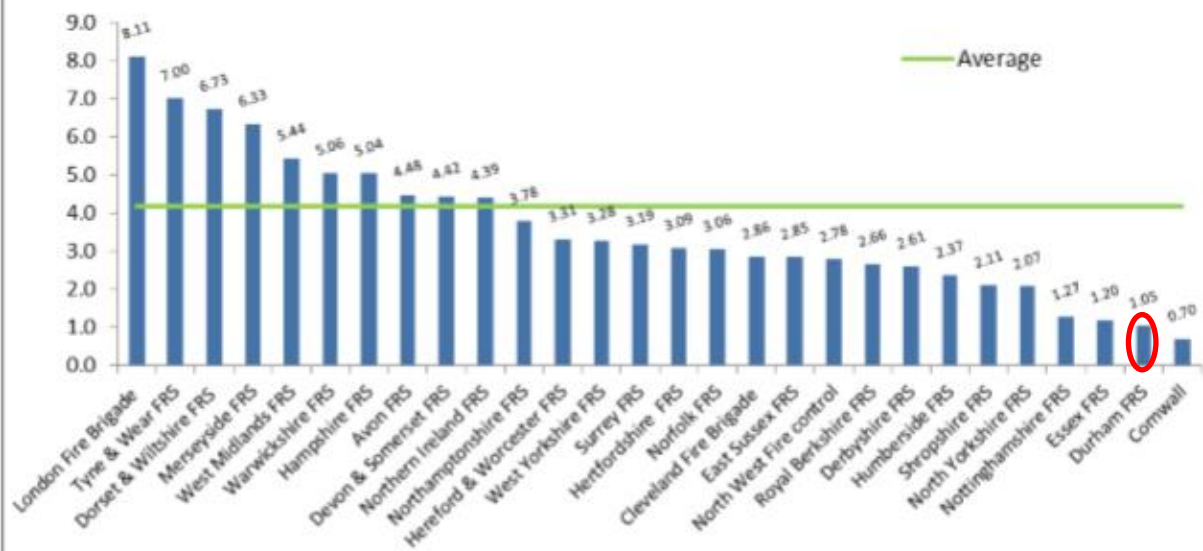
23. This data is supplied via the National Occupational Health Performance Report which is compiled by Cleveland Fire Brigade. All fire and rescue service's (FRS) are asked to supply data for the main categories of employees; WT, Control, RDS and non-uniformed. There is a set calculation which all FRS's 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. The data range is from April 18 to September 18.
24. Performance for WT (which is inclusive of WT riders, flexi duty and day duty officers), control and non-uniformed are all in the lower quartiles and below the national average.

Recommendation

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



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



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

