



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: 28 January 2022

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on key human resources metrics for the period 1 October 2021 to 31 December.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of the report.

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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

STAFFING NUMBERS

- 2.1 During the period 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2021, 10 employees commenced employment. Establishment levels at 31 December 2021 are highlighted below:

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	431 (431 FTE)	439 (437.8 FTE)	+8 (+6.8 FTE)
On-Call	192 Units	241 persons (includes 80 Dual Contracts)	-54.5 units (Please refer to Para 2.6)
Support	151 (147.59) FTE)	176 (165.51 FTE)	+25 (+17.92fte)

- 2.2 There have been 26 leavers and 10 starters since the last report. This has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 856 (this includes 80 dual contractors). Leavers are broken down as follows: 5 x Wholetime, 10 x On Call and 11 x Support roles.
- 2.3 As at 31 December 2021 Wholetime strength stood at 439 operational personnel (437.8 FTE) employees against an establishment of 431 posts.
- 2.4 During the period, the Service has appointed one Station Manager and nine support roles.
- 2.5 The number of leavers for Wholetime and On-call roles is within planning forecasts. However, as reported in the previous review, the number of leavers from support roles is higher than predicted, with 27 leavers compared to a forecast of 18 leavers in 21/22. This reflects the national picture of turnover where employment vacancy rates have increased significantly during 2021. This has been identified as a potential area of concern for the Service and will

be kept under review. During the same period, there have been eighteen new starters to support roles.

2.6 The recent introduction of the On-call trial at Bingham and Stapleford fire stations, whereby available hours are calculated as opposed to units of cover, has affected the variance figure set out in the table at 2.1. This now reflects the position of the fourteen stations not involved in the trial period.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

2.7 The review period covers Q3 (Oct-Dec 2021).

2.8 Target absence figures for 2021/22 are:

Wholetime:	6 days per person
Non-Uniformed:	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)

2.9 Summary Table:

Absence	Period 3 July – Sept	Compared with previous quarter	Total days lost for 21/22	Average over last 12 months
Total workforce (259 employees have been absent on 300 occasions during Q3, excluding On-call *)	2008.5 days lost 3.32 days per employee	1731 days lost 2.86 days per employee 16% increase (+277.5 days)	5162.5 days lost	10.37 days per employee (target 6.25 days)

(*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).

2.10 Absence across the workforce, excluding On-call employees, increased by 277.5 days (16%) in Q3 compared to the previous quarter. This also

represents an increase compared to the same quarter of the previous year (2020-21) of 681 days (51.4%). It should be noted that absence during 20-21 saw an overall reduction in absence of 25.7% compared to the previous year (2019-20), which accounts for the high comparative increase. The increase has also been impacted by absence related to covid.

- 2.11 Absence related to Covid represents 690 working days lost in Q3, which accounts for 34.4% of total absence in this period. In addition, 476 days were lost due to covid absence for On Call personnel.
- 2.12 The trends across quarters is shown in the table set out at Appendix A.
- 2.13 Long term absence equated to 39.5% of the total absence during the review period. A full period commentary of Q3 can be found at appendix C.

NATIONAL ABSENCE TRENDS

- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 Reasons for sickness absence at NFRS broadly mirror the national trends with musculo-skeletal and mental health related absences featuring significantly in all workgroups.
- 2.16 Appendix B reflects the national absence trends for Quarter 2. Quarter 3 figures have not yet been published. The three charts reflect Wholetime, Support staff (Green book) and On-call the average of duty days / shifts lost per person for those Fire and Rescue Services who contribute to the survey.
- 2.17 For Wholetime personnel NFRS has an average of 4.98 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 29th out of the 38 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 4.27 days per employee. The lowest average was 2.3 and the highest 8.34.
- 2.18 For On-call staff, NFRS has an average of 8.68 days lost per employee which ranks the Service 21st out of the 24 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 6.97 days per employee. The lowest average was 1.83 and the highest 17.28.
- 2.19 For Support Staff (Green Book) the Service has an average of 6.06 days lost per employee which ranks us 35 out of the 39 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 3.94 days per employee. The lowest average was 0.31 days and the highest 8.34 days.

OTHER WORKFORCE METRICS

- 2.20 This section reviews the following activities: disciplinary cases, grievances raised, harassment cases raised, dismissals, appeals and active employment tribunal cases.
- 2.21 Over the period, one disciplinary investigation has commenced and there has been one dismissal due to capability/ill health.

- 2.22 The employment tribunal case which has been previously recorded has now completed. The Service was successful in defending a claim of constructive dismissal.
- 2.23 There are no significant issues in respect of the above HR metrics outlined above.

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.

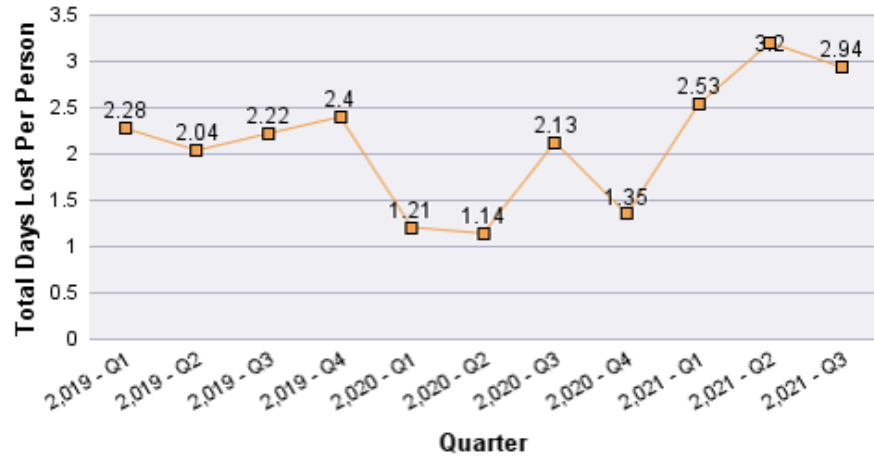
11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

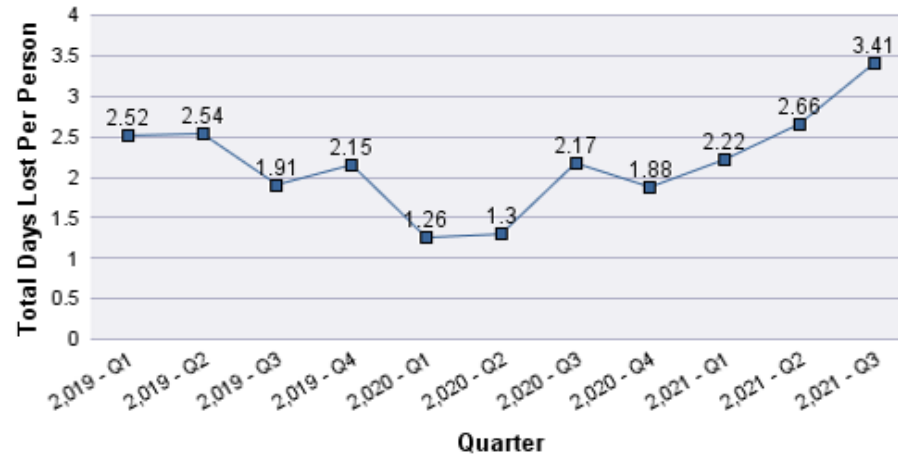
John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Appendix - Reporting Period: 01/04/2019 to 31/12/2021

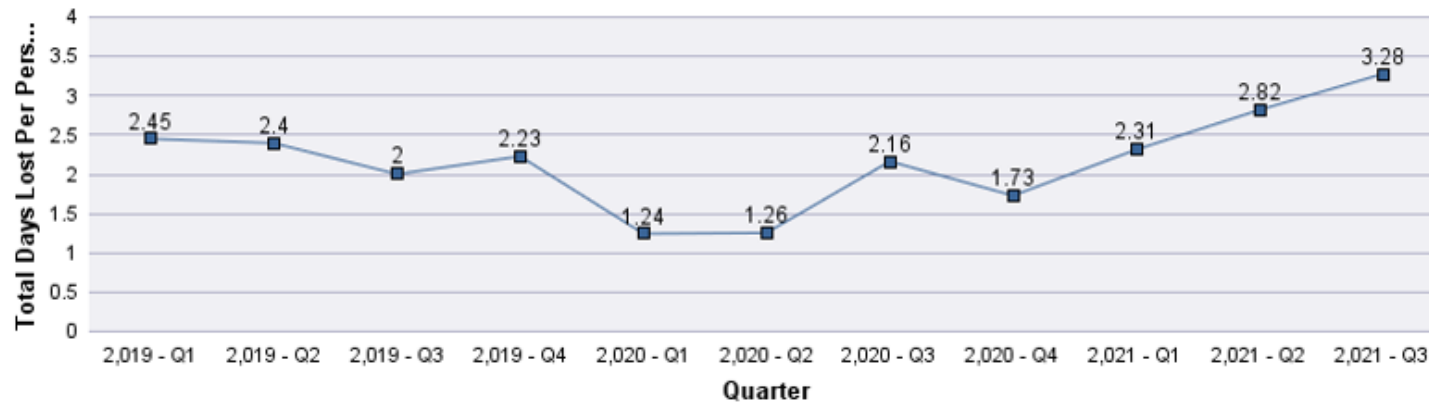
Whole Period Summary - Non Uniformed



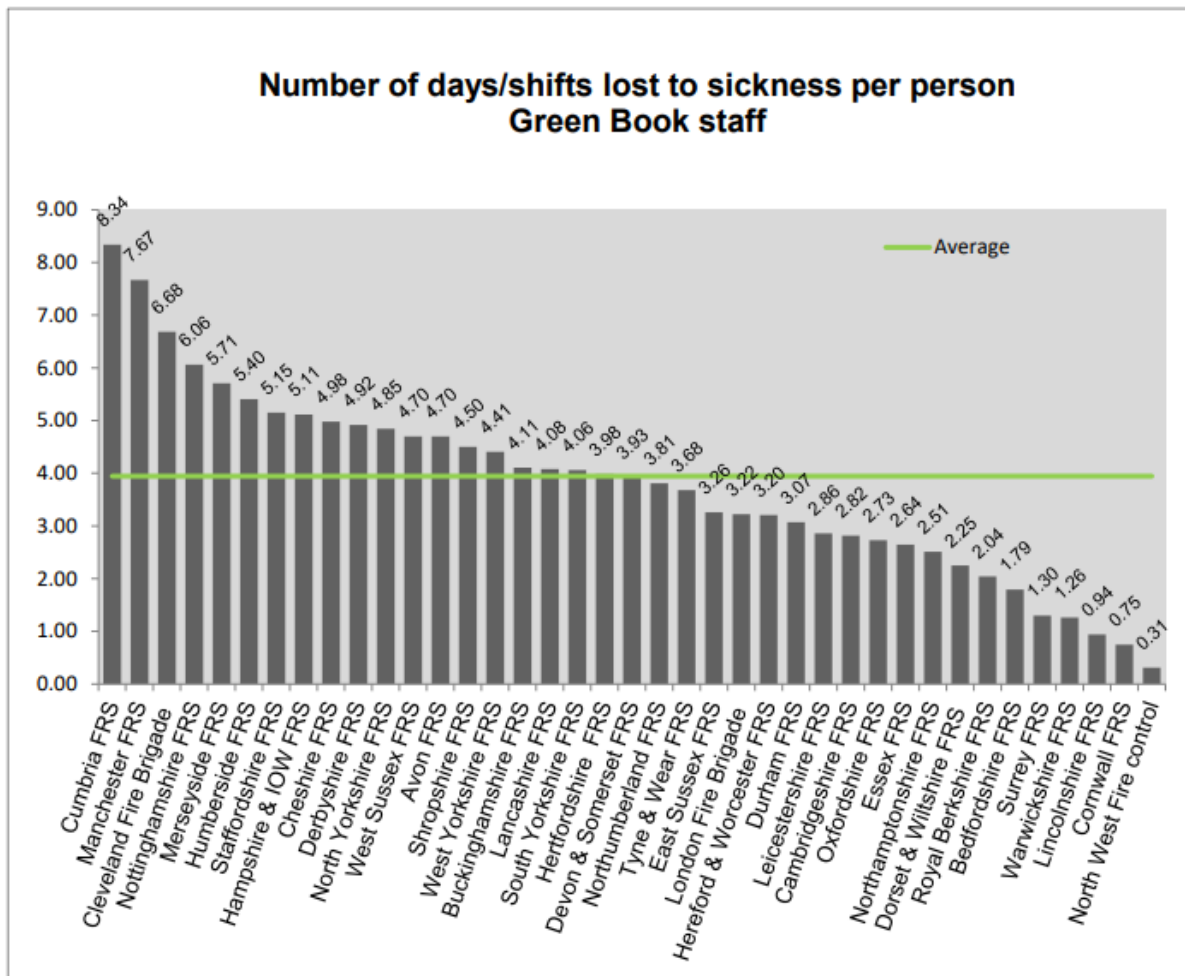
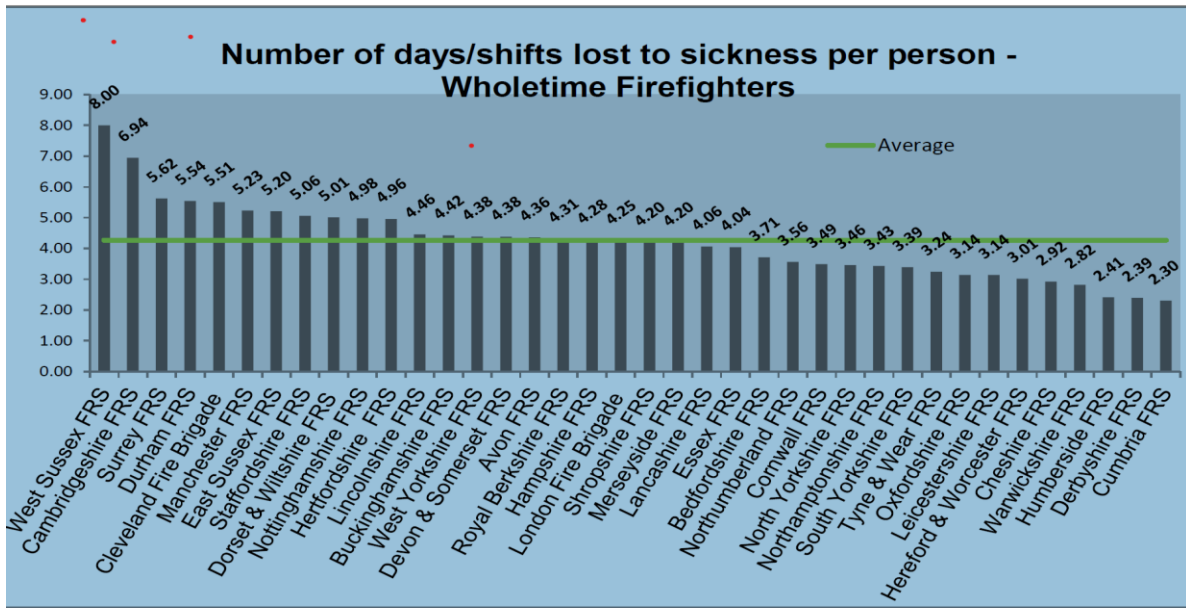
Whole Period Summary Wholtime & Control

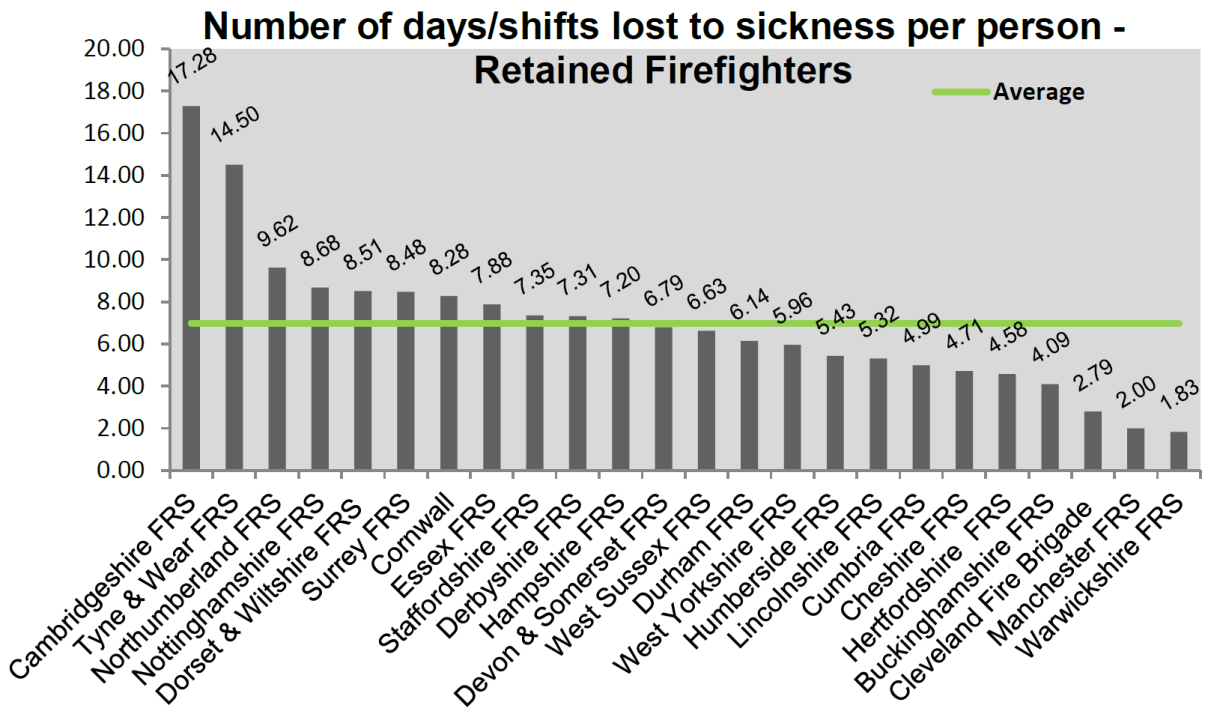


Whole Period Summary - All



APPENDIX B





APPENDIX C

Q3 2021/2022 - Wholetime

In total 1488 working days were lost due to sickness during this quarter. Of this, 579 days were lost to long-term absence (28+ calendar days absent) and 909 days were lost due to short term absence. This represents an overall increase of 324 days (27.84%) on the previous quarter.

The average absence per employee was 3.39 days lost, which is above the target figure of 1.6 days lost per quarter per employee.

38.91% of sickness absence in this quarter was due to long term absence. There were 90 periods of absence covered by a Medical Certificate (i.e., absence longer than 8 days in duration), 16 of which were classified as long-term sickness. At the end of the period 70 employees had returned to work with 20 still absent.

Reasons for absence

Main reasons for sickness absence for the Wholetime are Covid-19 Isolating – Tested Positive (80 instances, 419 days) and Musculo Skeletal (32 instances, 374 days).

Wholetime

<u>Wholetime</u>			<u>Short Term Absences</u>			<u>Long Term Absences</u>		
Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	80	419	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	79	403	Musculo Skeletal	6	235
Musculo Skeletal	32	374	Musculo Skeletal	26	139	Mental Health	4	188
Mental Health	11	241	COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	32	99	Cancer and Tumours	1	46
COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	32	99	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	28	95	Hospital/Post Operative	2	40
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	28	95	Mental Health	7	53	Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	28
Hospital/Post Operative	3	53	Gastro-Intestinal	18	48	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	1	16
Gastro-Intestinal	18	48	Unknown causes, not specified	6	22	Mental Health - Other	1	13
Cancer and Tumours	1	46	Hospital/Post Operative	1	13			
Other known causes (not specified in list)	6	38	Virus/Infectious Diseases	3	13			
Unknown causes, not specified	6	22	Other known causes (not specified in list)	5	10			

Q3 - Support (Non-Uniformed) sickness absence

In total 521.64 working days were lost due to sickness absence for support personnel during the quarter. This breaks down into 215 days due to long term sickness absence (28+ continuous days absent) and 306.64 working days due to short term absence. This represents a decrease of 45 days (8%) on the previous quarter.

The average absence per employee was 3.13 days lost, which is above the target figure of 1.6 days lost per quarter per employee.

41.22% of sickness absence in this quarter was due to long term absence. There were 27 periods of absence covered by a Medical Certificate (i.e., absence longer than 8 days in duration), 5 of which were classified as long-term sickness. At the end of the period 20 employees had returned to work with 7 still absent.

Reasons for absence

The main reasons for support absence was Covid-19 Isolating – Tested Positive (20 instances, 146 days) and Musculo Skeletal (3 instances, 69 days).

Non Uniformed

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
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	20	146	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	20	146	Cancer and Tumours	1	66
Musculo Skeletal	3	69	Gastro-Intestinal	6	30	Musculo Skeletal	1	66
Cancer and Tumours	1	66	COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	8	26	Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	32
Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	32	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	22	Mental Health	1	26
Gastro-Intestinal	6	30	Unknown causes, not specified	3	22	Genitourinary/Gynecological/Reproductive	1	25
Mental Health	2	30	Headache/Migraine/Neurological	4	22			
COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	8	26	Hospital/Post Operative	3	13			
Genitourinary/Gynecological/Reproductive	1	25	COVID-19 Adverse Reaction to Covid Vaccine	3	6			
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	22	Respiratory - Chest Infection	2	6			
Unknown causes, not specified	3	22	Ear, Nose, Throat	2	4			
			Mental Health	1	4			

Q3 - 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 whole-time employees).

In Q3, 1333 days were unavailable due to sickness, broken down into 701 days of long-term absence (28+ days) and 632 days of short-term absence. This equates to an average of 5.4 “days” of unavailability per employee.

Compared to Q2, when 1092 days were lost to sickness absence, this reflects an increase of 241 available days (22%).

There were 49 periods of absence covered by a Medical Certificate (i.e., absence longer than 8 days in duration), 11 of which were classified as long-term sickness. At the end of the period 40 employees had returned to work with 9 still absent.

HMICFRS do not collate sickness data for On-call.

Reasons for absence

The 2 main conditions leading to absence for On-call employees in Q3 were Covid-19 Isolating – Tested Positive (40 instances, 448 days) and Musculo Skeletal (7 instances, 236 days).

Retained

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	40	448
Musculo Skeletal	7	236
Mental Health	5	192
Respiratory - Other	1	92
Other known causes (not specified in list)	3	76
Eye Problems	1	70
Gastro-Intestinal	9	49
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	6	48
Hospital/Post Operative	1	30
COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	7	28

Short Term Absences

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	39	383
Gastro-Intestinal	9	49
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	6	48
Musculo Skeletal	4	34
COVID-19 Isolating Symptoms Self	7	28
Ear, Nose, Throat	1	22
Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	16
Other known causes (not specified in list)	2	14
Mental Health	2	12
Respiratory - Asthma	1	12

Long Term Absences

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	3	202
Mental Health	3	180
Respiratory - Other	1	92
Eye Problems	1	70
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	1	65
Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	62
Hospital/Post Operative	1	30