



PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

7 MARCH 2019

SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE

01 APRIL 2018 – 31 DECEMBER 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 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 2018 to 31 December 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 Dec 18	Apr 18 to Dec 18 Target	Variance	Apr 17 to Dec 17 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
Working shifts/days lost for all staff	6.63	4.5	+ 2.13	4.87	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime, Control and Non- Uniformed	4.59	3.75	+ 0.84	3.5	
Working shifts/days lost due to sickness for all Wholetime and Control	4.65	3.75	+ 0.9	3.44	

7. All the KPIs for sickness are above target at this 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. 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 Dec 18	Apr 17 to Dec 17 Target	Variance	Apr 17 to Dec 17 (PYR)	Direction of Travel
Wholetime Riders (WT)	5.70	3.75	+ 1.95	3.36	
Flexi Duty (FDO) / Day Duty Officers	2.84	3.375	- 0.89	2.99	
Control	1.94	6	- 4.06	5.65	
Retained Duty System (RDS)	13.05	6.75	+ 6.3	8.53	
Non-Uniformed	4.88	3.75	+ 1.13	3.77	

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 31/12/2018	1343
Long term sickness	1027 (76%)
Short term sickness	316 (24%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£219,271

11. The WT rider category has seen a 42% reduction in absence in Q3 when compared to Q2 of this reporting period. This is due to a number of long-term absence cases coming to an end. These absences were mainly due to MSK operations the majority of which are now resolved. However there has been an increase in absence in December when compared to November, primarily due to new cases of sickness which will come to an end when the personnel retire in Q4. Performance at Peterlee, Durham, Newton Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland and Darlington are all below target for the year. Overall this category is over target for the year.

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 30/12/2018	34
Long term sickness	1 (3%)
Short term sickness	33 (97%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£7,742

Day Duty

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/12/2018	91
Long term sickness	76 (84%)
Short term sickness	15 (16%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£14,813

13. Sickness levels within the FDO category have remained low throughout this reporting period with only 2 shifts lost to short term absence. Within the DD category there have been 1 cases of long-term sickness however returned to full operational duty early 2019. This category remains under target for the year.

Control Staff

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

Description	Days/cost
Total shifts lost to 30/12/2018	33
Long term sickness	8 (24%)
Short term sickness	25 (76%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£5,343

15. Control absence has seen a decrease of around 41% in comparison with absence levels this time last year. There have been only 10 shifts lost to absence across the reporting period all due to short term various issues, all personnel have returned to full duties. Projected figures for this category are 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	384
Long term sickness	276 (72%)
Short term sickness	108 (28%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£45,302

17. The non-uniformed category of staff has seen an increase in absence of 28% in Q3 when compared to Q2. This relates to both long- and short-term absence. Four personnel have triggered long term sickness the main reasons bring mental health and MSK all of which have returned to work. Short term absence has been for various reasons including gastrointestinal; respiratory; cold etc. Non-uniform absence is above target at this time of the reporting period however, improvement is expected within Q4.

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	1813
Long term sickness	1678 (92%)
Short term sickness	135 (8%)
Approximate cost of sickness	£37,482

19. Absence within the RDS category has seen a reduction of 34% this reporting period in shifts lost to absence. 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. Short term issues primarily relate to gastrointestinal and flu. On a positive note Wheatley Hill have had 0 absence in Q3 Durham; Newton Aycliffe and Middleton in Teesdale all remain below target. Projected figures for the year are above target for this category.

Action Taken

20. Sickness levels 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. The HR team are progressing several potential ill health cases predominantly within the RDS category to enable some of the more prolonged lengthy absences to be resolved.
23. There are several long-term absences within the WT category which will end within Q4 due to the retirement of the employee. This will have a positive impact on the sickness figures for the end of the year.

National Fire Service Data Comparison

24. 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 December 18.
25. 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

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

APPENDIX 1



