



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 23 April 2021

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on key human resources metrics for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021, with exception of absence data which is for the reporting period 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of its remit, the Human Resources Committee of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority receives regular updates on Human Resources (HR) issues within the Service. This includes issues such as sickness absence, formal discipline, grievance, employment tribunal cases and staffing numbers. These issues are collectively referred to as HR metrics.
- 1.2 Reports are on a quarterly basis and allow the Human Resources Committee to keep informed of ongoing issues and offer their guidance and scrutiny.

2. REPORT

HR METRICS - SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 2.1 The following represents absence figures for Quarter 3: 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020:

Target absence figures for 2020/21 are:

Wholetime:	6 days per person
Support Staff:	7 days per person
Whole Workforce:	6.25 days per person

(The average is affected by the numbers of employees in each work group and the average work shift)

- 2.2 Absence across the workforce, excluding On-call employees, increased by 561.2 days (73.3%) compared to the previous quarter. A comparative breakdown of figures by employment group are set out in Appendix C. This represents an increase compared to the same quarter of the previous year (2019-20) of 74.58 days.

Absence	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec	Compared with previous quarter (Q2)	Cumulative total days lost for 20/21	Cumulative average over last 12 months
Total workforce (122 employees have been absent on 147	1326.58 days lost 2.24 days per employee	765.44 days lost 1.3 days per employee	4190.31 days lost	7.06 days per employee (target 6.25 days)

occasions during Q3, excluding On-call *)		73.3% increase (561.14 days)		
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(*Due to the On-call nature of the On-call Duty System, On-call absence is not reflected in the figures. These are shown separately at Appendix C).

- 2.4 Across the workforce a total of 1326.58 working days were lost in the third quarter of 2020/21. The trends across quarters is shown in the table set out at Appendix A.
- 2.5 Long term absence equated to 59.85% of the total absence during this period. A full period commentary of Quarter 3 can be found at appendix C.

NATIONAL TRENDS

- 2.6 The Service contributes to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) sickness absence survey, which is undertaken quarterly and allows for comparison between contributing Fire and Rescue Services.
- 2.7 Reasons for sickness absence at NFRS broadly mirror the national trends with musculo skeletal and mental health related absences featuring significantly in all workgroups.
- 2.8 Appendix B reflects the national absence trends for Quarter 1, Quarter 2 and Quarter 3. The three charts reflect wholetime, support staff (green book) and On-call average of duty days/shifts lost per person across the Fire Services who have submitted data.
- 2.9 For wholetime personnel NFRS has an average of 4.16 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 14th lowest out of the 41 Services included in the survey. This figure is below the sector sickness average of 5.4 days per employee. The lowest average was 2.76 and the highest 7.37.
- 2.10 For support staff the Service has an average of 4.11 days lost per employee which ranks the Service 17th lowest out of the 41 Services included in the survey. This figure is below the sector sickness average of 4.67 days per employee. The lowest average was 0.93 days and the highest 9.28 days.

DISCIPLINE, GRIEVANCES ETC

- 2.11 Over the period 1 January 2021– 31 March 2021.
- Disciplinary: 0
 - Grievances: 0
 - Harassment and Bullying: 0
 - Formal Management Sickness Absence Policy: 0

- Dismissals including ill health retirements: 0
- Redundancy: 0
- Redeployment: 0
- Employment Tribunal cases: 1
- IDRPs appeals: 0
- Performance and capability: 0

STAFFING NUMBERS

2.12 During the period 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021, 25 employees commenced employment. Establishment levels at 31 March 2021 are highlighted below:

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	431 (431 FTE)	427 (425.76 FTE)	-4 (-5.24 FTE)
On-Call	192 Units	254 persons (140 units) (includes 84 Dual Contracts)	-52 units
Support	160 (151.78) FTE)	177 (168.02 FTE)	+17 (+16.24)

2.13 There have been 20 leavers and 25 starters since the last report. The starters include 6 WT (now dual contractors) who are providing temporary cover due to secondments to support vaccinations and testing, and 3 new dual contractors. This has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 858 (this includes 84 dual contractors). Leavers are broken down as follows: 7 wholetime, 8 On-call and 5 support roles.

2.14 As at 31 March 2021 wholetime establishment stood at 427 operational personnel (425.76 FTE) employees against an establishment of 431 posts.

2.15 During the period, the Service has appointed to 16 support roles.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Authority's pay budgets cover the cost of the workforce and these include budgets for overtime to cover sickness absence where operational cover is affected. The actual numbers of employees in post compared to the establishment can cause budgetary variances and these are reported to the Finance and Resources Committee.

3.2 Any increase in absence has a direct impact upon the Service's operational pay budget as gaps in the ridership can lead to an increase in overtime pay to cover for long-term absence.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The human resources and learning and development implications are set out in the report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

As this review does not impact upon policy or service delivery, no equality impact assessment has been undertaken.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

A regular reporting system on the management of human resources ensures that the Service and the Authority are aware of any developing workforce issues.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of the report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

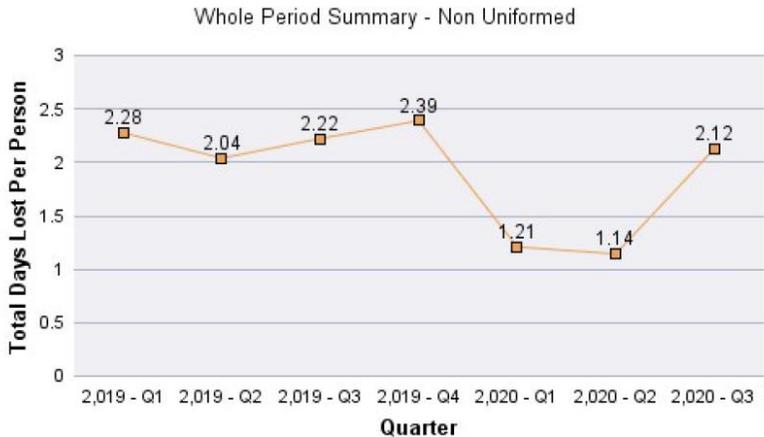
None.

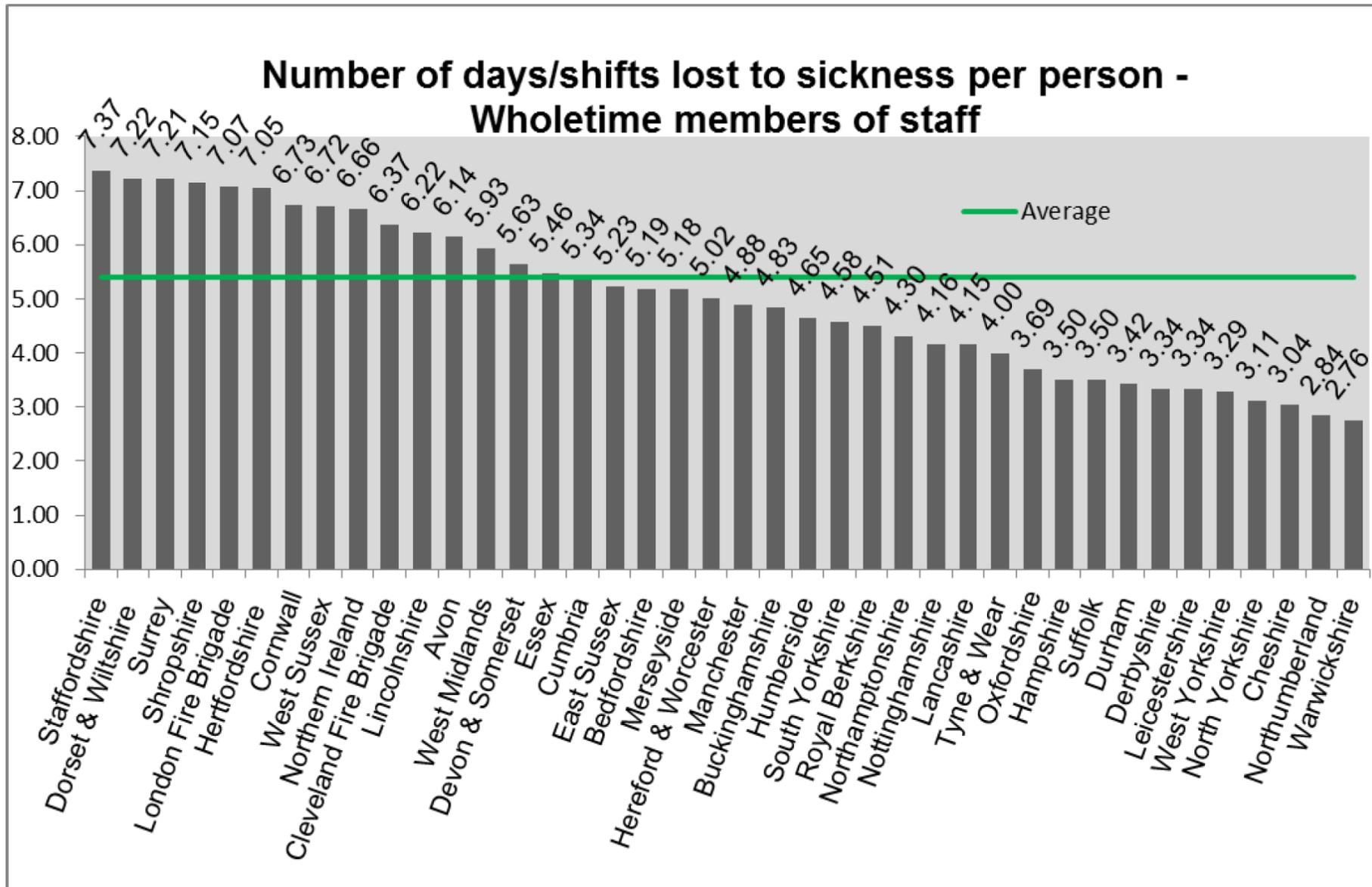
John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

LOCAL TRENDS OVER TIME

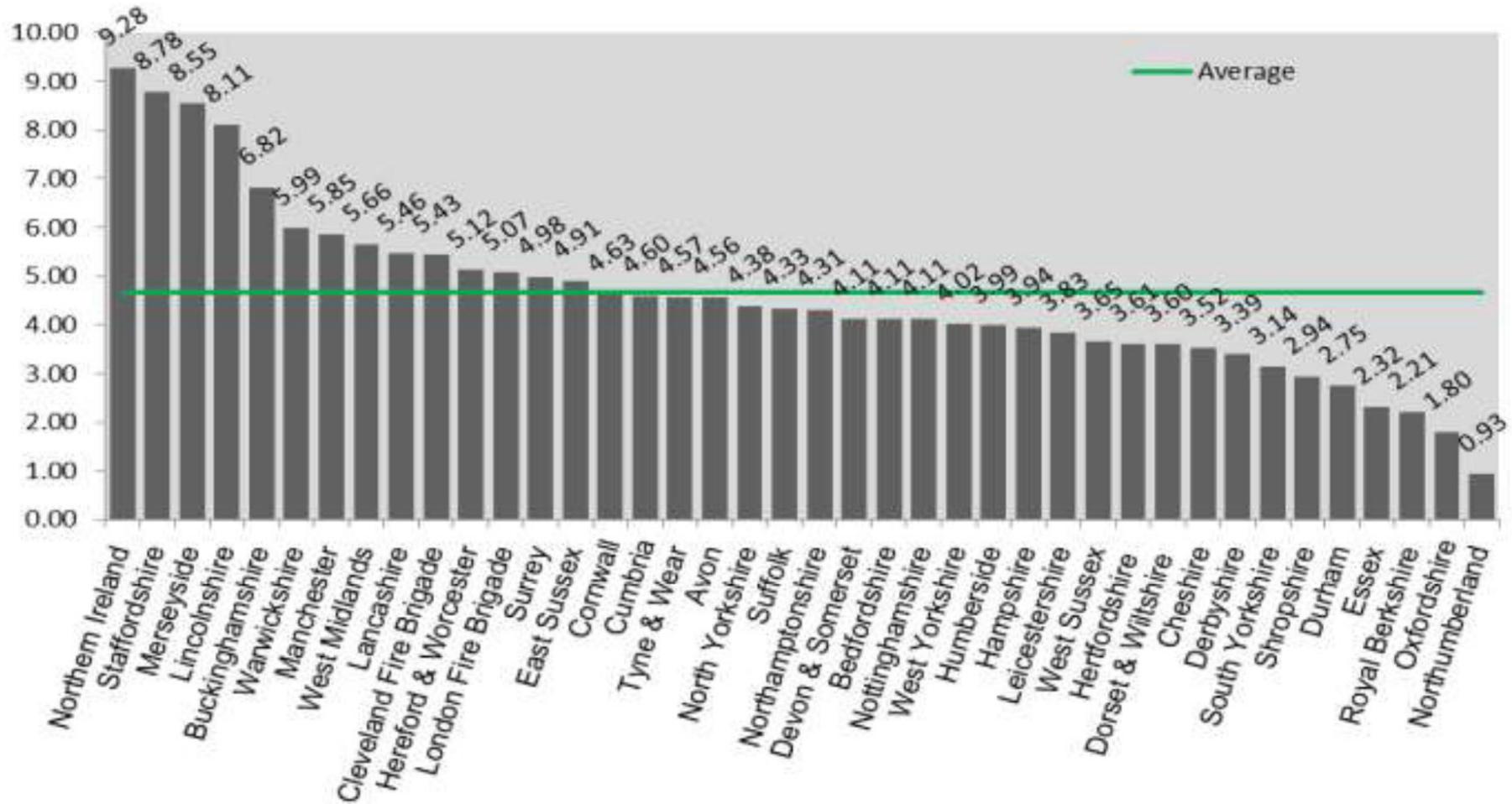
APPENDIX A

Appendix - Reporting Period: 01/04/2019 to 31/12/2020





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



Q3 2020/2021 - Wholetime

In total 950 working days were lost due to sickness during this quarter. Of this, 542 days were lost to long-term absence (28+ calendar days absent) and 408 days were lost due to short term absence. This represents an overall increase of 387.1 days (68.8%) on the previous quarter.

The average absence per employee was 2.2 days lost, which is above the target figure of 1.6 days lost per quarter per employee.

57.1% of sickness absence in this quarter was due to long term absence. There were 55 periods of absence covered by a Medical Certificate (i.e. absence longer than 8 days in duration), 21 of which were classified as long term sickness. At the end of the period 43 employees had returned to work with 12 still absent.

Reasons for Absence

Main reasons for sickness absence for the wholetime are Musculo Skeletal (23 instances, 309 days) and COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive (22 instances, 131 days). The main long term absence reasons were Musculo Skeletal (8 instances, 223 days) For short term absences was COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive (21 instances, 117 days)

Wholetime			Short Term Absences			Long Term Absences		
Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	23	309	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	21	117	Musculo Skeletal	8	223
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	22	131	Musculo Skeletal	15	86	Mental Health	4	90
Mental Health	6	116	COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	16	36	Hospital/Post Operative	3	80
Hospital/Post Operative	7	106	Hospital/Post Operative	4	26	Mental Health - Other	2	69
Mental Health - Other	4	84	Mental Health	2	26	Other known causes (not specified in list)	2	41
Other known causes (not specified in list)	7	60	Gastro-Intestinal	7	24	Eye Problems	1	25
COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	16	36	Other known causes (not specified in list)	5	19	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	1	14
Eye Problems	2	27	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	19			
Gastro-Intestinal	7	24	Ear, Nose, Throat	4	16			
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	19	Mental Health - Other	2	15			

Support (Non-Uniformed) Sickness Absence

In total 376.6 working days were lost due to sickness absence for support personnel during the quarter. This breaks down into 252 days due to long term sickness absence (28+ continuous days absent) and 124.6 working days due to short term absence. This represents an increase of 174.1 days (85.98%) on the previous quarter.

The average absence per employee was 2.3 days lost, which is above the target figure of 1.6 days lost per quarter per employee.

66.9% of sickness absence in this quarter was due to long term absence. There were 13 periods of absence covered by a Medical Certificate (i.e. absence longer than 8 days in duration), 6 of which were classified as long term sickness. At the end of the period 7 employees had returned to work with 6 still absent.

Reasons for Absence

The main reasons for support absence was Mental Health (4 instances, 127 days) and Musculo Skeletal (2 instances, 78 days). Mental Health is the main reason for long term absences (3 instances, 124 days).

Non Uniformed			Short Term Absences			Long Term Absences		
Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Mental Health	4	127	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	4	32	Mental Health	3	124
Musculo Skeletal	2	78	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	5	17	Musculo Skeletal	1	66
Hospital/Post Operative	2	36	Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	17	Hospital/Post Operative	1	35
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	4	32	Gastro-Intestinal	3	12	Pregnancy Related Disorders	1	27
Pregnancy Related Disorders	1	27	Musculo Skeletal	1	12			
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	5	17	Eye Problems	1	10			
Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	17	COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	5	7			
Gastro-Intestinal	3	12	Genitourinary/Gynecological/Reproductive	1	5			
Eye Problems	1	10	Mental Health	1	3			
COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	5	7	Mental Health - Other	1	3			
			Respiratory - Other	1	3			

On Call Absence

Attendance for On-call fire-fighters does not reflect shifts lost as they do not have standard working hours, instead it reflects calendar days lost e.g. availability to attend incidents or training periods and absence is predicated over a 7-day availability pattern (compared to 4 day shift traditionally for wholetime employees).

In Q3, 891 days were unavailable due to sickness, broken down into 555 days of long-term absence (28+ days) and 336 days of short-term absence. This equates to an average of 3.6 “days” of unavailability per employee.

Compared to Q2, when 583 days were lost to sickness absence, this reflects a decrease of 308 available days (52.8%).

There were 24 periods of absence covered by a Medical Certificate (i.e. absence longer than 8 days in duration), 8 of which were classified as long term sickness. At the end of the period 19 employees had returned to work with 5 still absent.

Reasons for Absence

The 2 main conditions leading to long-term absence for On-call employees in Q3 were Musculo-Skeletal issues (12 instances, 411 days) and COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive (18 instances, 195 days).

Retained			Short Term Absences			Long Term Absences		
Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	12	411	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	17	164	Musculo Skeletal	5	340
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	18	195	Musculo Skeletal	7	71	Mental Health	1	92
Other known causes (not specified in list)	4	103	Mental Health - Other	1	25	Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	92
Mental Health	1	92	Gastro-Intestinal	5	20	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	1	31
Mental Health - Other	1	25	COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	6	17			
Gastro-Intestinal	5	20	Other known causes (not specified in list)	3	11			
COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	6	17	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	2	9			
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	2	9	Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	8			
Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	8	Cause Known, but not specified	1	6			
Cause Known, but not specified	1	6	Hospital/Post Operative	1	5			